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*Looking Forward: Australia's Relations
with the People's Republic of China in
the Twentieth Century*

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Abstract

The primary intent of the present dissertation is to analyse Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China from 1949 until the first decade of the 2000s.

However, before examining the Sino-Australian relationship, it is analysed the history of Australia's foreign policy, significantly developed at the beginning of the 1900s. Firstly closely subdued by Great Britain and later largely conditioned by United States, Australia's foreign policy attained some degree of independence when it was expanded to the countries of the South-East Asian Region. In 1949, Australia faced one of the central events of the region, the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the country with which Canberra has developed one of its most important bilateral relationship. As a matter of fact, the growing importance of China led Canberra to strengthen its connections with Beijing, although diplomatic relations between the two countries were not established until 1972.

As a result of the Chinese internal troubles, its international challenges and its regional predominant influence, the People's Republic of China has represented the most complex foreign policy dilemma to Australia. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the Sino-Australian relationship was also influenced by Canberra's dependence to Washington and its hostility towards the Chinese Communists. On the contrary, in the following decades, both countries have enjoyed a relationship of mutual understanding and cooperation, albeit some problems and crisis affected the friendship.

The dissertation examined the reasons of such problems, explaining how the historical and political relations, guided mostly by economic reasons, have developed creating also important social and cultural connections. These connections increased to a point in which the strong and dynamic interactions between the two nations led to the growth of a significant community of Chinese Australians.

The last part of the dissertations represents the cultural counterpart of the political and diplomatic Sino-Australian relationship. They are described the experiences lived by the Chinese and the Australians citizenship in first person. The Chinese, in particular, narrate their lives in Australia and the problems they encountered: from the menace of *Yellow Peril* which affected the first Chinese gold-seekers, to the menace of the *Red Peril* which blamed the Chinese Communist, to the last generation of Chinese Australians who were born and grown in Australia, knowing little or nothing of their Chinese historical roots.

Introduction

On 21 December 2012, Australia and the People's Republic of China celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

The bilateral relationship has reached a point in which the two countries share interests and mutual respect, especially in economic relations. These connections have strengthened in particular since the 1990s, when China's growing market needed even more raw materials –of which Australia is rich.¹

Today, China is Australia's largest trade partner, in terms of both exports and imports while China's economic liberalisations and its growing investments in Australia offer the best prospects to maximise economic interests –in 2010 Beijing became the third investor in Australia after Washington and London.

Visits by senior members of the Australian and Chinese Governments grew year by year along with an increasing number of institutions and organisations.

Forty years of relationship has consolidated not only diplomatic and economic relations but also a vast range of socio-cultural connections. Since the 1970s, Australian and Chinese diplomatic efforts have cooperated to establish cultural and social interactions through programs of students exchanges, tourism visits, arts and music reciprocal exhibitions. Furthermore, activities in agricultural, sciences and industry cooperation helped both Australia and China to learn each other's experiences, methods, technology and research.

Cultural cooperation, especially in the form of students exchanges, helped to open national consciousness of Australians who have considered Chinese as a menace for long time, regarding them with distrust. As a matter of fact, Australia's relations with China have been distinguished by more than a century of suspect and unconditional fear which were first manifested towards the Chinese gold diggers arrived in Australia in the half of the 1800s. Over the years, Australians developed a real aversion against foreigners; the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 and the later *White Australia Policy* resulted directly from the exclusion of the Chinese.

Being historically a part of the British Empire but situated in a far Asia-Pacific outpost, Australia did not share the political and cultural heritage of its geographical region. When Canberra started to assert some form of independence, it found itself alone and far from its allies. Australians, considering themselves in danger of external attacks,

¹ G. Gabusi, 2012, "I rapporti Australia-Cina nel secolo asiatico", in *Orizzonte Cina*, Novembre 2012, www.meridianionline.org (January 2013).

developed a foreign policy based on fear and dependence to the British Empire. When the Motherland revealed itself unable to defend them against the Japanese during the Second World War, Australians rapidly shifted towards the United States, who were able to assure major protection, becoming Canberra's most important ally.

The rise of China's international influence in the half of the 1900s challenged Australia's traditional foreign relation policies. As never before, Canberra had to face the necessity of its participation in the South-East Asia regional events; Australians shared the same interests and necessities with other countries of the region, a place where China was becoming a major feature. As a result of its growth some Asian countries strongly directed their policies, especially the economic strategies, on the basis of the Chinese ones.

Australia's deeper engagement with Asia at the beginning of the 1970s was partly the result of the Chinese increasing importance in the region; Canberra was intent to strengthen its ties with Beijing because its unprecedented growth and its openness towards the "Western World" offered the opportunity to give a new direction to its foreign policy. Gough Whitlam, who is often defined "the father" of the Sino-Australian relationship, sustained Australia's engagement with China when an anti-China policy was seen as the only solution for Canberra. He has the merit of having strongly emphasised and led the importance of China and the importance of Australian independent policy directions towards Asia.

If, under the Whitlam Government, China and the Asia-Pacific Region became the most important challenges for Canberra's new voice in the regional agenda, today Julie Gillard has relaunched "the Asia challenge" into "the Asian Century". Last October (2012), the Prime Minister released the *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper and affirmed that 'whatever this century brings, it will bring Asia's rise, where Australia should actively plan and shape its national future'.²

China has always been seen as the pillar of the Australian foreign policy evolution towards Asia and over the years it has taken a new relevance: it was no more limited to the bilateral relationship but it needed to be implicated in the South-East Asia Region. China and Australia share the same environment and although each Asian country owns its proper cultures, they took part in the same traditional historical and economic evolution.

Some factors, however, have interfered in the Asian relations, annoying Beijing in particular. The United States, in fact, is today a permanent feature in the Asia-Pacific, a

² 2012, *Australia in the Asian Century*, Foreword by Julie Gillard, see asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au (January 2013).

presence seen with diffidence by China, whose diplomacy has always been sensitive to external interventions. This delicate issue got worse in November 2011, when President Obama made a speech in the Australian Parliament. Speaking about Asia he said: 'history is on the side of the free –free societies, free governments, free economies, free people. So let there be no doubt, in the Asia Pacific 21st century, the United States of America is all in'.³ Obama explained that the Americans will contribute to the Asia-Pacific security deploying 2,500 troops in Darwin, by 2016.

During his permanence in Australia, the American President also said that Washington welcomes 'the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China but it would keep a watchful eye on it as the region's dominant power'.⁴ China reacted to Obama's words sustaining that the strategy of Washington aimed to take advantage of Asia's development prospects and count China's superpower status. Washington has viewed Beijing as its main strategic competitor, able to challenge the American hegemony or its security credibility in the Asia-Pacific.⁵ As a matter of fact, when China modernised its army, the economic, but mainly military aspects of China's ascendancy, together with unresolved territorial disputes with some Asian states, have increased concerns among countries of the region about the Chinese foreign policy objectives.⁶

The Australian Defence White Paper of 2009, *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030*, announced that 'the biggest changes to Australian outlook over the last decade have been the rise of China [...] and the beginning of the end of the so-called unipolar moment, the long period in which the pre-eminence of Australian principal ally, the United States, was without question'.⁷

In the light of these observations, the presence of the United States in Asia is, today more than ever, an influential factor in the Sino-Australian bilateral relationship. A regional conflict between Beijing and Washington could bring to Canberra an arduous dilemma: the choice between one of them. Canberra needs to avoid such a choice and doing so it must encourage both countries to develop positive relationships at every level. Both China and America are fundamental friends for Australia and the 40th

3 Office of Press Secretary, November 2011, "Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament", see www.whitehouse.gov (January 2013).

4 November 2011, "Barack Obama's address to troops in Darwin", *The Australian*, see www.theaustralian.com.au (January 2013).

5 S. Mahmud Ali, 2012, *Asia-Pacific Security Dynamics in the Obama Era. A new world emerging*, see online on Google.books, p. 79.

6 J. Szczudlik-Tatar, 2012, *China's Response to the United States' Asia-Pacific Strategy*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, pp. 1, 6, 7.

7 S. Mahmud Ali, 2012, *Asia-Pacific Security Dynamics in the Obama Era. A new world emerging*, see online on Google.books, p.81.

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations proved the growing importance of Beijing for Australia. Canberra could not afford to get involved in questions that jeopardise their relations which is still far from being totally uniform; some aspects, which have traditionally affected the relationship, are still creating serious troubles. In particular, human rights is a complicated issue. After the tragic events of Tiananmen Square in 1989, Canberra has acted like a promoter of human rights dialogue in China. Recent episodes of Chinese human rights violation in Tibet and issues related to the Chinese authoritarianism, such as the case Rio Tinto espionage or the condemnation of the leader of the Uyghur independence movement, rose harsh debate between Australia and China. Chinese, who strongly sustain the independence of each government, do not appreciate Canberra's interference in its internal affairs.

Beijing certainly takes account of Canberra's opinion but the former needs to consider its approach carefully, trying to ponder its critics. The achievement of a constructive dialogue with China has required great efforts for Australia and the fact that today the Chinese's foreign policy involves Australia is an important outcome. The present work aimed to analysed how this result has been reached and how the Sino-Australian relationship have developed.

The first chapter proceeds with premises which reflect the historical dominant features of the Australian foreign policy. The first is the traditional fear of foreign invasion. On the one hand, Australia's obsession for external aggression (first Japan then the Communist China) has felt many time into irrational; on the other hand, it must not be underestimated that Australians were grown with the British culture and the "whiteness" ideology and their fear were based on ignorance, prejudices and preconception about the Asian neighbours.

Australia's involvement with the Asian societies was the central theme in the slow emergence and maturation of its foreign policy. However, Canberra's relations with Asia were initially impeded by China which represented the most dangerous point in the region. Chinese minorities situated throughout South-East Asia could spread Communism and create disorder and to counter them the Australian Government planned a series of practical operations which saw their greatest realization in the creation of The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South-East Asia –established in 1950.

The dangerous image of China, and of Asia in general, was removed by the new Australian Governments in the 1970s. Beginning by Whitlam and continued with Fraser, the following governments erased little by little the Menzies aggressive policies against the Chinese Communism. The end of the Cold War and the more moderate

positions of the Chinese opened new possibilities of dialogue between Canberra and Beijing.

However, before the recognition of the People's Republic of China occurred, Australians had had a long way to run: twenty-three years of Liberal Party ruled Australia, focusing its major enemy on Communist China. The second chapter analyses the Liberal Governments of Menzies, Holt, Gorton and McMahon. These administrations had been unable to act independently from the United States and to adopt their own policy on China, despite during the 1950s weak pressures towards the recognition were manifested by the Menzies Government.

The same occurred with the Australian engagement with Taiwan: the Chiang Kai-Shek Government was an American friend and Canberra automatically strengthened its relationship with it. Australians initially postponed their diplomatic commitments with Taiwan because they knew that the recognition of the People's Republic of China would have occurred; finally, however, with an illogical and unfortunate decision, Harold Holt opened an embassy in Taipei in 1966.

The question of Taiwan is related also to the United Nations debate. When the question of the Chinese representation in the World Organisation was called into question, Australians were inclined to accept the Communist Government in it but they put the idea into cold storage to not contrast American moves. Canberra has for a long time sustained a "two-China policy" according to which both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China might have considered as important actors in the international arena. However, Beijing and Taipei were not willing to accept each other government sitting together.

Chapter three explains how Australians shifted from Taipei to Beijing in a twinkling when Whitlam was elected Prime Minister. It examines how the source of treat, which for Whitlam did not exist, became a source of opportunities. The chapter illustrates the political, cultural and trade agreements which have developed and evolved. With the dismissal of Whitlam, Fraser continued to built close connections with China. The new Prime Minister transferred the external threat from China to the Soviet Union: thus, Chinese communists and Australian conservatives were more than even united in opposing aspirations of the Soviet expansionism. If under Whitlam and Fraser, the Sino-Australian relationship has strengthened, offering challenges and opportunities for both countries, the Labor Government of Hawke is known for the "special relationship" it created between Beijing and Canberra, being the new Prime Minister one of its most enthusiastic promoters. However, June 1989 ruined the situation but Keating succeeded in repairing the relationship after the breakdown of the Tiananmen events. The eleven

years of Howard Liberal Government initially represented an interrogate point in relations between Canberra and Beijing but after the initial scepticism and troubles, Howard reaffirmed Australia's engagement with China, confirming the common interests the two countries shared. Rather, Australia's China policy under Howard was more moderate and less critical than the other governments. It became increasingly evident the importance of China in Australia's resource-rich economy. Canberra appeared no longer ready to follow all of Washington's China policies which could undermined the Sino-Australian relations. The American military alliance remained fundamental for Australia's security but Canberra, as an instance, remained silent during the spy plane incident of April 2001 and ceased public criticism of China's human rights records.⁸

On the contrary, Kevin Rudd, the first Western leader who spoke a fluently Mandarin, did not refrain from openly criticizing the Chinese human rights record or expressing concern over the Chinese military build-up. In June 2008, Rudd broached his "Asia-Pacific Community concept", which would enable countries of the region to jointly security, economic, social and tarns-boundary issues. China's role in Rudd's vision was clear: it will be central to the development of a cooperative security community in the Asia-Pacific Region. Thus, Rudd inaugurated Gillard's *Asian Pacific Century* and within it the Sino-Australian dialogue took a new relevance and a new challenge for the future.

In the last chapter they are narrated Sino-Australian relations from the point of view of the Chinese and the Australian citizens. Since the first Chinese diggers have arrived in Australia, they experienced in first person the evolution of the relations, the menace of *Yellow Peril* which later became the *Red Peril*, the sentiment of exclusion and the inability to find their place in the foreign country. The chapter describes also the experience of the Australian students, journalist and writers who came to China and lived the Communists ideology like something totally different from their perspectives. With the aid of novels, comic strip, dossiers, government documents, public polls, politicians' pronouncements, oral history interviews and personal narrative the chapter tells how Australians and Chinese have understood, imagined and interacted with each other, contributing to the creation of one of the most important Australia's foreign relationship.

8 C. Tubilewicz, 2010, "The 2009 Defence White Paper and the Rudd Government's Response to China's Rise", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, The University of Adelaide , Vol. 45, No. 1, March 2010, p. 150 .

Chapter One

The Australian Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century

Each state has its own history, culture and politics. These features are unique for every state because they are the result of events that occurred to one place rather than one other; however, even presenting differences, the majority of governments around the world have always had in common two fundamental preoccupations, security and economy, and their foreign policies have acted in order to promote the national well-being and safeguard the national territory from external threats. In this, Australia is no different.

With regard to uniqueness of each state history it is possible to distinguish between great and weak powers. Australia has never been a strong power and it has always collocated between other states' influence and policies.

Furthermore, Australia may be the most uniquely situated of any country: its cultural history is European, having been founded as a series of British penal colonies in the eighteenth century; its security and military dependence is on North America, having developed closer ties with it after the Second World War; its geographical region and its major economic partnerships are in South-East Asia.

This variety in Australia's history has been fundamental in the development of its foreign policy which the present chapter is going to tell.

1.1 Imperial connections: Great Britain

On the 1st of January 1901, the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania were united in the Commonwealth of Australia. It had been an act of the British Parliament which created the state of Australia, not a war for independence or revolutionary actions. Consequently, Great Britain remained tied to Australia's land for long time, influencing the country in different ways.¹

Australia was British, with a British constitution, a British head of state and a British flag. Almost all Australians (except the Aboriginal and minorities) were British by birth or descent. One of the characteristic traits of the Australian foreign policy has been its determination to remain a part of "Western civilization" in a South Pacific outpost. It has always patterned with British legal, political and cultural institutions and after one century of Great Britain presence and control British policy-makers largely dealt the foreign relations of Australian dominions. Thus, even independent in many respects, this former British colony was not still a fully sovereign state because the leverage of the Motherland continued to influence its choices.²

However, the national interests of Great Britain and Australia were bound to diverge for different reasons. First of all, Australia was on the other side of the world with respect to Great Britain and it needed to find protection from external threats.³ The defense of the Pacific was an urgent priority for Australia, not for Great Britain; the most dangerous menace in the Pacific area at the beginning of the 1900s was represented by Japan. This country was becoming a growing power and its military victories in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) were interpreted as the initial expansion of a new territorial and economic Empire. What is more, Great Britain had signed a commercial treaty with Japanese in 1854 and despite its growth, Australians refused to consider it as an equal, provoking the embarrassment of the British. The Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 did not help to avoid the new rift in Australia and Great Britain friendship.⁴ From 1901, the Australian Government imposed explicit anti-Japanese immigration restrictions, 'cultivating an Australian sentiment, based upon the maintenance of racial

1 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 3.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, p. 4.

4 C. Bell, 1988, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy*, Allen&Unwin, NSW, pp. 22-28.

purity and the development of an enlightened and self-reliant community'.⁵ The fear of Japan became also part of a growing sentiment of anxiety towards Asians, especially after they started to migrate to Australia. It is noticeable that one of the first acts of the Australian Parliament after its foundation was the creation of the *Immigrant Restriction Act*, which marked the commencement of the well-acquainted *Australian White Policy*.⁶ The fear of Japan also prompted the Prime Minister Alfred Deakin to invite, in 1908, the American battle fleet to visit Australian ports for helping the promotion of an independent navy. Consequently, from 1913 Australians had their own naval fleet, the Royal Australian Navy.⁷

These first independent initiatives underlined Australians' traditional priorities for the coming years, which were defense and "whiteness".

Despite the last rifts with the Motherland, when war broke up, Australia supported Great Britain although there were not obvious Australian security interests involved; troops were sent to South Africa, to Europe and to Middle East; the most important military action Australians carried out was the fight on the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli. When the demand for troops grew up, Australia became to diverge internally between those who sustained the overseas military engagement and who did not: the loyalty to the Empire was starting to decrease.⁸ Nonetheless, even if seeking independence and starting to acting on their own, Australians emotionally considered their country as a part of the British Empire until the Second World War.

As an instance, E. G. Wakefield, one of the most influential figures during the early independent actions of Australia, affirmed that 'at not stage was the subsequent history of Australian nationalism to make a radical departure from the British framework of social life and organization. Britain was to be the source of the Australian culture for more than a century and a half, providing the standards and the methods of Australian education. Most important of all, the Motherland dominated the Australian economy as the major market for Australian exports, and the principal supplier of labor as well as capital and consumer goods'.⁹

An important symbol of autonomy was the Balfour Declaration, adopted by the Imperial Conference in 1926. It recognized what follows:

5 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 12.

6 The Australian White Policy will be deeply analyze later in the chapter.

7 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 4.

8 Ibid, pp. 5, 6.

9 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 15.

Great Britain and the dominions were autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status and in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of external or domestic affairs, although limited by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁰

It was not until 1937 that a Department for External Affairs was created and diplomatic relations were established. In April 1939, Robert Gordon Menzies became Prime Minister and he sent Australia's first diplomatic mission to a foreign capital, Washington. The same year an ambassador was sent to Japan and it was followed by Australian Diplomatic Mission to China and Canada.¹¹

Australians had to overcome many handicaps in following foreign affairs; the most important was its distance from other countries. It was difficult and expensive traveling abroad and few policy-makers from other countries were willing to come to Canberra. Moreover, books, magazines and newspapers published overseas needed long time to arrive.

At the first stages, the only preoccupation of the Australian foreign affairs was anticipate all possible external threats and destroyed them as they alive. It is significant to note that although the major parties of Australia, the Labor and Liberal parties had different lines of actions, they initially shared the same approach to foreign policy. Even the Labor Party, which within few decades became a great promoter of a "pro Asia" policy, sustained in the inter-war years the isolationism and nationalism, reinforcing the notion of *White Australia*.¹²

As far as the stages analyzed until here, the most relevant consideration is that the foundation of the Commonwealth in 1901 did not create a proper sovereign entity but, in some way, another kind of colonial and dependent state. Canberra could express its ideologies and also act independently for what concerned internal politics (see for instance the immigration policies). However, Australian policy-makers had always to face the British approbations when discussions concerned international matters. Thus, Australia could define totally autonomous only in the aspects that not involved the British interests.

A logical question arises. Why Australians have accepted to be so committed to Great Britain for so long?

10 C. Bell, 1988, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy*, Allen&Unwin, NSW, p. 11.

11 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, pp. 39-41.

12 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 6.

Primarily, there was an important economic component. During the greater part of the nineteenth century, Australia retained what was largely a non-industrial and pastoral economy. Its industrialization developed later as a consequence of the competition of Great Britain, Western Europe, the United States and Japan. Australia's small population meant that it could not develop a large domestic market for its products. Every effort had to be developed with overseas markets and hence the preoccupation for the safety of the routes. Moreover, transport cost and so the export market remained limited and Australia depended at most on home market. Australia's economic situation tended to reinforce the psychology of dependence on the one hand and the preoccupation with threats on the other.¹³

Secondly, Australian policy-makers were weak in promoting an independent foreign policy because both Labor and conservative parties felt scared contradicting the British. Instead of broke with the imperial connections and advancing their international ties, Australians participated in the military, economic and cultural achievements of the Empire. As a consequence, not only the political parties but also Australian public in general was indifferent to foreign policy issues.¹⁴

The Second World War had been a turning point for Australia's relationship with the Great Britain and it marked the beginning of a new era in its foreign relations. Different events occurred.

First of all, the Australian Government became increasingly aware of the need to develop an Australian voice in international matters about war and peace. In 1939 Menzies spoke about the Pacific as a zone in which Australians had primary responsibilities and risks. H. V. Evatt, the Minister for External Affairs asserted 'Australia's right to be a principal party to every armistice and peace arrangement'¹⁵ of the war.

On September 3, 1939 Menzies told to Australians on radio that 'in consequence of persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.'¹⁶ The logical meaning and the greatest concern resulting from his words were that if Great Britain and Australia should stand together, they consequently should fall together. In this emergency situation, the

13 G. D. McColl, 1972, *Overseas Trade and Investment: Selected Readings*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, page not available.

14 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 7.

15 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 23.

16 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, pp. 7, 8

necessity to break away the dependence on another power protection and the wish to develop an Australian diplomatic representation overseas became as fundamental as never.

Furthermore, war showed British incapable to defend their empire in South-East Asia and in the Pacific and when the Japanese invaded Rabul, the capital of the Australian New Guinea, the Australian Government, under the new Labor Prime Minister John Curtin, faced the possibility that Japan would advance further towards south and invade Australia too.¹⁷ For the first time in Australia's history, as Alan Watt wrote, 'an Australian Government faced the immediate problem of trying to ensure the survival of its country.'¹⁸

Japanese forces captured the British Singapore in February 15, 1942; a week later they were bombing Darwin and Japanese midget submarines attacking the Sydney harbor. In that dramatic moment, Curtin needed to bring back the Australian division serving Great Britain in Middle East while the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill insisted to keep some divisions there.¹⁹ Compelled to choose between Australia and the Empire, Curtin choose the homeland. For the first time Australians acted in disagreement with the British and since that event, relations between them had never been the same again.

In 1942, the Labor Party ratified the Statute of Westminster. The Statute, passed through British Parliament in 1931, declared that Australia was an independent state able to form its own foreign policy and defense free from the British control. Initially Australia, unlike Canada and South Africa, made no attempt to ratify the five key sections of the Act which required separate Australian action. The decision of the Curtin Government and External Affairs Minister Evatt in the second half of 1942 to legislate for the parliamentary ratification of the Statute of Westminster was a major step forward in Australia's preparedness to forge its own legal identity in the international arena. This legislation was the first relevant symbol of autonomy, giving Australia the right to make its own laws without British interference.²⁰

Talking about the events occurring in those months, R. G. Casey, the successor of the Minister for External Affairs Spender, wrote that side by side, Australians' relation with the British Commonwealth were weakening to left the place for deeper relations with the United States. The Minister added that 'it was sometimes said Australians should

17 Ibid, p.10.

18 A. Watt, 1967, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938-1965*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 51.

19 Ibid, p. 11.

20 "Increasing Australian Independence - Postwar Policy" <http://john.curtin.edu.au> (November 2012).

have “chosen” between the United States and Great Britain but it was not a question of “choice”. Australians sincerely believed that the survival and progress of their civilization depended substantially on the English-speaking peoples and that British-American relations had to be intimate and confident not only between Great Britain and the United States but also between Australia and the United States.’²¹

Australians definitively realized that they needed a new powerful friend and in the following decades they tried to intensify the relationship with the Unites States.

21 R. G. Casey, 1958, *Friends and Neighbors*, Michigan State University Press, Michigan, p. 10.

1.2 'Australia looks to America'

*“Without any inhibition of any kind,
I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America,
free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with
the United Kingdom”.*

John Curtin (1941)

The Australian Government was aware that it needed to make a transition from its situation of dependent state to fully independent but when the conflict impelled to its lands during the Second World War, the national security became the most urgent priority and the autonomy of the country took the second place.

The United States was able to offer to Australia a more effective guarantee of security than Great Britain. Consequently, Menzies accepted when the American military commander General D. MacArthur made Australia the headquarters for United States forces in the South-West Pacific.²²

The American navy halted the southwards advance of Japanese forces in the battle of Midway in June 1942. After few months from Britain's failure to protect them, Australians found themselves “saved” by the United States. As a consequence, they sustained a pro-American sentiment for decades. At first, they did not understand that Washington did not save Australia for Australia's sake: that land was the only possible base for American forces to organize their military reply to Japan.²³

What happened was that Australia turned from one Great Protector to another, and, ironically, the searching for a major independence would now be subdued to American policies in the following ages.

The literature that studies the American-Australian relations often accentuates that the core of problematic questions between them has always been the same: Australia wanted an alliance; the United States wanted cooperation. Both spent long time to achieve (and not completely) these purposes. Canberra needed a great power presence

22 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p.11.

23 Ibid, p. 10.

in Japan and South-East Asia, but at the beginning of the 1900s the United States was more interested in engages themselves in Europe rather than the Asia.²⁴

Curtain and Evatt were upset discovering in early 1942 that it was the Americans who had originally created the “Atlantic First” strategy, which assigned top priority to the defeat of Germany rather than to Japan. This revelation engendered suspicions of American intentions in the Pacific; the successes of the 1943 in this region gradually relieved Australian anxiety.

At the end of the war Australians’ obsession for the external threats did not disappear and their wish to count on United States as a great power guarantee and ally was confirmed. Hence, the basic difficulty was that the Henry Truman Administration was not prepared to assume the kind of leadership that Canberra had in mind. There were two main reasons. First, Evatt clearly believed that Australian-American relations should be conceived in terms of a partnership of equals, with full and effective consultations on all matters of common interest. The United States was not well-intentionate to recognize Australia as an equal partner. American policy-makers did not agree to accept the right of Australian policy-makers to be consulted on issues in which no real Australian interest could be discerned. Second, Evatt had the conviction that the United States should underwrite a formal military alliance in the Pacific, and Americans considered it politically unacceptable and strategically counterproductive. Like Evatt used to point: ‘great powers are not in the habit of taking too much notice of smaller powers and the truth is that Great Powers are inevitably preoccupied with questions of prestige and spheres of influence’.²⁵

Evatt called for years for broader arrangements in the Pacific, involving not only the United States but all regional powers and nations with colonial interests there. He gave to Americans the idea that a tripartite joint defense union consisting in Australia, United States and New Zealand should be set up to cover the South Pacific zone. He also sought, as it did his successor Spender some years later, to seek reciprocal American and Australian use of military base in the South Pacific. These matters were discussed a first time with Truman but they did not give positive successes. Washington did not place high priority on the improvement of its relations with the Australian Labor Government. Part of the problem was represented by Evatt’s personality. The minister’s bad and rude manners, the ambitions he showed in the Pacific Region and towards the United States and his desire to act independently with Japan²⁶ made himself a real

24 J. M. Siracusa, D. G. Coleman, 2006, *Australia looks to America. Australian-American Relations Since Pearl Harbor*, Regina Books, California, pp. 33-35.

25 Ibid, pp. 34-37.

26 Evatt tried to obtain a treaty with Japan without consulting any other allies.

unappreciated politician. The Americans could not see any improvements as long as Evatt remained Minister for External Affairs. The American State Department official, R. A. Lovett, warned Truman about Evatt's 'aggressive, egocentric manner and blunt address in debate and personal relations' and felt that 'it was not always clear whether he was motivated by true patriotism or simply by egoism.'²⁷ With the recent developments of the Chinese Civil War and the advance of the "Communist China Menace", even the CIA found the Australian Labor Government 'soft to communism and extremely jealous of the independent position of Australia, suspicious of what it regards as American economic imperialism'.²⁸

Thus, the Truman Administration was counting on the departure of the Labor Party, taking Evatt with it. The Liberal Party took soon the place of the former government in 1949.

Evatt's successor as Australian Minister for External Affairs, Percy C. Spender, had a central role in overcoming the American hesitancy towards a collaboration arrangement. In his first speech in Parliament he told that the conclusion of a pact between the closest allies in the Pacific would not only create a major security from communist threat but also allow the promotion of democratic political institutions, higher living standards and increased commercial and cultural ties. Australia needed to find new friends and new collaborations, different from Great Britain –however when alliance with the United States was formally established, Australia's ties with Great Britain remained close for many years in popular sentiment, trade, diplomacy and military commitments.²⁹

Furthermore, in a speech to Washington, Spender insisted on the need for urgent measures to confront

the consolidation of Communism in China and the evident threat of its emergence as a growing force throughout South and South East Asia. Efforts to stabilize governments and to create conditions of economic life and living standards under which the false ideological attractions which Communism excites will lose its force would be essentially long term measures. [...] All governments who are directly interested in the preservation of peace throughout South East Asia and in the advancement of human welfare under the democratic systems should consider immediately whether some form of regional pact for common defense is a practical possibility.³⁰

27 J. M. Siracusa, D. G. Coleman, 2006, *Australia looks to America. Australian-American Relations Since Pearl Harbor*, Regina Books, California, p. 39.

28 Ibid, pp. 39, 40.

29 Ibid, pp. 41, 42.

30 Ibid, pp. 42, 43.

Australia was not alone in searching collaboration with the United States; in fact, other Pacific and Asian countries asked for American alliance, generally, without achieve positive results. But in January 1950 Truman's Secretary of State, D. Acheson, announced that Washington was moving towards the acceptance of the concept of a defensive arc in the North Pacific, from Alaska to the Philippine, excluding South Korea.³¹

The turning point for a Pacific pact between Australia and United States (including New Zealand) had been carried out by the American Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur and it was in part a consequence of the already clear Australian desire to set up a peace settlement with Japan; that settlement was in contrast with the Americans' idea of peace arrangement with Japan. Their aim was ensure that Japan did not fall under the influence of Soviet Union and they wanted a peace without a treaty or with a "soft" one, naturally combined with their continuing presence in Japan. To discuss the Japanese Peace Treaty, Special Representative J. F. Dulles and Spender met each other. Dulles began by confronting Spender, without any preliminaries, with the most extreme version of the American position, presenting him a document which omitted any reference at all to limitations on Japanese freedom to re-arm. Spender replied saying that Australia would never accept a similar treaty and he did not regard Dulles' proposal that Americans should maintain troops in Japan to provide Australian security; the only solution was a Pacific pact. Dulles agreed that a compromise solution would be found.³²

In addition, circumstances played more favorably for the new Menzies Government than the former one: the North Korean attacked the Republic of Korea in June 1950, giving a new impetus in the determination of a security treaty.³³

Once Dulles agreed to establish a pact, a new problem emerged about the Australian membership in a Pacific Pact. The British disagreed because of their consideration that an Australian involvement might take Canberra less willing to send its military forces to the Middle East, a British theater in the event of a global war with the Soviet Union. The Australian replied saying that the United States presence in the Pacific would strengthen the confidence of the Australian Government to send its military forces to the Middle East. When Great Britain accepted a tripartite security arrangement between

31 E. S. Elphick, 1975, *Australia's relations with Asia*, Reed Education, Sydney, p. 30.

32 J. M. Siracusa, D. G. Coleman, 2006, *Australia looks to America. Australian-American Relations Since Pearl Harbor*, Regina Books, California, pp. 43-48.

33 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 14.

Australia, New Zealand and United States the ANZUS (Australian, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty) was initiated on July, 12 1951 and the text published the following day.³⁴ Casey, outlining the series of mutual obligations under the Treaty, described the article IV as the heart of the Treaty; according to it, 'each party recognised that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.'³⁵

The ANZUS Treaty was signed in San Francisco on September, 1 1951 and came into force on April, 29 1952. Since its stipulation, it has been Australia's most important and enduring security guarantee.

On September, 8 1954 Australia became part to another defense treaty in which United States was the leading power, the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty (SEATO). The principal clause of the treaty outlined the circumstances in which its members would act against aggression:

Each part recognized that aggression by means of armed attack in the Treaty area against any of the parties or against any state or territory which the parties by unanimous agreement may here after designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.³⁶

SEATO was based on the containment policy and the domino theory and as Casey wrote, the Australian intention in its commitment was the resistance to Communism.³⁷

However, many critiques moved towards the SEATO treaty suggested that it was only a rational and legal justification for the Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. As a matter of fact, a defense pact with the United States had already been stipulated and this new one would also add more commitments to Australia. It was becoming clear to the Australian public that Canberra's moves were a "copy" of Washington's ones; nevertheless, their relationship has never been of equal and every Australian deviation from the American policy was played down by Canberra because of its anxiety to incur into the displeasure of United States.³⁸ This disparity has characterized the American-

34 Ibid, pp. 13-16.

35 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2001, *The ANZUS Treaty 1951*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, see: introduction.

36 Article 4 (i) of the SEATO pact.

37 R. G. Casey, 1958, *Friends and Neighbors*, Michigan State University Press, Michigan, p.11.

38 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, pp. 14, 15.

Australian relations for a long time and in this sense it could be argued that Australians have shift from a great protectorate to another. It is true that they engaged themselves in the international scenery and signed two important treaties to protect they territory but it also true that they sustained these statements always asking the help or the presence of the United States. The most blatant examples were the involvement in the Vietnam War and the following non-recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

1.3 The dawning engagements with Asia

Australians' major concern in the post war years was that their most powerful friends and allies would be more interested in Europe and the Middle East than in Asia and the Pacific areas which were affected by the tension between East and West in the period of the Cold War.³⁹ In 1951, Menzies affirmed that the ANZUS Treaty was important for two reasons: a long-range one, because at some time in the future Japanese militarism might have revived and presented a world threat. The other, more immediate, was the extreme and aggressive posture of Communism China, whose possible avenues of advance pointed in the direction of Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁰

However, although this treaty would theoretically assure more security guarantees in Australia, a lot of critics were moved towards it: many people believed that a similar military pact would promote conflict in the region rather than discourage it. ANZUS, it was argued, would tend to antagonize Australians' Asian neighbors who were excluded from it and who did not reach separate bilateral defense agreements with the United States. What is more, ANZUS created a major obstacle to good relations between Australia and the non-aligned countries, whose policy was based on the desire to avoid the great-powers presence in Asia's affairs. In fact, since the middle of the 1900s century, new nations were created through the Asian and Pacific Regions, becoming independent from European empires. The last desire they had was that a new great-power succeeded to the former one. They were all proud of their independence and determined to safeguard it.

Between 1947 and 1949, India, Pakistan and Ceylon obtained independence from the Great Britain and Indonesia achieved its independence from the Netherlands in 1979. Indochina was in turmoil from the 1945 against the French. Burma declared independence from Great Britain in 1948. In China the communists under Mao Tse-Tung were making steady advances against the nationalist of Chiang Kai-shek, and these advanced resulted in the inauguration of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the exile of Chiang in island of Formosa (now renamed Taiwan). Finally, Korea was divided after the war and Japan was occupied.⁴¹

39 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 46.

40 Ibid.

41 E. S. Elphick, 1975, *Australia's relations with Asia*, Reed Education, Sydney, pp. 29, 30.

As a result of these changes, two major consequences affected Australia; firstly, it had a new and difficult set of relationships to establish and, like Menzies affirmed, Australia found 'itself in a sea where the opportunities were greater to pursue a range of options and associations'.⁴² Radical changes were occurring and, as one of the most richest and developed country of the region, Australia was intended to become a drawing power in Asia. Casey wrote in 1955 that Australia had to maintain active interests in South-East Asia because its countries were Australia's neighbors. For this reason Australians 'had to live with them and sought to understand them, for their mutual benefit'.⁴³

Second, and related to new kind of leadership Canberra had in mind, Australians had to protect the new nations of South-East Asia from the threat of Communism.

Casey explained in 1949 that, after the Second World War, Communist China and her satellites represented a new potential threat. Consequently, 'Australians needed to devote their minds and energies to that new possibility. The time was gone by when Australia could rest securely within its own borders. Instead of living in a tranquil corner of the globe, it was on the verge of the most unsettled region of the world'.⁴⁴

The most relevant aspect is that Australia's involvement with the Asian societies was the central theme in the slow emergence and maturation of its foreign policy.

A secret document of the Department of External Affairs of November 1949, explained clearly the beginning of Canberra's new orientation:

The important changes that are taking place throughout Asia are bound to have fundamental consequences for Australia and call for a re-examination of its relationships with Asia and with the rest of the world. In particular, the existing pattern of Australia's international, political and economic relations, and even domestic policies, will inevitably have to be reviewed in the context of future security. [...] Australia's predominant political interest and defense preoccupation must be in the South-East Asia area, where [...] policy of re-orientation must be attempted [...]. If armed conflict or large scale of disorder occurs in any part of South-East Asia area, Australian national security would be directly threatened. [...] it is necessary that appropriate political and economic measure should be taken to arrest, and ultimately eliminates, the spread of Communism.⁴⁵

42 G. Woodard, 1992, *Australia and Asia. A regional role?*, Australian institute of international affairs, Deakin University, Victoria, p.4.

43 R. G. Casey, 1958, *Friends and Neighbors*, Michigan State University Press, Michigan, p. 87.

44 Ibid.

45 Department of External Affairs Working Paper, Australia and South-East Asia, Canberra, 13 November 1949, in Australia and the postwar world. *The Commonwealth, Asia and the Pacific, Documents 1948-1949*, pp. 268-270.

The document underlined that China represented the most dangerous factor in the region because the large Chinese minorities situated through South-East Asia could spread Communism and create disorder. It added that Australian principal aim should be to make that area a place of weak states incapable in itself of threatening us, a buffer region between us and Asian mainland.⁴⁶

The Document continued with the idea that Australia should develop a program of political and economic action in the South-East Asia Region and the Australian Government planned to achieve these aims with a series of practical operations; some of them are briefly summed in the following points:

- A planned Australian financial, commercial and industrial policy to help meet the reconstruction and developmental needs of the area and to remove any present causes of friction in commercial policy;
- A contribution to fill transport needs;
- An expanded program to furnish technical, administrative and educational experts in all fields;
- The provision of facilities for training in Australia at all levels, both under free government fellowships and private arrangements.⁴⁷

All these purposes saw their greatest realization in the creation of the Colombo Plan. Among all aid programs Australia directed over the years, it has been the most important.

The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South-East Asia was established in 1950; initially it was addressed to the countries of Commonwealth in Asia but later it has expanded to non Commonwealth members. It is still operating and it is one of the longest aid programs in the world; Australia remains a country member.⁴⁸

Most important, while promoting aid and development programs, the Colombo Plan was part of a broader campaign to align non-communist countries and to ensure stability throughout the Asian Region, Australia included.

As a matter of fact, because of its geographical isolated location, 'the situation in the North of Australia was dangerous and potentially explosive'⁴⁹ and with the Communist

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the Colombo Plan 1949-1957*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, see *Introduction*.

49 Ibid, document 4.

Chinese declaring victory over the Nationalists, the great concern was that the former could 'capture the genuine nationalist movements in the region'.⁵⁰

The Colombo Plan is considered very important for two essential reasons: first of all, it occupied a prominent place in the story of Australia's independent post war relations with Asia, reaching every aspect of foreign policy, from strategic planning and diplomatic initiative to economic and cultural engagements. In this process of developing a more independent policy, it helped that the two External Affairs Ministers in charge during the negotiations of the plan, Spender and Casey, placed the plan at the top priorities of Australian foreign policy. In particular, Spender had been a prominent role in the formation of the plan –it was often called the 'Spender Plan'.⁵¹

The second reason which gave the Colombo Plan great importance was that it revealed Australians' hope of using the program to involve the United States in their regional affairs. Spender sustained this idea, explaining that Australians 'were aware of the success of the American Marshall Plan in Western Europe'⁵² and they could hope for some Asian equivalent. Since the Marshall Plan had been a way to restore the nations of Europe, the Colombo Plan would be an equivalent.

It is also possible add one more important function of the Colombo Plan in the context of Australia's relations with Asia, namely a more open approach towards the region and the believe that increasing personal contacts with Asians, Australians would temper their growing resentment on immigration policy and racial attitudes. Especially, this plan is best remember for the sponsoring of Asian students in Australian universities and technical institutes. Most of these students never came back home after finishing their studies. They were the first non-European immigrants who migrated to Australia and they represented the beginning of a new openness in Australians' minds.⁵³

However, the new engagement with Asia has not been easy and without troubles. The process required the involvements of different aspects, such as the diversity of Asians' and Australians' cultures, identities, histories and alliances.

As it will be explained in the next pages, Asians and the *Yellow Peril* has represented a menace for many decades and, at that moment, openness towards it was quite improbable and unacceptable.

50 Ibid, document 6.

51 Ibid, *Introduction*.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

1.4 Thinking about Asia

Before going on, it is necessary explain and justify the definition of *Asia* used in this dissertation. This is important because Asia could include too much geographic references:

- It can be defined as all the land mass on the continent of Asia east of the Mediterranean Sea, plus the island of Japan and South-East Asia⁵⁴;
- Asia as the largest of the continents, bordering on the Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean and Red Seas in the west⁵⁵;
- It is possible to make a subdivision among Asia (a continent bounded by Europe and the Arctic, Pacific and Indian oceans), East Asia (includes the countries and the land area of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Macao, Mongolia, Taiwan, the Ryukyu Island and the Russian Federation in Asia), South Asia (the countries and land area of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan, South-East Asia (the countries and land area of Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam)⁵⁶;

However, add other definitions of Asia is plausible, since there has not been a fixed and universally agreed one.

It is interesting the definition gave by the Australian writer Brian Castro who speaking about Asia said:

But what does 'Asia' mean? Geographically it is a composite of more than a dozen different countries all with different languages, dialects, customs and politics. I still find myself ignorant when I use the word. It is like saying 'The Americas' when one means the United States. Or it is like using the word 'Europe' to refer to Russia.⁵⁷

54 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia.

55 See www.thefreedictionary.com (February 2012).

56 See <http://dictionary.reference.com> (February 2012).

57 B. Castro, 1999, *Looking for Estrellita*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, p. 144.

In delight of these informations, say *Asia* or *Asian Region* can result really generic. To be more specific and for what concern this dissertation and is relevant to Australia, the concept of Asia will be relate to the area described before as East and South-East Asia (see map):

Fig. 1⁵⁸



Consequently, in the following pages both Asia and South-East Asia expressions will be used, and both of them with reference to figure 1. Furthermore, it is used the concept of *South-East Asia Region*. The term *region* implies that there are certain characteristics and common ties in the South-East Asia societies, which share historical experiences, similar political and economic transformations. Literature includes often Australia as a

58 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, see Preface.

component of the South-East Asia region with regard to the growing interdependence between them and to the new sense of belonging Australia has developed towards it⁵⁹ (see par. 1.5).

As a final clarification it is necessary to explain that the aim of this dissertation is not study step by step each single historical Australian relationship with each South-East Asian country. The focus on this region is of essential importance because it represented the turning point of the Australian transition towards a more independent foreign policy. As a matter of fact, since the first decades of the 1900s, the zones of the East and South-East Asia Region have assumed immense economic and strategic significance to Australia and throughout decades, especially after 1972, they became a part of the social fabric of Australia because of the high level of Asian immigrants. For this reason, the Asian challenge for Australia would no more limit on economic or commercial exchanges but it had to be also intellectual, political and cultural.

Nevertheless, Australia and Asia relations handled some divergences and incomprehension before getting under way; some events have deeply affected the relationship and they created some consequences till existing at the present.

The following sub-paragraphs are going to examine the multifaceted aspects which challenged Australia's policies in South-East Asia in the years which preceded and followed the Australian openness to this region and the abolition of the White Australia Policy.

The invasion anxiety

Despite Australia was directly attacked only once in its history (with the Japanese bombing to Darwin), Australians have considered themselves threatened for a long time. It is not a case that great part of the literature which studies Australia foreign policy describes it as an "anxious nation". The threats Australians feared had been multi-faceted, covering both a physical menace and an ideological subversion caused by uncontrolled immigration. All of these menaces were reinforced by the isolation in which this country was placed.⁶⁰

In particular, from the beginning of the 1900s, the most dangerous peril was represented by the "Asians invasion". The concept of *Yellow Peril* enclosed at best the danger posed to Australia by Asia and it is defined as follows: 'the belief in the moral and spiritual

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp.5, 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 203.

degeneracy of Asian people; the fear of blending a superior race with an inferior race; the effect of Asian economic competition and the threat of military invasion from Asia'.⁶¹ The idea of *Yellow Peril* was born with the first Chinese settlements and contacts with Australian lands.⁶² There are lots of documentation and lots of things to write about the origin of Australians and Chinese people relations, but they will be analyzed in the last chapter of the present dissertation. At the moment, it is interesting understand how the Asians peril has developed and how the idea of inferiority related to them was born.

Primarily, it is fundamental highlight the Australian connection with Great Britain: Australians have never had their own roots in an historical tradition different from a British one. Inheriting each single ideology from the British, Australians received from them also a sense cultural superiority towards Asians. As a matter of fact, since the expansion of the British Empire to India in the seventeenth century, they elaborated the idea of “missionary” for which they had to bring some forms of civilization in those “uncivilized lands”.⁶³

This sense of cultural superiority was reinforced during the nineteenth century with the expansion of the British Empire in the Asian sub-continent (India) and South-East Asia (in particular Burma, Singapore, Malaya and Borneo). Great Britain was also involved with the Chinese Empire, forcing it to open its borders to trade and successively fought a number of successful wars with China.⁶⁴

Asians represented a source of “immorality” and peril and they threatened the “white purity” of Australia. As a consequence, Australians developed an immigration policy which purpose was keeping afar any person who was not European. This ideology led the creation of the *White Australia Policy* which remained into force from the beginning of British colonization in the middle of the 1800s to its abolition in 1973.⁶⁵

This is, in sum, the ideology of the *White Policy*. This policy had an important influence in Australia’s relation with Asia and its intent was reflected in foreign policy objectives too: the main aim was counter threats coming from external countries, rather than develop relations with them.

61 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrila*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, pp. 28, 29.

62 See Chapter 4 of the present dissertation.

63 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia’s Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, p.202.

64 Ibid, pp. 201-205.

65 A. Dupont, 1991, *Australia’s Threat Perception: A Search Security*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 40.

A new problem emerged: Canberra had very little experience in dealing with Asians on equal levels. In the past, there were white men who had always held the dominant position in the colonial dominions. Instead of them, new Asian leaders took the leadership and they obviously did not trust in Australians whose country had always been unfriendly and exclusive.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Australian politicians, rather than promote the new relations sustaining a positive attitude towards them, increased the sensation of “refusal of yellow immigrants”. For example, Menzies repeatedly spoke about the menace of Chinese Communism and for two decades to Australians were ‘fed a diet of racist and anti-communist propaganda’.⁶⁷ The Menzies Government, obsessed with the containment of communism, reproduced an array of stereotypes about Asian countries, their people and their cultures that hardly influenced the public opinion. Similar accusations had fed negatively Australians’ mind for years and had led to a lack of understanding of Asian neighbors that made the relationship really dramatic considering that Australia had just adopted the idea of “Asia”. Before the 1950s Australians had made little effort to develop relations with Asia. Rather, in 1901, when the first diplomatic actions of Australia began, the first move had been to shut out all Asians with the *Immigration Restriction Act*. In addition, Australians relations with Asians have often been troubled by a misunderstanding of the formers. They (like other *Westerns*) often thought about Asia like a land mass which stretches from India in a sweeping arc through Indonesia to Japan. They did not understand that there was not a unique Asia; there were rather different countries with different languages, dialects, customs and politics. Such a premise was at all a good debut.⁶⁸

The predominance of the economic relations

The close attention Canberra gave to Asia in the postwar period was dominated by security and political issues as a result of the Cold War. Little by little, the menace of the East and West confrontation disappeared, allowing the increment of the trade and economy relationships among the region. Whereas Great Britain was the principal

66 E. S. Elphick, 1975, *Australia's relations with Asia*, Reed Education, Sydney, p. 30.

67 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrila*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, p. 32.

68 E. S. Elphick, 1975, *Australia's relations with Asia*, Reed Education, Sydney, pp. 9-12.

market for Australian exports and the main supplier of imports, into the 1950s the position changed drastically. The following table shows the changes:⁶⁹

Table 1:

	Percentage of Australian Exports received by GB	Percentage of Australian Imports supplied by GB
1937-38	55%	41%
1961-62	20%	29%

In 1965 Japan displaced Great Britain as Australia's major export market. Between 1960 and 1977 trade between Australia and Japan increased fifteen fold. Similarly, by 1970s, other South-East Asian countries began to assume greater significance to Australia's exports and bought from it more exports than the nations of the European Economic Community. Australian trade with ASEAN⁷⁰ increased ninefold in the period 1972-84.⁷¹ There are a number of explanations for the increase in Australia's exports to South-East Asia. First, its proximity to the region made easier and much cheaper dealing with Asia rather than with other destinations, transporting commodities such as coal, minerals, wheat, and wool. Second, a rapid development of the economy of the region emerged. Since the 1960s, Asian countries' unprecedented economic growth fueled demand for Australia's commodities. It had resources that the Asian developing economies required. Moreover, Australia imported manufactured product from their economies that was either not good at producing or did not produce at all as a result of Australia's small domestic market. As a consequence, it could be argued that the Australian economy and the economies of South-East Asia were, and still are, complementary in many ways.⁷² These are basic information but they underlined how the security imperative had followed the economic one.

69 H. R. Cowie, 1993, *Australia and Asia: a changing relationship*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 267.

70 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967 to foster economic, political and cultural cooperation by the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. In 1974 ASEAN and Australia had jointly founded an economic co-operation program. However, due to Australian protectionism and waves of economic uncertainty, relations with ASEAN countries have never been easy. Furthermore, rather than an organisation, ASEAN was an association of state who were still facing problems characterizing the developing countries.

71 H. R. Cowie, 1993, *Australia and Asia: a changing relationship*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 267.

72 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, pp. 212, 213.

“Lack of understanding”

The new “Asian Openness” faced serious problems even because it needed a lot of time to mature in Australians’ minds. A new engagement with Asia implied not only an economical challenge; it required in particular an intellectual, political and cultural openness. Considering that Australians’ legacy depended strictly on Great Britain, they had not natural or historical friends in Asia.⁷³

The greatest mistake Australians made when they first embraced the idea of Asia was that many of them see that region as an amorphous mass and fail to take into account the myriad differences between and within the countries of the area. People who lived on this vast area did not think themselves as “Asians” because all of them had different cultures, histories, legacies. They were Asian because they lived in the Asian Continent but they were Chinese Asian, Malays Asian, Indians Asian, Japanese Asian, etc. and each of these separate nationalities was proud of its distinctiveness.⁷⁴

This lack of understanding could be explained as follows: the majority of Australians have always been a homogeneous people and they have always had a common background of race, religion, culture and even political development. They did never have two or more large groups of different language, culture and origin, as exists for instance in Canada, a Commonwealth country where people of British and of French background live together but in separate ways of life. Thus, except for local problems, all Australians tended to look at things in the same way and they could not perceive a space in which more than one different culture stand together.

This awareness was gained through the years and following changes. When Australians began to think them as a part of “Asia” or, at least, they started to think about a future in Asia, they were initially blinded by stereotypes coming from the idea of Asian peril and inferiority. Stephan FitzGerald, the Australia’s first ambassador to the People’s Republic of China and a great advocate of Australian engagement with Asia, has at best explained this complex and new attitude towards Asia:

«We began with “Asiatics” in the nineteenth century and this persisted well into the last decades of the twentieth century. We are all given to stereotypes, and that is also how I began my own engagement with Asia. [...] walking in Sydney’s Chinatown, some 30

73 S. FitzGerald, 1997, *Is Australia an Asian Country?*, Allen&Unwin, St.Leonards NSW, p. 19.

74 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia’s Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, p. 217.

years ago, with my newly acquired Chinese language (Mandarin), and in search of a bottle of Rose Dew liquor, I was elbowed in the ribs and I urged to ask the wine in Chinese. In an urban version of a Chinese trade store up a spoke to the Chinese behind the counter, a tiny, wizened woman with a nit-brown face and cataract-clouded eyes, who would have been on the high side of 90 years old. She listened, uncomprehending. I asked again, certain by now that she was Cantonese and did not speak Mandarin. She screwed up her face, looked up at me and said, 'Don't yer speak Austrailyan?'

This story illustrates something of the mental stereotypes we have in thinking about Asia. I have assumed something from this woman's physiognomy which was entirely unjustified. Australia began its long coming to terms with Asia with similar assumptions and stereotyping. There were of course no such things as Asia, and there were not such a people as the Asian people. The world was a European invention»⁷⁵.

As a consequence of this initial difficulties, the Australian commitment to the Asian region was limited to economic relations and practical matters, such as the Colombo Plan and the containment of the communism. However, Canberra's opposition to the spread of communism in Asia, was accompanied by a continuing lack of understanding of South-East Asia nations and the dynamics of social and political changes that were working in them. Since few politicians could speak an Asian language and few of them learnt any knowledge of Asian culture, the relations were strictly limited.⁷⁶

Despite that, because of its geography, Australia had an advantage over other Western nations in its relation with Asia. As R. Buttwell said in the early 1960s there were no other Western nations with which the South-East Asian countries were involved in a significant way with the exception of Australia. Australia shared Commonwealth membership with Malaysia and Singapore, was a member of SEATO and an important participant in the Colombo Plan.⁷⁷

However, Buttwell wrote in the early 1960s, when the relations between Australia and Asia had just established and when the paradoxes and difficulties of this new connections were not still evident. They came to light some decades later and in 1974 Professor Nancy Viviani summed them at best. She explained that the seeds of Australia's postwar dilemma in its relations with Asian countries lied in the incompatibility of the cultural, racial, economic and political heritage with Australian geographical position. These difficulties arose from the grafting of a predominantly Western, Christian, sparsely populated, stable, democratic, rich and racially prejudiced

75 S. FitzGerald, 1997, *Is Australia an Asian country?*, Allen&Unwin, NSW, pp. 7, 8.

76 Ibid.

77 R. Buttwell, 1961, *Southeast Asia Today and Tomorrow: a Political Analysis*, Praeger, New York, p.38.

society to the rump of an Asia convulsed by ant colonial revolutions, with few successful experiences of Western political traditions, over-populated and undernourished, with no unifying religion and with severe communal problems. Furthermore, the difficulties have been heightened by the isolation of Australia from her traditional sources of culture, trade and security in Great Britain and more recently in the United States.⁷⁸

Although Viviani did not tell any news and she expressed a repetition of the previous concepts, it is interesting observe that there are presented here the main gaps between Asia and “the West” (including Australia) with a veiled sarcasm. Viviani would denounce that many Australians, when they started to come to terms with Asians, used this kind of attitude and superior tone. Thus, when it became evident that Asians were growing their contacts with Australians, most of them were confused and they were struggling between the past and “the known” and “the new” and “unwritten”. In light of these statements, any development of these relations needed to be clarified in order to give them a new direction. It was necessary for Australia to become more closely aligned with Asia. A great change had to occur in Australians’ minds. A first onset arrived with the election of Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party victory in December 1972.

The Whitlam Challenge: illusion or reality?

‘The change of government provides a new opportunity for us to reassess the whole range of Australian foreign policies and attitudes’. With these words Gough Whitlam commenced after his election in 1972. The new Prime Minister planned a more independent policy, less direct to military matters and not open to racism. Whitlam believed that the policies of containment adopted by the previous governments, had been counter-productive and he sought for a growing collaboration with other countries. On several occasions he affirmed that his intention was create a new style and image for Australia, which had to abandon the fears and myths of the past and, in particular, marking an important shift in Australia’s relations with Asia.⁷⁹

Before proceeding, it could immediately be revealed that, despite Whitlam determination to gain a more independent stance in foreign policy, the cornerstone of

78 V. Selochan, 1992, *New directions and new thinking in Australia-Southeast Asia Relations*, Griffith University, Australia-Asia Papers No.62, p. 3.

79 Ibid.

Australia's relation remained the United States, whose influence continued to strongly affected Canberra. The Literature and critics are divided in their evaluations of the Labor approach to foreign policy.

Starting with the positive achievements of the new government, it heavy transformed the Australian foreign policy and established the basis for its successful engagement with the Asian region. As a matter of fact, Whitlam has the merit to have taken some positive initiatives towards the region, allowing an initial dismantling of the negative stance that characterized Australia for a long time.

In particular, three initiatives were taken. The first was the Australian recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1972 –and also other Communist nations: East Germany, North Vietnam and North Korea. The second was the withdrawal of Australian forces from Vietnam. The Prime Minister subsequently did not oppose the new communist governments in Cambodia and Laos. Finally, the *White Australian Policy* was abolished in 1973. Whitlam was determined that Australia could no longer base its policy towards Asia on racism and anti-communism ideologies. The Australian positions had to change and its future and interests would increasingly be linked to the region.⁸⁰

In order to achieve this new orientation, in 1973 Whitlam proposed a new Asian Pacific organisation which was supposed to become a new regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the Labor concept of regional cooperation revealed itself confused and contrasting. The reasons are the following.

In first instance, Whitlam's attempt was smothered by objections of ASEAN that the body would be a threat to the Association's own importance. Whitlam explained that he did not want to change and enlarge ASEAN, but create a broader regional association for Asia and the Pacific, to develop 'a truly representative regional community.'⁸¹

In a speech in January 1973, Whitlam said that the proposed organisation would insulate the region against ideological interference of the great powers from the Asian Pacific region but it did not offer a way for reduce or eliminate the military and economic spheres of influence exercised by them. Moreover, several great powers (principally the United States) and some local Asian powers were committed to the preservation of the existing order and to the retention of their diplomatic, economic and military advantages. One more reason of contradiction was the inability that a regional organisation could resolve the enduring great power conflict and the emerging of North-

80 V. Selochan, 1992, *New directions and new thinking in Australia-Southeast Asia Relations*, Griffith University, Australia-Asia Papers No.62, p. 5.

81 G. Dobell, 2011, "Australia in Asia: Echoes of Whitlam", *The interpreter*. Lowy Institute for International Policy, see www.lowyinterpreter.org (November 2012).

South confrontation. Finally, Whitlam's insistence on dealing only with effective governments without considering the revolutionary movements, the ethnic minorities and the repressive regimes –such as the Philippines and South Vietnam– showed high attachment of Australia with the United States and with the previous memberships it took in the past. As a matter of fact, Australia continuing membership of ANZUS and SEATO expressed its contribution to the consolidation of conservative forces in the region.⁸² The new government, whose aim was achieve some independence from United States, by the fact was unable to separate itself from the American ally and stand alone. In the light of these reasons, it could be argued that this first attempt did not give the expected result; the South-East Asian countries did not support Whitlam's proposal and, in doing so, they revealed the limits of the Australian influence in their region. The part of the critic which highlighted Whitlam's failures, sustained that his government did not still demonstrate sufficient political and economic weight in the international scenery. Furthermore, some debased Whitlam's attempts and criticize for example some choices Canberra took about China and Vietnam. They said the Whitlam Government boasted of being the first government which took relevant position towards the People's Republic of China and Vietnam, recognizing the republic of Mao and withdrawing Australian troops from Vietnam. In reality, some critics affirmed, Australia recognized the Communist China only after Nixon visited it. Secondly, the Vietnam War had reached a phase in which Australian troops' presence was no more indispensable.⁸³ Some also argued that the new Prime Minister, instead of promoting hegemony in South-East Asia, dismantled it. As an example, in January 1973, Deputy Prime Minister Lance Barnard, who also served as minister of defense, informed Australia's closest Commonwealth allies that Canberra planned to reduce its contribution to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA). The FPDA, came into office in 1971 when Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and Britain, pledged in relation to the external defense of Malaysia and Singapore, after the withdrawal of British forces from East of the Suez.⁸⁴ The FPDA was merely a consultative forum, not a formal alliance and the proposed reduction of Canberra's involvement threatened the FDPA's very

82 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, pp. 102-105.

83 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1902 Vol. 1*, Union Offset, Canberra, pp.63-65.

84 Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Malaysia and Singapore pledged in relation to the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore, that in the event of any form of armed attack externally organised or supported, or the threat of such attack against Malaysia or Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken or separately in relation to such an attack or threat.

existence. The Australian decision provided Harold Wilson's British Labour Government, elected to power in February 1974, with the pretext it needed to withdraw Britain's ground contribution to the FPDA. The departure of both British and Australian ground forces from Singapore in the mid-1970s effectively ended any chance the FPDA had to become a framework for regional security.⁸⁵

However, whether the Whitlam efforts had been in a sense vain, they served a dual important function. First, many of the Whitlam Government foreign policies have continued to underpin Australian relations with other nations and they have helped to refine the Australian political mechanism which enabled Canberra to align its policies with those of great and powerful allies. Second, it has seriously provided to Australia a greater sense of involvement in international politics and in the affairs of South-East Asia⁸⁶.

The sense of involvement promoted by Whitlam implied a new challenge which has been widely sustained by important prominent figures like FitzGerald. According to him and his global idea of the Australian relation with Asians, Australia should come to terms with their historical baggage and start to think differently about Asia because its major interests and future were bound with that region. The need to think differently about Asia is probably the most important legacy gave by the Whitlam Government and, most important, it implied the acceptance of the real influence of Asians in Australia.⁸⁷

Thus, since 1972 Australia's looking for independence assumed a new challenge and direction: the South-East Asia.

85 A. Benvenuti and D. M., 2010, *Jones Engaging Southeast Asia? Labor's Regional Mythology and Australia's Military Withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia, 1972-1973*, *Journal of Cold War Studies* Vol. 12, No. 4, Fall 2010, pp. 32, 33.

86 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1902 Vol. 1*, Union Offset, Canberra, pp.63-65.

87 S. FitzGerald, 1997, *Is Australia an Asian country?*, Allen&Unwin, NSW, p. 158.

1.5 Past obsessions and future options

By the 1970s, in order to improve new relations with the Asian neighbors and carry on further achievements in foreign policy, Australians needed to understand two more fundamental concepts. Firstly, the fact that Asia was present in their life, society and customs; secondly, the idea that Australia was no more an isolated country in a Pacific outpost because, since some years, it had the possibility to be perceived itself as a part of the Asia region.

The following sub-paragraphs explain how the presence of Asians in Australia was difficult to accept after decades of racist attitudes and how it was difficult for Canberra look to Asia as a fundamental partner.

Asians in Australia

When it became obvious that Australia was increasing its reliance in the Asian Region, a new debate arose; as a consequence of that, Australians could no longer continue to label people of the region on the ground of race. However, when Whitlam abolished the *White Australian Policy*, many Australians did not accept the practical consequence that a racially non discrimination immigration policy might have in changing the ethnic composition of the Australian population. One thing is that a government declare that Australia has abandoned racist policies and could no more sustain a racist society; it is another that people suddenly abandon deeply attitudes of racism they inherited through the ages. As Viviani suggested, when Whitlam abolished the *White Australian Policy*, the foundation of attitudes which underpinned the walls of White Australia was still in good order, and the experience of living with Asians –or rather the community’s perceptions of this– could have effect in practice of increasing pressure for some implicit re-establishment of a racist policy.⁸⁸

New pressures concerning immigration arose over the following decades and they became part of the Australian political life, generating high and heated debates. People less in favor of immigration, argued that the new tendency was allowing the presence of

88 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbors. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, p. 214.

too many Asians, who constituted a threat to the society besides they took Australians' jobs and created a rift in Australian unity. These fears have reached irrational level, how it was demonstrated for example by the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party debate after the Federal elections in 1996. In her maiden speech she said:

I, and most Australians, want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being *swamped* by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40% of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. Abolishing the policy of multiculturalism will save billions of dollars [...] and our dole queues are not added to unskilled migrants not fluent in the English language.⁸⁹

In their book *Asians in Australia*, J. E. Coughlan and D. J. McNamara carried out an important research about Asians in Australia. Despite the opponents, the level of Asian immigration has continued to increase since 1970s. The authors in their studies tried to explain the effects that Asian immigration had on the ethnic composition of Australian society. They demonstrated that Australia was not being "swamped" by Asians, such Pauline Hanson sustained in her speech to Parliament.⁹⁰ In the period 1981-91, the Asian-born segment of the Australian population grew to 4.1 per cent of the total population. This had risen to 5.5 per cent by June 2001. Demographic estimates predict that, by 2025, Australians of Asian ethnic origin (including second and third generation Australians of Asian origin) may rise to almost 20 per cent. However, as J. E. Coughlan and D. J. McNamara concluded, 'it is clear that Australia's population will continue to be predominantly Anglo-Saxon for the foreseeable future' and explained those children born in Australia of immigrants from Asia are increasingly marrying outside their ethnic group and many with a partner who is Australian-born.⁹¹

Apart from extreme positions, such as the Hanson's one, as a long consequence of the elimination of the *White Australian Policy*, increased immigration from Asia and other non-European regions have meant that earlier fears became more and more distant from the contemporary Australia. The nation was changing, it was becoming a multicultural society and Asians were even more a relevant component of it.

89 H. J. Dodd, 1997, *Pauline, The Hanson Phenomenon*, Boolarong Press, Brisbane, p. 51.

90 For further information see chapter three of the present dissertation.

91 J. E. Coughlan, D. J. McNamara, 1997, *Asians in Australia. Patterns of Migration and Settlement*, Macmillan Education Australia, Melbourne, pp. 296-317.

Do Asia and Australia share the same region?

The idea of multiculturalism in Australia is something asserted and generation by generation different cultures will integrate more and more each other.

Although it was stated that Asians were a fundamental presence in Australia, it was still complex define which place and role Australia filled in the Asian region at the end of the twentieth century when Asia was becoming completely dominant in Australia's economic, immigration, tourism and education flows.

As explained in the previous paragraphs, the 1970s increased the involvement with Asian countries, dismantling little by little immigration restrictions against Asians and promoting Australia's reliance on trade with them in order to change the static situation and shake public opinion.

However, in the years that followed the Whitlam Administration, despite both side of government, Labor and Liberal, came to accept that maintaining positive links with the Asian region was a central intent to Australia's security and prosperity, Australian policy-makers and academics were not able to embrace entirely the idea of Asia. It is an arduous concept to explain and it is hard understand how in the 1990s there were still incertitude and a lack of a transparent policy towards Asia. Two matters were involved: a lack of a "real" political openness and the consequently lack of public attitude openness. Throughout the ages, governments sustained in theory a pro-Asia policy but they did not achieve lot in practice. They did not consider Asia as a fundamental ally and friend of Australia and they were still locked into the American purposes and the ANZUS Treaty.⁹² Australia had the possibility to change some cornerstones of its ties with the Americans, such as the New Zealand Government did. New Zealand and Australia have traditionally exhibited almost identical foreign policy orientations, based on reliance on Great Britain first and United Nations later; however, in 1984, New Zealand chose to pass an anti-nuclear policy that ran counter to the interests of its allies and resulted in the abrogation of its only security alliance. New Zealand has undergone a reorientation away from both the Americans and Great Britain and towards greater "independence" in foreign policy. On the contrary, Australia continued to privilege traditional security concerns, maintaining "joint facilities" such as intelligence and military ties, joint military exercises, and the access in the American State Department –

92 S. M. Fraser, 2012, The Whitlam Oration given by Malcolm Fraser. *Politics, Independence and the National Interest: the legacy of power and how to achieve a peaceful Western Pacific*. See www.theage.com.au (November 2012).

later Australia will cooperate with the United States in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. In the 1990s, the Australian foreign policy has been described as being dominated by a doctrine which creates disincentives for assertiveness and independence.⁹³

According to FitzGerald, this failing has been the first of all a failing of Australian elites; in order to reform the set of relationships of a whole country it is necessary to reform and involve institutions, universities and cultural organisations.

Some initiative has been taken, for instance the following.

In the middle of 1970s the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) was established; its aim was to promote and support the study of Asia in Australia.

In 1979 a Center for the Study of Australia-Asian Relations (CSAAR) was set up in the School of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University. The School gave a significant contribution carrying out research on political, economic, social and cultural problems in Australia's relations with the countries of Asia.

In 1986 a further initiative was the creation of an Asian Studies Council which emphasised industry and employer demands for future directions for Asian studies in Australia.

Additionally, the foundation of the Asia-Australia Institute in 1990, set up by FitzGerald, is distinguished by its vision for a future political association in East Asia, its focus on influential elites and its role in developing an idea for East Asia regional policy. It works with regional partners on the challenge of how to give central importance to the place of human being in the planning of the region's future⁹⁴.

According to FitzGerald, another important step for Australia was an act of identification with the Asian region. This meant more than being willing to trade with Asia. It meant recognizing that Australia could be considered, in certain significant aspects, an Asian nation and shared a part of Asian history. The Australian commitment to Asia was not in mind enough and was not well scheduled.

In the middle of 1990s, FitzGerald had in mind a future for Australia and the nations of Asia in which they formalised an East Asian Community. He affirmed that East Asia needed such Community –in a way on the lines of Europe– for peace, prosperity, security and social and cultural harmony of its region. An East Asia Community was necessary for different reasons: peace and prosperity was not assured, the benevolence of greater powers towards the smaller was not assured at all, the legacy of history and

93 A. L. Catalinac, 2010, *The evolution of Nuclear-Free New Zealand: Ideas and Foreign Policy Change*, Department of Government, Harvard University.

94 See The Asia-Australia Institute, The University of New South Wales, www.nira.or.jp (February 2012).

culture presented political and other problems which could only be managed on shared basis.⁹⁵

In his book *Looking for Estrellita*, the Australian writer Brian Castro analyzed, and even criticized, Australia's presumptuous conception of itself and how this affects its engagement with Asia. It is ludicrous, he suggests, that Australia even thinks that it can choose to be part of Asia: 'Australians are basically talking to themselves, assessing their own identity and worrying about how others see them. Nobody else is really very interested. They see this as a holiday destination and not as a serious place for culture and intellect'.⁹⁶

The writer explained that Australia considered Asia like "an option" in which it has the predominant influence and a leading role. Australians, as suggested by FitzGerald, 'like to think that our society has changed' and 'we are defending our record of change against the critics in Asia who say we have stood still'. He added that the change in Asia 'has been breathtaking by comparison'. In all this, Australians cannot seem 'the political import for them and for us'.⁹⁷

Asian leaders could feel this lack of understanding and moving towards them. As an instance, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, after a meeting with FitzGerald in 1995 explained: 'If I'm approached by Japanese who want to hang something on what they know I'll say I accept because the Japanese will listen and try to do something about change'. He said that he has been to Australia and he has 'talked bluntly about Australia and Asia. But I see no change. No one takes any notice. Australia seems not to want to change'.⁹⁸

As a matter of fact, Australia was excluded from the ASEM, the Asia-Europe meeting which took place in Bangkok in March 1996. In that event, the European Union, sixteen Asian states and the ASEAN secretariat met each other in order to establish a dialogue and facilitate discussion on political, economic and cultural relations. Australia was not presented at this meeting, on either side. It was not "Europe" and not completely "Asia". That meant that neither Europe nor Asia were an option for Australia. And that highlights the concerning situation in which Australia found itself in the 1990s.

It is not astonishing that it has not been until 2010 that Australia, attended by the Prime Minister J. Gillard, has formally joined the ASEM.

95 S. FitzGerald, 1997, *Is Australia an Asian Country?*, Allen&Unwin, St.Leonards NSW, p. 156.

96 B. Castro, 1999, *Looking for Estrellita*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, p. 155.

97 S. FitzGerald, 1997, *Is Australia an Asian Country?*, Allen&Unwin, St.Leonards NSW, p. 6.

98 Ibid.

In the following transcription of a local radio debate of April 2000, it is well explained the situation of uncertainty and confusion between Australia and Asia relations still existing at that time:

COMPERE: The head of a prominent regional think-tank says that Australia risks long-term isolation from its neighbours because of an on-going national confusion about how much it wants to be part of Asia.

Professor Stephen Fitzgerald, a former diplomat who's now Chairman of the Asia-Australia Institute, says that Australia is missing a debate about the merits of what some see as an Asian version of the European Union. But as China correspondent, Tom O'Byrne reports, Australia's Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, has discounted as unnecessary such talk of wholesale engagement.

TOM O'BYRNE: In Beijing over the past few days, some of Asia's most influential policy-makers, diplomats and academic thinkers have been discussing what Asia might look like in ten years time. To some it'll have a single currency and a common market like the European Union, along with the influence that comes with size. To others it'll be ASEAN and little else. Yet the Asia Institute's Professor Fitzgerald says with government backing, regionalism is developing momentum and Australia can't afford to stay on the sidelines.

PROFESSOR STEPHEN FITZGERALD: The region is a little bewildered about Australia and where it stands at the moment, and they're asking the question, are we engaged, can we be engaged in this new regionalism that is now occupying a lot of attention here in the region? If you look at the Australian debate about foreign affairs, this doesn't feature.

TOM O'BYRNE: Born out of the Asian financial crisis, much of the region, say academics, is now looking to within so as to counter any future trade or financial threats. The biggest shift has been the move to have China, Japan and South Korea link up with ASEAN. Already Ministerial level meetings are taking place, and Professor Fitzgerald says Australia needs to leverage its reputation and relationships to be included.

PROFESSOR STEPHEN FITZGERALD: We may have a wrong policy framework at the moment in Australia, one which is not related to the reality which is going on in this part of the world, and I think a truly self-interested Australian foreign policy will say we've got to take seriously every one of these options and we've got to work really hard at them, because if that should happen and we're on the outside, that is a disaster for

Australia.

TOM O'BYRNE: The Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, though prefers what he calls practical regionalism, stronger trade and economic links combined with the realism that culturally and historically Australia can never connect with Asia.

ALEXANDER DOWNER: We would need to look at arrangements that suited us, suited our interests. If we approach regionalism on the basis of an emotional community of interest, an historical and cultural community of interests, well then Australia doesn't have those types of historic associations with the region, and ethnic and cultural associations very obviously. I don't think that this part of the world is going to develop like the European Union. The focus is likely to be the focus that I'm putting emphasis on, and that is practical regionalism.⁹⁹

The words used by T. O'Byrne when he spoke about 'practical regionalism, stronger trade and economic links combined with the realism that culturally and historically Australia can never connect with Asia' let think that may be the idea of an "Asia-Australia shared region" is nothing more than an utopia. May be links between Australia and Asia region will be always limited to the economic sphere. May be it will be the future, new challenges and new governments which will write a new kind of involvement and a new kind of relationship between Australia and Asia region. Or, simply, this kind of relationship will not be possible.

As Castro concluded in 1999, Australia has written off Asia for almost two hundred years; written off the countries of Asia, with various cultural traditions of thousands of years. Perhaps it is time to write Asia; to write within it and of it, rather than just about it. The word *Asia* is found, after all, in the word Australia. If Australia wants to re-figure itself in its relationship to the countries of Asia, then Asia must also be part of Australia and vice versa.

John Upton commented ironically in his play *The Hordes from the South*: 'we sometimes need to be saved from ourselves, from our own blindness'. One of his characters says: 'Asia's where it's at, George. Mix of cultures, emerging nations, exotic people'. Such naïveté has been the result of implanted mythologies. It would perhaps be more interesting to be able to say this about Australia in the future –that it isn't, as it is perceived at the moment, just another island down there in the South Pacific. An

99 AM Archieve, April 2000, "Concern for Australia's future role in Asia", *The ABC*, see www.abc.net.au (January 2012).

emerging, dynamic nation full of exotic people and exciting idea, with a deep reverence for culture. If Australia cannot re-orientate its perceptions of itself and others it will remain one of the ‘wannabees demanding admittance to a club whose membership rules it regards with scarcely concealed condescension and mistrust’.¹⁰⁰

Most recently, in June 2012, Malcom Fraser, the Liberal Prime Minister in charge from 1975 to 1983, offered an oration to Whitlam, describing him as ‘a formidable political warrior who recognised the distinct national interest of Australia’¹⁰¹ and its needs to open the foreign policy in a new scenery.

In his oration, Fraser, among other things, pronounces himself about the Australian place in Asia. He wanders how Australians can contribute to peace, to progress, to stability in the Western Pacific and South-East Asia. He believes that Australia today should be able to have more influence than fifty years ago but two matters cause many people to question the real influence and purpose of Australia in Asia. Primarily, Fraser affirms that before the Tampa affair¹⁰² there would have been many who accepted that the idea of the *White Australia Policy* was dead and that those who supported racism had no influence. Since Tampa, there have been many who interpret the Australian attitude to refugees and the toxic and demanding debates that have taken place over this question, as a resurgence of racism. The second matter which creates difficulty is the nature of Australian relationship with the Americans. Rather than become more independent, Canberra, in the past twenty years seemed more and more locked into United States’ purposes and objectives. ANZUS was invoked when Australia cooperated with the United States in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. Fraser himself supports ANZUS and the American alliance but at the same time he sustains that Australia need to be a nation acting independently. This does not mean it cannot have alliances; there are many things in which Canberra will always agree with Washington but there are some very important in which the interest is different. The Americans’ major interests are in the western hemisphere, the Australians’ in East and South-East Asia. ‘Australians must rely more on themselves’ and recognise that ANZUS itself is a limited treaty. It is limited geographically and substantively. It involves a commitment in the first instance to consult. Then according to their constitutional processes the

100 B. Castro, 1999, *Looking for Estrellita*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, pp. 168, 169.

101 M. Fraser, 2012, The Whitlam Oration given by Malcolm Fraser. *Politics, Independence and the National Interest: the legacy of power and how to achieve a peaceful Western Pacific*. See www.theage.com.au (December 2012).

102 In August 2001, the Howard Government refused the permission for the Norwegian freighter *MV Tampa*, carrying 438 rescued refugees, predominantly Hazaras of Afghanistan from a distressed fishing vessel in international waters, to enter Australian waters. This triggered an Australian political controversy in the lead up to a federal election, and a diplomatic dispute between Australia and Norway.

United States may or may not provide military support. The hard commitment does not go beyond consultation. According to Fraser, in dealing with countries of the Asia Region, Australians need to show a greater element of independence and a greater strength of mind. They need to increase their sophistication in their approach to relationships throughout East and South-East Asia. For example Canberra still tends to say that strategic considerations have no impact on the good economic and trade relations with China. That is plainly not true. It cannot be expected that Australian trade relationship are unaffected if on every occasion Canberra follows the United States in strategic matters. Australia does need to play a part. If Australians have independence of mind, if they have confidence in ourselves, as indeed they should as an independent nation, they cannot just keep doing as they have in recent times, just doing what America wants. Being and being seen to be independent and having a clear eyed view of what they can achieve in security and continued peace throughout this whole region is critical to Australia's future.

Julie Gillard has advanced Australia's objective of its engagement towards Asia with the publication of the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper. The Prime Minister emphasised that 'whatever this century brings, it will bring Asia's rise, where Australia should actively plan and shape its national future',¹⁰³

The choice for Australia is the independence of mind to break with subservience to the United States. Subservience has not and will not serve Australia's interests. It is indeed dangerous to its future.¹⁰⁴

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The words of Fraser assert how the independence and progress of Australian foreign policy have been not significantly improved from the past.

Once again it must be repeat that "rethink about Asia" and "rethink about Australia's position in the Asia region" will be the greatest challenges for Australia's future.

After have summarily studied the Australian relations and policy in Asia, the dissertation proceeds examined a keystone of the Australian foreign policy in the Asian region, the People's Republic of China.

103 2012, *Australia in the Asian Century*, Foreword by Julie Gillard, see www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au

104 M. Fraser, 2012, The Whitlam Oration given by Malcolm Fraser. *Politics, Independence and the National Interest: the legacy of power and how to achieve a peaceful Western Pacific*. See www.theage.com.au (December 2012).

Chapter Two

The People's Republic of China and Australia's Ambivalence

During the decade which followed the creation of the People's Republic of China, Canberra was intended to keep it out of from the world order and before the Australian recognition occurred, a wide range of issues strongly influenced the Australian policies. The present chapter is going to tell the historical reasons which has impeded the immediate recognition of the new Chinese Republic.

Fig.2¹ Chairman Mao Zedong's Long March



¹ Image provided by www.guardian.co.uk

2.1 New Governments for China and Australia

Robert Menzies' Liberal Party Government was born in parallel with the creation of the People's Republic of China² in 1949.

Menzies and his government were elected on the back of an anti-communist campaign and for this reason it might be expected they pushed for an hard-line towards China; nonetheless, the new Australian Government arrived into office without fixed ideas about the question.³

In the months immediately following the creation of the PRC, a statement of the Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, made it clear that Australians were not totally condemning the new government in Beijing. He said: 'It is not for us to question the kind of government the Chinese people choose to live under... we do not accept the inevitability of a clash between the democratic and the communist way of life. We would very much dislike seeing the traditional contacts severed between China and the Western world'.⁴ Hence, after the creation of the Communist China, Canberra was willing to create a friendly relationship with it: had Beijing the same interest in maintain good relationships with Australia?

According to Gregory Clark, after the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese interests in Australia operated at two levels.⁵ In the context of Chinese global policy, 'Australia received some attention by virtue of the fact that it existed and had a role to play in world affairs'. For instance, the Chinese included Australia in Beijing's main list for official communications on occasions when the government felt it needed maximum publicity; Australia was also included in the Asian and Pacific nuclear-free zone proposed by the PRC⁶ as well as in the trade mission that China sent to the West to increase its trade.⁷

2 PRC or simply China.

3 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Introduction.

4 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 51.

5 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, pp.161, 162.

6 In the post Second World War period South-East Asia region saw many disruptive events caused by outside interference. Consequently, the states of the region have long sought to remain outside the traditional East-West confrontation and to insulate the region from any potential confrontation caused by the activities of outside Powers in the region.

7 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, pp.161, 162.

At the country to country level of interest, apart from the economical relationship the Chinese appeared to ignore Australia. One indication of their lack of interest was the absence from the Chinese press of any accounts of events in Australia.

Taking these aspects into account, it followed that the PRC was neither a dangerous country nor a menace for the Australian security. It could be define rather a nonsense the relationship Canberra established with Beijing over the years, based on distrust and unreasonable fear. The elaboration of Australia's China policy clearly showed how the component of the "fear of China" influenced Canberra. This fear reflected the Australian traditional anxiety of foreign invasion and how affirmed Fung and Mackerras, 'Australia's obsession with external aggression –first Japan then Indonesia and finally the Communist China– bordered on the irrational because its fears were based largely on ignorance, prejudices and preconceptions about its Asian neighbours rather than on a cool appreciation of the balance of power and Australia's geopolitical location'.⁸

Canberra also feared the Asian nationalism, which could be used by the Communists, especially in South-East Asia and Vietnam. Spender told the British Commonwealth Secretary that if 'Vietnam went Communist, it would be extremely difficult to save any of the rest of Asia'.⁹

The history of the Australia's China policy in the two decades following the establishment of the PRC could be divided into two distinct periods: a first and more "moderate" during the 1950s; and an "hard" and more tortuous during the 1960s.

8 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 4.

9 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p.165.

2.2 Australia, China and the United States

Sino-Australian relations were influenced by a number of events and actors, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Taiwanese offshore island crisis, the economical factors, the Tibetan question and a series of events occurred in South-East Asia which increased the discrepancy between “the West and the East”.

In particular, Washington has greatly influenced Canberra, who has always felt the need of a mighty friend, even more indispensable to face the “Red Menace” of Communism.

Canberra between Washington and London

After the establishment of the PRC, Australian policy-makers were soon subjected to conflicting pressure from their most important allies.

On the one side, in mid-December 1949, Menzies was informed by the British that ‘they had decided to recognize the PRC and that they planned to act with this purpose early in the new year’.¹⁰ Great Britain did not want to risk its interests in China and more generally in Asia. Moreover, the British argued that persistent contacts with the West was the ‘only way to counter the Russian influence in China’.¹¹ The fact that Great Britain recognised Beijing in January 1950 appeared to override whatever ideological objections might have held by the Liberal Party Government.¹² On the other side, Australians were aware that the American Administration of Henry Truman was making a firm stand on recognition. The United States refused to recognise the Communist China because

it would not honor international agreements and because recognition would not deter China from subversive activities in neighboring countries; furthermore it would be incorrect to abandon prematurely the Nationalists, who had been Western allies in the

10 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Document 1, p. 2.

11 Ibid, Introduction.

12 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p.164.

It is evident that the American and the British positions were totally different. The Australian Government found itself in a difficult position, between two different options of its historical major allies.

Of course, Canberra could not openly embrace the new Chinese Republic because it had to consider that the elections of the Menzies Government ran on an anti-communist campaign, where the Communism was described as a threat to Australia and New Zealand. Before the elections, Menzies and his party produced posters depicting the Chinese Communism as an arrow aimed at the heart of Australia, together with a promise to ban the Australian Communist Party. On December 20, 1949 the Australian Cabinet¹⁴ decided not to grant recognition at that moment. The main arguments it advanced against the new Chinese Government were the following:

- (1) There is no advantage to be gained from it. The Chinese Communists are communists in the fullest sense, and it can be expected that they will move into the Soviet orbit and become increasingly subject to Soviet domination. No thanks or any other form or reciprocal gesture can be expected from them;
- (2) Recognition would amount to condoning the seizure of power by force and the holding of it against the wishes of the majority;
- (3) It would mean the throwing over of a former ally;
- (4) It would result in the replacement in the Security Council and other United Nations meetings of a government which has been normally friendly to the western countries by a government which will vote solidly with the Soviet bloc;
- (5) Recognition would boost the morale and troublesome communist elements throughout South-East Asia;
- (6) It would needlessly antagonize the United States of America.¹⁵

13 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Brief by McIntyre for Spender", 9 January 1950, Document 8, p. 11.

14 Though not mentioned in the Constitution, the Cabinet is the key decision-making body of the Australian Government. Comprising the Prime Minister and senior government ministers, the Cabinet has been a key part of the Australian political system since Federation in 1901. Cabinet decisions are given legal effect by their formal ratification by the Executive Council, which comprises all ministers, with the Governor-General presiding.

15 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Submission to Spender", 20 December 1949, Document 3, pp. 5, 6, 7.

The same day, Canberra, in a cablegram, replied to a message of the British Prime Minister Attlee who indicated the British's purpose to recognise the Communist Government of China; the message wrote: 'after carefully considering all aspects we have decided that we are not in favor of according recognition to the PRC at the present moment'.¹⁶ The main reason, the text explained, was that Australian policy-makers were not convinced recognition would offer them any compensating advantages over disadvantages. They sustained that the Chinese gave no indication they intended to respect the sanctity of international law and they added: 'We feel that recognition should not be granted unless we are convinced both that it is warranted by the facts and that it is the right thing to do. At present, we feel far from sure that the Communists will behave as a civilised government [...]'.¹⁷

Actually, Menzies and his government knew that the rational reasons for the recognition outweighed the reasons of opposition; the recognition was only a matter of time. They were simply reluctant to act in advance of the United States.

The Korean War and Australia's mediation

The cautious nature of Australia's policy was firstly challenged with the outbreak of the Korean War. Early Australians' reactions to the war were moderate. They did not blame China for the war but they feared Russian or Chinese interventions and wanted to localize the conflict. For this reason Canberra was extremely hostile to the American idea of moving some Nationalist forces placed in Taiwan to Korea, since 'to do so would make localization difficult, if not impossible'.¹⁸ Spender clearly told the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, that Australia did not recognize the PRC because 'they preferred not to take a line inconsistent with that of United States and because Canberra should avoid linking Korea with the question of Chinese representation'.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the opposition and perhaps as a result of the influence of the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who he met at Colombo, Spender was becoming more moderate on the China question. Like Spender, also Menzies appeared to have disenchanted with the American policy in Asia, following the outbreak of the Korean War. The general believing sustained that the Americans were being increasingly

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 F. A. Medianky, 1992, *Australia in a changing World. New Foreign policy Directions*. Maxweel MacMillan Publishing Australia, NSW, p.209.

19 Ibid.

guided more by emotional than strategic considerations. The connection between this feeling and the recognition issue crystallised for Menzies while he was in transit to the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in London. After discussions with Indian leaders, Menzies cabled Spender saying: the 'democracies have got into a mess about the recognition of China and that it is of importance to get out of it [...]'. The assumptions girding Menzies' idea appear to have been the following: first, the Americans exaggerated the strategic value of Taiwan and its Nationalist forces; second, the Chinese were giving too much strategic value to the Formosa island²⁰ and its Nationalist forces; third, the Chinese were too powerful in Asia to be ignored or antagonised unnecessarily; finally, Beijing was pragmatic enough to hammer out a modus vivendi with the West. On the basis of these suppositions, Menzies proposed to the Prime Minister in London that a settlement in Korea could be accompanied by admission of China to the United Nations and talks on the status of Taiwan.²¹

Early at the beginning of the Korean War, Canberra still hoped that Washington would use a "soft line" towards the conflict but 'events had their own impetus and the war broke up'.²² As the Australian Division of External Affairs realized, the defeat of the North Koreans would tempt the Chinese to intervene. This was especially clear when General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief United Nations Command, did not stop at the 38th parallel but drove across it towards the Manchurian border. Nine Chinese armies, numbering over 300.000 men, began to cross the Yalu River in October 14, and a full-scale offensive developed two weeks later. Menzies tried to warn off the Chinese and in a radio broadcast late in November he denied that the allies had any designs on Manchuria. The intention was good and was repeated after November 30, when Truman, in a press conference, gave the impression that the United States was considering the use of the atom bomb. Spender cabled the Australian High Commissioner in Ottawa to seek the Canadian government's views to emphasize his desire to limit the conflict and make the Australian attitude known. He then cabled the Ambassador in Washington to apply the "utmost effort". Canberra's aim in those anxious days was quite clearly limit the war. Great Britain, resisting the American pressure, considering the idea of a demilitarized zone surrounding the Yalu River. Spender supported the idea and consulted as closely as possible with Bevin. Canberra was very worried by MacArthur's claimed right of hot pursuit by air power over the

20 Taiwan.

21 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Introduction.

22 F. A. Medianky, 1992, *Australia in a changing World. New Foreign policy Directions*. Maxweel MacMillan Publishing Australia, NSW, p. 213.

border against Chinese planes, and on the wider issue it supported Great Britain rather than the United States. Spender tried to adopt a middle position between London and Washington but it was difficult to do so, especially when his suggestion that Australia should withdraw recognition from Chiang was strongly opposed by the Americans.²³

Australia's inclination towards the PRC went even more strongly in January 1951 when Menzies participated to the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in London and there, again under the influence of Nehru, considered the recognition of China. Menzies sustained that 'MacArthur was a ham actor who had to go' and that 'it was imperative to come to some sort of understanding with China.'²⁴ He expressed this idea though he remarked that they were at war with China and stressed the need to co-operate with the American allies. Nevertheless, when Spender knew his movements he immediately cautioned Menzies that he did not align Australia against the United States. Spender at that time was strenuously negotiating the ANZUS treaty and he urged to support a strong stand towards Washington and the United Nations.

The equilibrium between the recognition and the non-recognition has continued to overbalance for long time. During the 1950s and the 1960s, Canberra has always found a way to postpone the concrete action of the recognition. The situation went worst when, following Australian internal troubles between the Liberal party and the opposition²⁵, Spender ceased to be Minister for External Affairs. The new Department reorganized the South-East Asia Policy and gave less importance to the argument of recognition –although Australia has continued to not support General MacArthur policies towards Korea.²⁶

The new Minister for External Affairs, Richard Baron Casey, played an important role in the development of the Sino-Australian relationship although the context in which he worked was extremely bitter towards the Chinese. In the 1950s, he noted in his diaries that 'the Chinese Communists made considerable improvements in the well-being of the Chinese people' and 'the Chinese self-respect restored after the humiliations of the

23 Ibid, p. 216.

24 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 46.

25 It refers here to the *Australian Communist Party v The Commonwealth* event which had been a legal case in the High Court of Australia. In 1951 Menzies decided to hold a referendum on the question of changing the Constitution to permit the parliament to make laws in respect of Communists and Communism where he said this was necessary for the security of the Commonwealth. If passed, this would have given a government the power to introduce a bill proposing to ban the Communist Party. However, the Opposition leader campaigned strongly on civil liberties grounds, and the proposal was narrowly defeated.

26 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 159.

nineteenth century'.²⁷

Menzies and his government demonstrated feeble progress towards the Chinese recognition but the Americans continued to use the ANZUS Treaty to keep Australians in line with them on China. A similar pattern occurred also for the question of the Australian attitude towards the Nationalist and Western-oriented island of Taiwan. "The Taiwan question" has been one of the major reasons of frictions between Australia and the United States; Washington continued to sustain the government of Chiang Kai-Shek at the expense of Mao's Republic and Australian interests. The debate and the question over Taiwan is very long and complicated and it will be analysed in the next paragraphs.

China and the United Nations

The Taiwanese issue was not the only source of disagreement between Australia and the United States. Another serious conflicting matter was the question of Chinese representation at the United Nations.

In September 1950, a resolution of the General Assembly established a Special Committee to look at the problem of Chinese representation in the World Organisation. The central core of this problem was that the Communist bloc and some Afro-Asian initiatives were geared to the admission of the PRC and the expulsion of Republic of China (ROC). On the contrary, the United States and its supporters sought to delay considerations of the PRC representation.²⁸

Canberra faced this matter with the same weakness it faced the question of recognition. It was inclined to the acceptance of the PRC into the United Nations but, not surprisingly, they put the idea into cold storage to not contrast the American moves. According to the United States, the PRC could not be recognized or admitted to the United Nations because

it was part of international communism and had been declared an aggressor in Korea. The PRC would hamper the capacity of the United Nations to maintain peace –a weak argument in view of the presence of the URSS, which had committed aggression in Hungary and remained a member.²⁹

27 Ibid.

28 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "The question of Chinese Representation in the United Nations", p. 55.

29 Ibid.

Another objection to China's admission was based on a perception that it was not "peace-loving" within the United Nations Charter's terms. This was an equally untenable position because the "peace-loving" criterion was not fulfilled by some United Nations members, including Great Britain, France and Israel during the Suez War, as well as the URSS. Finally, but not least important, although the United States was not committed to the Nationalist on Taiwan, the recognition of China and its admission to the United Nations would have damaged the Chiang regime.³⁰

As a consequence of the deep resentment the Korean War produced in the United States and by the fact that China was condemned as an "aggressor" in the same conflict, Canberra decided to avoid associated talks with the Chinese about their representation. Australian policy-makers finally sustained that adopt the American view of recognition and admission to the United Nations was more "seductive" than the British one because the former seemed to have gained little from their recognition. What is more, Chinese actions were creating international irritation and disagreement –the invasion of Tibet, the internal arrests, the long imprisonment without trial and ill treatment of Westerners, including some Australians in China. Finally, Australian politicians were preoccupied with security and they were bound to follow the American ally, who were supposed to defend them.

A section of Australian opinion disagreed. The press was becoming to move towards the idea that Beijing needed to be recognized and it was hostile to Chiang's Government. At this point, Casey seemed to have followed Spender's idea, realizing that the ceasefire in Korea offered new opportunities. He produced a submission to Cabinet, in August 1953, which argued the need to recognize Beijing but then he went on explaining that the strength of American objections, the complexity to admit the PRC to United Nations and the problem of Taiwan made a new step vary difficult.³¹

A cablegram written in Canberra at the end of 1953 and addressed to the Australian delegation at the Geneva Conference, listed the arguments *For* and *Against* the Australian recognition of the PRC. The reasons *Against* the recognition were almost the same over the years but new motivations *For* the recognition were enumerated. They are the following:

30 H. Albinski, 1965, *Australian Policies and Attitudes toward China*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.34.

31 Ibid, p.36.

For:

(1) As the Communist Party government is the effective ruler of the mainland of China, there seems little reason from the legal viewpoint why we should not recognise the Beijing government as soon as possible. Recognition of a government, and its right to represent the nation in the United Nations does not imply either approval or disapproval of the regime concerned;

It is very difficult to have any negotiations or reach any understandings with China unless we are prepared to talk to the Beijing government and regard it as a Government able to enter into commitments [...].;

(2) Non-recognition means that China has relations with the Soviet Union and other Communist countries only, she is cut off from the rest of the world and there is no opportunity to exert influence on her.

Against:

(1) The attitude of the United States is a factor deterring us from deciding too quickly to recognize Communist China, in view of the importance of American cooperation to our security [...].;

(2) Even if Australia recognised Beijing, she might be virtually ignored by the latter – as the United Kingdom has been [...].;

(3) The question of Formosa raises difficulties. For strategic reasons, we are not prepared to hand Formosa over the Communists [...].³²

The point number three, ‘for strategic reasons, we are not prepared to hand Formosa over the Communists’, clearly referred to the American opposition of recognition and to the complexity of the Taiwan question. Canberra has for a long time sustained a “two-China policy”, according to which both the PRC and ROC might have considered Australian allies. However, both Beijing and Taipei were not willing to accept each other government sitting together.

Although when Casey met Zhou Enlai at Geneva, in June 1954, he remained deeply and positively impressed by him and later urged a co-operative Chinese spirit to prevent drastic measure the American could adopt in Vietnam, he also admitted to Zhou that there were many questions to be overcome before Australia could talk of diplomatic recognition of China’s admission to the United Nations. He did not explain openly but it

³² Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Brief for Australian Delegation to the Geneva Conference”, Undated, Document 45, pp. 79, 80.

was obvious that he referred to Australia's alliance with Washington.³³

As a matter of fact, trying to find an agreement on the subject, in 1955 Casey suggested that Australia could recognise the PRC and support its entry into the United Nations in exchange for a "two China" solution to Taiwan, whereby Nationalist China would be recognised as a separate state or its status left legally undermined.

The American response to Casey's idea was negative and the minister was compelled to admit reluctantly that the Chinese would probably have no part in the arrangement that would endorse Taiwan's split from the mainland.³⁴

The Liberal Party did not move beyond Casey's proposal of 1955. Having established the parameters of Australian policy under the American imperatives, the Australian Government could offer no more than recognition and admission to United Nations on a "two China" basis.

At the end of his mandate, Casey regretted that the American Administration supported Chiang and the Nationalists in Taiwan because of domestic politics. He also added that

he would have liked Australia to recognize China and support its admission to the United Nations. Although this would not free Indo-China or South-East Asia from the communist threat, China would be put under the eyes of the world and would have to answer for its actions to the world community; moreover, in the event of overt Chinese aggression, the United Nations would also find it easier to condemn Beijing. China, he thought, would have retorted that it would be "normal" if it was properly treated by the American camp.³⁵

The Taiwanese offshore island crisis

The efforts towards the recognition of the PRC knew a critical stage during the first Taiwanese offshore island crisis. Taiwan experienced in its territory two major crises, one occurred in 1955 and the other in 1958; they were the consequence of Truman's neutralisation of the island after the establishment of Mao's Republic, where the Nationalists were still claiming sovereignty. They did not hold only Taiwan but also the

33 H. Albinski, 1965, *Australian Policies and Attitudes toward China*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.38.

34 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Introduction.

35 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 25.

so-called “offshore islands” –four groups of islands situated in the Strait of Taiwan.

On February 2, 1953 the new American President Eisenhower declared Taiwan “de-neutralized”, an action which was followed by Nationalist commando raids on the mainland. In September 1954, the Chinese Communist began an artillery bombardment of two of the disputed islands and the crisis began. The legal situation of the conflicts was ambiguous: the SEATO Treaty deliberately ended its sphere of action south of Taiwan but Article V of ANZUS defined an attack as not only on a metropolitan power but also on the ‘territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific, or in its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific’. Since the Americans had a treaty with the Nationalists, Australia might well become involved.³⁶

The American interest over Taiwan dictated full support for the Nationalist position over the offshore islands while, in Canberra’s view, ‘the fate of the offshore island had little bearing on Australian security, while hostilities between the United States and China could only increase the risk to this security’.³⁷ Menzies was very worried about the events and he tried to work with Great Britain urging restraint on the United States; he also tried ‘to act as an ally with an honest difference of opinion’.³⁸ It is reported that Australia tried to ‘vigorously opposed Nationalist China’s inclusion within SEATO area’.³⁹

Later, on January 18, 1955 a Chinese Communist force attacked and captured one of the involved island, the Ikiang, located few kilometers north-west of the Tachen Island. In announcing the “victory”, the Chinese Communist press linked the liberation of the coastal islands with the eventual liberation of Taiwan from the Nationalist forces. On January 24, in response, Eisenhower sent a message to the Congress stating that the PRC took a series of provocative military actions aimed to conquer Taiwan. Eisenhower stressed that the existing and developing situation in the area of Taiwan posed serious danger to the security of the United States, the entire Pacific area and to the peace of the world. He believed that the situation was one of appropriate action for the United Nations but that it had become sufficiently critical in the meantime to impel him, without waiting for the United Nations, to ask the Congress to participate in order to improve the prospect of peace. Eisenhower explained that, if necessary, these measures contemplated the use of American armed forces to assure the security of Taiwan and the other islands. A joint resolution, embodying these measures, was approved by the

36 The cold war museum, *Taiwan Crisis*, www.coldwar.org (June 2012).

37 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p.165.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

American House of Representative and Senate.⁴⁰

Australians' hopes for a Nationalist withdrawal from the off-shore islands were not realized and in August 1958 a second crisis occurred. In this events, the United States seemed also ready for a nuclear confrontation with China. Australian policy-makers were still opposed to these moves but in this second crisis 'the Americans were more intransigent to oppositions and Australians more hesitant'.⁴¹ The Australian Government did not find more question to justify its delay and opposition: after the second Taiwan crisis, Casey, questioned in federal parliament by Gough Whitlam on the extent of Australia's security responsibilities in the Pacific, applied to the United States for help with the answer.

Australia's trade with China

Although the United States strongly conditioned Australian choices, the attitude of the American allies was less influential in the case of Australia's trade with China. Washington thought that its interests were furthered by blocking all trade with China since any trade loss it suffered could increased its weakening as an economic and political military rival. On the contrary, for Canberra, to impede trade with China meant 'a relatively greater loss to Australian interests –to the extent that its economy was more dependent on foreign trade– for the sake of relatively little gain –to the extent that Australia did not plan to compete with China as a world power'.⁴² Hence, American objections to Australian trade with China did not affect Canberra's moves.

The Australian Government continued to allow statutory bandies and private companies to trade with the Communists. Certain kind of goods –the so-called “ strategic goods”– were not permitted for export but the trade relationship with China was significant particularly from the end of 1950s. Giving some details, in 1958-59 Australia delivered its first consignments of wheat, iron and steel to the PRC. In 1958-60, the value of exports reached Australian £16 132 000. By mid 1964, sales of wheat exceeded 7 million tons at a value of over £250 million.⁴³ The Americans, who maintained a

40 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Australian Policy towards the offshore island crisis”, p. 93.

41 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 174.

42 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p.167.

43 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Introduction.

complete embargo on trade with China, might not been happy with this situation but in general they were content with Australian political support on China.⁴⁴

External events

If the recognition of the PRC had always been a critical option during the 1950s, at the end of the decade additional events related to the “Communist world”, made Canberra more hesitant than ever and it began to sustain harder positions. First of all, after the proclamation of the independence, in Indonesia, from 1952 to 1957, the Communist Party worked with Sukarno’s Government. The powerful changes that were occurring in Indonesia could be extremely dangerous if leaded by Communist forces.

Secondly, between 1956 and 1958 a public split occurred between Russia and China. The Chinese opposed what to be appeared the moderation of Russia who talked of ‘peaceful coexistence and acceptance of a parliamentary road to Communism’. Russian leader Khrushchev also discouraged armed conflicts arguing that no side of the world could win a nuclear war. Mao, on the contrary, laid stress on ‘support for revolutionary wars’ sustaining that the Chinese could have win. The Sino-Soviet dispute cannot be analyse so summarily but it is relevant to highlight that Australian policy-makers tended to take these arguments at their face value and assume that Russia was ‘a satisfied power seeking to maintain international peace, while China was the new danger’. Not surprisingly, the Chinese moderation at the Bandung Conference in 1955 was ignored; no one tried to find out whether its offer to negotiate over the Straits of Taiwan and her denial of plans of subversion were genuine.⁴⁵

There followed, in 1959, the Tibetan uprising and clashes between India and China underlined Chinese dangerousness –see next paragraph.

The restraint shown by the Chinese leaders in the late 1950s had brought no profit and from 1960 onwards they adopted a new “hard line” policy in foreign policy. As a matter of fact, in November 1960 the National Liberation Front was formed in Vietnam and the third Indo-Chinese war, against the American-backed Ngo Dinh Diem régime, began.

The stage was set for a change in Sino-Australian relations, for the worse.⁴⁶

44 Ibid.

45 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, pp.59-62.

46 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 52.

2.3 1960s: the hardening of Australia's attitude

By the end of 1950s a series of international events combined together produced a noticeable hardening in Australia's attitude towards international communism.

China's aggressiveness

For what concerned the PRC in particular, one dramatic episode worsened its international position: the Chinese suppression of the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Chen Jan clearly summarized the episode:

On 10 March 1959 an anti-Chinese and anti-Communist popular revolt erupted in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which had been under the reign of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since 1951. One week later, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet's political and spiritual leader, fled the capital to avoid a Chinese crackdown. In the meantime, the revolt in Lhasa rapidly escalated into a full-scale rebellion. The authorities in Beijing kept the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Tibet on the defensive for ten days but on March 20 they ordered the army to crush the rebellion. The CCP also hurriedly transferred more PLA units to Tibet from other parts of China. In subsequent weeks, the PLA ruthlessly mopped up the resistance in Lhasa and many other parts of Tibet. On March 28, Zhou Enlai, the premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC), formally announced the dissolution of the Kashag (the Tibetan local government), putting political power in Tibet into the hands of the "Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region." Zhou also called on the people of Tibet to "unite" in "seeking to construct a democratic and socialist new Tibet." Three days later, on March 31, the Dalai Lama and his followers crossed the border to take refuge in northern India. By the end of May 1959, as many as 7,000 Tibetan refugees had entered India to seek asylum there, causing serious tension in Sino-Indian relations—relations that until 1959 had been characterized by friendship and high-level cooperation. In the fall of 1959, two clashes between Chinese and Indian garrisons erupted along the border, and the long-existing yet hitherto well-controlled Chinese-Indian territorial disputes immediately made international headlines.⁴⁷

47 C. Jan, 2006, *The Tibetan Rebellion of 1959 and China's Changing Relations with India and the Soviet Union*, Journal of Cold War Studies , Vol. 8., p. 54.

According to Canberra, these events represented further instance of the dangerous expansion of the Chinese influence in South-East Asia.

It has been already said that the new evaluation of Chinese intentions and capabilities became so dramatic to Australians that they assumed the Russian point of view of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Among the disagreements of which the Sino-Soviet alliance suffered, the two Communist allies criticized each other's policies towards Tibet and India and, in particular, the Soviets did not accept the Chinese aggressiveness towards those regions. Consequently, the events of 1959 along the Sino-Indian border were, in some sense, the beginning of the collapse of the "great Sino-Soviet solidarity".⁴⁸ At first, the differences between the two Communist giants, which burst into open in 1960, were treated with disbelief. But when the quarrel between them intensified in 1962-63, 'Australia was compelled to acknowledge the reality of the dispute'.⁴⁹ Canberra not only came to accept the reality of the dispute but also accepted the dispute as a confirmation of its worst fears "face to face" with the Chinese. It was argued that 'if China's extremism and aggressiveness had reached the point where even the Russian were forced to break and denounce the Chinese as war-mongers, then clearly the remainder of China's neighbours should be even more seriously alarmed'.⁵⁰ Australian policy-makers had now to accept totally the Russian view of the Sino-Soviet dispute: China was aggressive, believed in world revolution and was indifferent to the threat of nuclear war. Ignoring the personal political reasons why Khrushchev made extravagant accusations against the Chinese, the Australian Government repeated the Russian propaganda and, furthermore, decided that support for Russia might restrain China's influence in Asia. The Minister for External Affairs, Garfield Barwick, spoke in 1963 of 'two almost forgotten treaties over Siberia that the Chinese wanted reviewed' providing that Russia itself was threatened by China.⁵¹

The nonsense of this stance reached the lowest point when, in 1964, the new Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, visited Moscow. Once there, he tried to warn the Russian leaders against the Chinese expansionism and asked them to restrain the Chinese in Vietnam. Andrews wrote that 'the theme of the good Russian Communists and the bad Chinese was taken up forcefully by the new External Affairs Secretary,

48 Ibid, p. 55.

49 J.A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 53.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid, p. 56.

James Plimsoll, and again found echoes even in the less conservative Labor Party'.⁵² The Australian Labor Party (ALP), traditionally asking for a more tolerant position, was divided internally when the right wing of the party gained control and stressed the American alliance, accepting the arguments of the Liberal Government. The ALP has always had members who feared China and, like the government, it was shocked by the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and the guerrilla warfare burst in South-East Asia. Even Whitlam, in 1963, affirmed: 'China represents a very great threat. She is potentially the most powerful country in the world and she seems prepared to run risks which Russia is unwilling to run'.⁵³

Furthermore, the Tibetan uprising of 1959 was rapidly accompanied by a sequence of other events which greatly alarmed Australian policy-makers. The tension between Tibet and China was worsened by border disputes which culminated in a brief war in October 1962 in which Indians were easily defeated. China was branded an aggressor by the West even though it quickly withdrew its troops from Indian territory. As the facts of the border dispute were far from clear at the time, Australia, giving its strong prejudice against China, naturally thought that India as a friend in the British Commonwealth was the victim of Chinese aggression.⁵⁴

From 1961, compounding the fears of China were events in Indonesia. The collaboration between the Sukarno's Government and the Communist Party in Indonesia was followed by Menzies' remark that it was extremely important that Indonesia should not become Communist and the phrase "Djakarta-Beijing Axis" became common.⁵⁵ According to Indonesia's President Sukarno, the Djakarta-Beijing Axis should include China, North Korea, North Vietnam and Cambodia. As a matter of fact, from the commencement in 1961 of the campaign to gain the West Iran, Indonesian policies moved increasingly in a pro-communist and pro-Chinese direction. The growing ideological rapprochement between China and Sukarno's Government –with the Chinese enthusiastically endorsing Sukarno's various ideological initiatives, Chinese support for confrontation with Malaysia, the continuing growth of the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI) and the PKI support for China in the Sino-Soviet dispute, raised

52 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 184.

53 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 38.

54 Ibid, p. 28.

55 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 186.

in the mind of Canberra the spectre of a communist Indonesia, dominated by China in the not distant future.⁵⁶

Communist China was more and more perceived as the source of aggression on a global scale. In addition, the authorities in Beijing had no repugnance also for nuclear war and were prepared to contemplate nuclear weapons as instruments of policy. In October 1964, China successfully detonate a nuclear device for the first time. The event took even the most informed observers by surprise. In a top secret report to American President Johnson, Robert Johnson, of the United States Department, wrote that in August 1964 aerial photographs showed that a 'previously suspect facility in Western China was later a nuclear test site which could be ready for use in about two months'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, literature which tells about the Australian "fear of China", often cites Lin Biao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, a 18 000 words essay published in 1965 in which the author wrote about the sacrifice of a few to gain perpetual peace; the article described the war as the means to push history forwards and was published to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the victory of the Chinese war of resistance against Japan. The Chinese Minister of Defence also divided the world into the cities (the developed countries) and the countryside (the Third World) and proclaimed that Communist strategy was to use the countryside to create a united front against the enemies of the Communism. His article was elevated to the status of a Chinese struggle whose implications were that Communism would, under Chinese leadership, strike at developed countries; furthermore, the Vietnamese should adopt Chinese as guide and not trust in others –i.e. the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Furthermore, some passages in Lin's article confirmed Canberra's fear of China's commitment to armed struggle. For example Lin glorified people's war in the following terms:

The sacrifice of a small number of people in revolutionary wars is repaired by security for whole nations, whole countries and even the whole of mankind; temporary suffering is repaired by lasting or even perpetual peace and happiness. War can temper the people and push history forward. In this sense, war is a great school.⁵⁹

56 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, pp. 71.

57 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "China and the Bomb", p. 260.

58 D. P. Mozingo, T. W. Robinson, 1965, *Lin Piao on "People's War": China takes a second look at Vietnam*, The Rand Corporation, California. pp. 1-7.

59 Ibid.

The Vietnam War factor

The years 1964-65 saw the security phobia culminate in the announcement of the commitment of the first Australian battalion to Vietnam. Here, it is remarkable that when in 1954 the Americans asked to Canberra its participation in Vietnam, Casey had pointed that 'such intervention would be wrong and it would put Australia in wrong with world opinion, particularly in Asia'.⁶⁰ By 1965 Canberra completely reversed Casey's statement and the government now assumed that the regimes of Beijing and Hanoi were linked. Beijing was held responsible for the guerrilla activities in South Vietnam, being regarded as the controlling force behind Hanoi and the National Liberation Front. After his return from a South-East Asian tour in June 1964, Hasluck asserted the existence of a clear chain of command from Beijing through Hanoi to the insurgents in South Vietnam. All the Vietnamese fighting against Saigon were portrayed as Chinese helping to establish Communist China's hegemony throughout South-East Asia. The Australian position over Vietnam followed directly from the belief that 'Vietnam was the first step in Chinese southwards expansion'.⁶¹ Australian policy-makers were also strongly influenced by the South-East Asia conflicts and disorders and above all by Washington. The United States wanted Australia to be involved in South Vietnam. In November 1961 the Americans made the first of several requests for Australian military assistance for the Diem regime. Early in the following year, South Vietnam itself asked Australia for military aid. On May 24, 1962 Australia announced the supply of thirty military instructors. By sending troops to Vietnam Canberra hoped to encourage a continuation of the American presence there, avoiding a prospect that had for a long time troubled Australian policy-makers: an American withdrawal from an offshore Asian perimeter of Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines, leaving the mainland Asia open to the Chinese advance.⁶²

As stated by Hasluck in 1966:

Behind Vietnam lies a wider conflict that extends from the northern frontiers of India to the dividing line in Korea; that engages the world-wide diplomacy of the Soviet Union no less than the world-wide diplomacy of the United States and that casts the shadow of fear over millions of people in all lands of southern Asia no less than the shadow of

60 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 75.

61 Ibid.

62 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p. 172.

terror over the villagers of the Mekong delta. This is a war that throws into sharp relief the aim of Communist China to dominate them.⁶³

The Menzies Government received a large measure of popular support for its decision to provide troops for service in Vietnam. Those who favored sending troops usually said: “We must protect ourselves” or “We must stop aggression”. The minority said “I don’t believe in wars” or “Leave it to the Americans”. An opinion poll of September 1965 reported that 56 per cent of the people interviewed thought Australia should continue to fight in Vietnam, 28 per cent favored bringing the troops home and 16 per cent were undecided.⁶⁴

China’s menace: alternative opinions

Not surprisingly, Lin Biao’s *Long Live the Victory of People’s War* article was perceived in Australia as a blueprint for Chinese expansion with the encouragement and active support for Communist-led guerrilla wars and insurgent movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁶⁵

A preeminent side of the literature sustains that the Australian policy-makers exaggerated the aggressiveness of China when they painted it as a “predator” who tried to extend its interests through Asia. Albinski, for instance, remarked that Australian policy-makers echoed the ideas and opinions of the Americans. In part, it was natural since the government had convinced itself that Australia interests required American assistance. On the other hand there was some American efforts to ensure the result. The author wrote: ‘the pervasiveness of the Chinese factor in Australia’s policy framework is truly impressive and at nearly every turn relations with the United States were manifest’.⁶⁶

According to Camilleri ‘there is little need to point out that by most standards of analysis there existed a considerable disparity between Australia’s perceptions and

63 H. Albinski, 1965, *Australian Policies and Attitudes toward China*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.36.

64 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 71.

65 S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia’s policies towards the People’s Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 33.

66 H. Albinski, 1965, *Australian Policies and Attitudes toward China*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p. 84.

political realities'.⁶⁷ He doubts whether Australian leaders had seriously studied Chinese official statements and whether they had carefully reflected on the gap between Chinese pronouncements and Chinese actions. It is a matter of fact that Lin Biao's article of 1965 spoke of wars of national liberation as a means of weakening and pinning down the forces of imperialism but he also carefully stressed that no liberation movement could rely on external support. Apart from the Korean War, China has not been involved in a large-scale military confrontation with either superpower. In the mid 1950s, China took several conciliatory initiatives towards the United States, realising Americans from jail, withdrawing its forces from North Korea and receiving the United Nations secretary-general in Beijing; however, no relevant international response was done.

Another controversial question was the Chinese attitude towards nuclear weapons. As said above, the PRC detonated the nuclear bomb for the first time in 1964 and this action was followed by the general denunciation of Chinese aggressiveness. However, the Chinese Government quickly and solemnly declared that 'at no time and circumstances will China be the first to use the atom bombs'.⁶⁸ One might wish to doubt the sincerity of the pledge, but no one could argue, as Australian ministers tended to do, that China was consistently faulting its willingness to use nuclear weapons. What is more, Canberra completely ignored the Chinese proposal, frequently repeated through the early 1960s, for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Asia and the Pacific, under which China promised to forego the development of nuclear weapons.

Another interesting question raised by Camilleri is the boundary disputes in which China was involved. The record shows that China was able to conclude negotiated border settlements with five of its neighbors: Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, the Mongolian People's Republic and Afghanistan. The two intractable conflicts which arose with regard to China's boundaries with India and Soviet Union provided no evidence that China ever departed from its stated policy of not resorting to unilateral action in defining unlimited borders.⁶⁹ China's attack on India in October and November 1962 was a response to the military challenge posed by India's "forward policy" in pursuing a dubious claim to Aksai Chin.⁷⁰ To conclude with Camilleri words:

67 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 53.

68 K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 31.

69 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 156.

70 Aksai Chin is one of the two main disputed border areas between China and India. It is administered by China but also claimed by India. In 1962 India and China fought a brief war over Aksai Chin.

it may appear somewhat puzzling that throughout the 1960s the Australian interpretation of Chinese intentions and of events in Asia and elsewhere should have involved such serious misjudgments. The fact becomes far less surprising when it is realised that during this period Australian policy-making made no attempt to verify its conclusion through independent diplomatic channels. No effort was made to commission full-scale studies or seek the views of informed reporters, academics or other competent groups. The politicians, even more than the civil servants, were unwilling to consider any evidence that might conflict with their presuppositions about external threats or their commitment to a European military presence on the Asian mainland. Indeed, rather than giving rise to any attempt to improve the channels of communication, Australia's hardening attitude led to a reduction in contacts with China and to a significant increase in her hostile propaganda towards China.⁷¹

Gregory Clark, talking about "hegemony in Asia", explained that the Chinese, according to Canberra, sought hegemony and domination of Asia. He wondered on what evidence Canberra believed such statements. The Chinese themselves have never stated or hinted, in public or in private, that they envisaged any form of Asian political union which they should dominate –the author explained. If they had had secret ambitions in this direction, one would have been expected they tried to exert some form of control over some countries, such as North Korea and North Vietnam. Both of them remained independent. Neither these considerations nor the fact that the Chinese had negotiated generous border agreements with all their weaker neighbors, made much impression on Canberra. The Chinese, it was argued, 'are playing a cunning game and do not wish to frighten their future victims. Besides, they are trying to bring pressure on India to hand over large areas of its territory'.⁷²

Clark thought the answer to this negativity towards China came from the bias that Australian policy-makers were subjected to have interpreting China's behavior. Furthermore, a study of statements made by a group of Australian policy-makers at the end of the 1950s, presented frequent reference to Australia as a member of the Western Alliance. The politicians spoke of the world as being divided into the rival power groupings of the United States and Russia, with China as a third contending. Australian policy-makers, by these references, 'were doing more than simply philosophize about the state of the world. They were expressing the concept which underlined Australia's overall foreign policy: the concept of Australia as tied to a particular grouping (the

71 J. A. Camilleri, 1973, *An introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, Jacaranda Press, Queensland, p. 54.

72 G. Clark, 1967, *In fear of China*, Landowne Press, Melbourne, p. 180.

West) in international affairs'.⁷³ Such thinking strongly influenced the government's policy-advisers who have lived and worked in framework of bias and prejudices for years. These bias, unfortunately, have strongly influenced Australian independence in foreign policy and caused an hardening in Sino-Australian relations since the 1960s.

In 1966, an year that many defined as "pivotal", a series of new events occurred, such as the retirement of Menzies from the Australian politics, the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China, the Indonesian revolutionary coup which overthrow Sukarno and the PKI in Dakarta, the establishment of an embassy in Taiwan, etc. These developments signed a new important phase in the relations between Australia and the PRC; however, before going on, telling how this "new era" evolved, it is fundamental clarify the Australian connection with the other China, Taiwan. The relationship between them, over the years, revealed misunderstanding and contradiction and the most evident had been the establishment of an Australian embassy in Taipei, in 1966.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 184.

2.4 Australia and the Republic of China

If Australia could not face the Communist challenge without the co-operation of the United States and its allies, Canberra had to automatically include Taiwan in ‘the united front of the free people of the world’, being the Republic of China an important American friend.⁷⁴ The External Affairs Minister Casey observed that Australia had to

join with all those who genuinely want freedom, independence and security in South-East Asia and it must enter the ideological struggle with the Communist with all the non military weapons at our command. These weapons are powerful if they are directed and co-ordinated.⁷⁵

Australian policies towards Taiwan has certainly been marked by the events occurred in mainland China and by the “Western fight” against the Communism in the Asia-Pacific Region during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Australian policy-makers, unable to openly recognize the Chinese Government, continued to postpone their diplomatic commitments with Taiwan: Canberra knew, and also desired, that the recognition of the PRC would have occurred and at that point it could not give space to the ROC.

As explained in the previous paragraph, in the early 1950s, Australia’s China policy did not entirely echoed the American one.⁷⁶ As an instance, Australia vigorously opposed the inclusion of Taiwan in the SEATO area in 1954 and strongly resisted the American policy in the Taiwan Straits in the 1950s.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Canberra sustained policies on trade with China and refused to open an embassy in Taiwan, distinguishing its approach

74 The United States signed a bilateral Treaty of Mutual Security and cooperation with Taiwan in 1954.

75 R. G. Casey, 1958, *Friends and Neighbors*, Michigan State University Press, Michigan, p. 77.

76 A. Watt, 1967, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938-1965*, Cambridge University Press, p. 243.

77 Since the United States had very limited contact with the PRC during the 1950s, its concern about the use of force was directed mainly towards the recognized ROC, with which the Americans had officials and constant relations. An increasing concern after the Taiwan crisis of 1954 was that the Nationalist Government might resort to the use of force to attack the mainland despite its military weakness relative to Chinese Communist forces. The Mutual Defence Treaty, which the United States signed with the Nationalist Government on December 2, 1954, clearly encouraged the Nationalists to take bolder measures against the Communists, despite the defensive character of the pact.

from Washington.⁷⁸

However, briefing on China from the State Department in Washington were regarded as the last word on the subject and the Australian Department of External Affairs frequently published American viewpoints on China. For instance, an American annex published in 1958 in *The Current Notes on International Affairs*, showed how their views on China and Taiwan became the Australian policies:

The Chinese Communists see the victory of communism in Asia as inevitable... The generally recognised legitimate government of China continues to exist in Taiwan and its steadily developing its political, economic and military strength. The Government of the Republic of China controls the strategic island of Taiwan and through its possession of a sizable military force presents a significant deterrent to renewed Chinese Communist aggression. Recognition of Communist China by the United States would seriously cripple if not destroy altogether that government.⁷⁹

How could be explained the decision to open an embassy in Taipei considering that until 1966 Canberra had always postponed the establishment of diplomatic ties?

The decision was not primarily made for commercial reasons considering that the Australian exports to Taiwan in 1964-65 were worth just AU\$ 8 136 000, compared with exports to the mainland of AU\$ 135 633 000.⁸⁰ It is undoubted, however, that Canberra was influenced by the political and economic transformation of Taiwan. By the mid-1960s, the island was stable politically and had made impressive economic progress; as a matter of fact, during the fifteen years from 1950 to 1965, Taiwan's real GNP grew at an average annual compound rate of over 7 per cent while per capita GNP increased at the astonishing annual compound rate of 4,2 per cent per annum, despite one of the highest rates of population growth in the world.⁸¹ Australia was beginning to think about regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and the Minister for External Affairs Hasluck claimed that an embassy in Taipei was necessary for the conduct of Australia's affairs in the country. He explained:

Economic progress (of Taiwan) has led to rapid expansion in trade and travel and it will also facilitate the growing co-operation in international organisations for economic

78 See paragraph 2.

79 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 36.

80 K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 53.

81 N. H. Jacoby, 1966, *US Aid to Taiwan*, Praeger, New York, p. 38.

development and political co-operation of which the Republic of China and Australia are both members. Indeed, the lack of representation in Taiwan was a gap in our effective participation in the diplomacy of the region.⁸²

During the 1960s, Taiwan was acknowledged to be one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. Taiwan's unprecedented growth, the significance of the government's land-to-the-tiller programme⁸³, the role of the American aid, foreign investments, foreign trade export processing zones, the rise in the per capita income and the restructuring of an economy from one which was basically agricultural to one with a substantial industrial base, made a favorable impression.⁸⁴

Praising Taiwan as an island which shared with Australia the fight against the communism and equal economic interests, Australian policy-makers reserved themselves about the viability of the repressive nature of the Kuomintang Government. Likewise, Australian and Western policy-makers, reserved themselves to remember that after the end of the Second World War, the Allied Forces left the occupation of Taiwan to Chiang. The Taiwanese, who had been under Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945, initially welcomed the Chinese Nationalist forces. But their joy soon changed into sorrow and anger, when the new authorities turned out to be repressive and corrupt. Taiwanese people had been ruled by 40 years of repressive martial law, during which Chiang's Kuomintang mainlanders controlled the island with iron fist. This regime ended only in 1987, when martial law was lifted and Taiwan started to move towards democratization.

The Department of External Affairs in Canberra ignored reports of the dark side of the Kuomintang's rule. After having visited Taiwan in 1963 and 1964, Stephen FitzGerald wrote that the majority of the population felt oppressed, excluded from the political process and economically exploited by the regime. Native Taiwanese leaders had been systematically exterminated and population were subjected to arrests, closed military trials and long prison sentences. FitzGerald said that the Kuomintang achievements made from 1949 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the regime (in 1964) was inefficient, corrupt and dictatorial. It was, affirmed FitzGerald, 'a police state in which

82 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 39.

83 The land-to-the-tiller program was a part of a major land reform which began in Taiwan in 1946. The final goal was to make all farmers the owners of their own fields.

84 G. Klintworth, 1995, *New Taiwan, new China : Taiwan's changing role in the Asia-Pacific region*, Longman Australia, Melbourne, p. 46.

the Taiwanese had been imprisoned, executed and cowed into submission by systematic surveillance and torture, strict censorship and tight political controls'.⁸⁵

Australia's first ambassador to the Republic of China in Taiwan, Frank B. Cooper, was more strict than his colleagues in Canberra. In a dispatch to Hasluck in 1967, Cooper wrote: 'despite its progressive features, especially in land reform, Australia should not be blind to the unsavory features of Kuomintang rule. The Republic of China is a police state in which basic freedoms do not exist and in which no political opposition is tolerate; even discussions of the massacres of Taiwanese by the Kuomintang on February 1947 are forbidden because it was regarded as treason'.⁸⁶ Cooper added: 'Australia's policy should be based on the hope that, ultimately, the Taiwanese people will achieve by peaceful means a political voice in their country's affairs commensurate with their numerical majority and economic status'.⁸⁷ According to Cooper, the ultimate objective of the Taiwanese was independence and he considered the Kuomintang as 'essentially a militarist regime in which corruption and inefficiency were still endemic'.⁸⁸

Before the statements of FitzGerald and Cooper, in 1962 the previous Minister for External Affairs Barwick reported to Parliament that the Chinese Nationalists had been a good example of development, in contrast to the failure of the Great Leap Forward on mainland. He said:

Their policies of land reform, education, improvement of agricultural productivity, water conservation, irrigation and hydroelectric development and the expansion of light industry have enabled economic development to keep pace with population increases; there has been a gradual but substantial rise in living standards particularly in the countryside. The record of the Chinese Nationalist stands in marked contrast to that of the mainland region and points up the fact that Communism simply is not the answer to underdeveloped countries' economic needs.⁸⁹

85 S. FitzGerald, 1977, *China and the world*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, p. 47.

86 On 28 February 1947, the Kuomintang troops of the Republic of China began a repressive crackdown of a popular uprising on Taiwan against the Chinese imposed local government. The actual number of victims will never be known as bodies were buried in mass graves and thrown out to sea but numbered, by almost all reports, in the tens of thousands – estimates of the number of deaths vary from 10,000 to 30,000 or more.

87 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 40.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid, p. 41.

Pro-Taiwan feeling in Canberra was helped by two factors. First, the effort of the ambassador of the Republic of China in Australia, Chen Zhimai and second, the retirement of Menzies from the political life. The Menzies Government had always refrained from establishing an embassy in Taiwan, in spite of a Nationalist mission in Canberra but there were members of the government who were strongly in favor of closer relations with Taiwan.⁹⁰ They were motivated by a feeling of antipathy to communism and admiration for the material progress of Taiwan. Some of them were engaged in trade with the island and visited it; others influenced by Chen Zhimai. This leader was an eminent scholar and highly respected diplomat, whose personal diplomacy had a very considerable effect on the political attitudes of many government members and on Harold Holt himself –Menzies’ successor. As Taylor pointed out, ‘great decisions are not necessarily the product of great causes’. The new Prime Minister Holt, a novice in international politics, was influenced by Zhimai during a private dinner party, where the Australian minister promised that an embassy would have established’.⁹¹ If, like some scholars sustained, Hasluck decided to place an embassy in Taipei simply because he had been well-entertained by Ambassador Chen, later he had to justify his choice in parliament and he firstly argued that Australia’s trade and travel to the island made it necessary.

While there is no question about Holt’s personal affection for Chen Zhimai, his motivation remained unclear. Fung and Mackerras argued that the Australian Government was interested to the strategic role of Taiwan and felt that Australia needed to act directly with Taiwan rather than made it indirectly through allied countries.⁹² Certainly, this was neither the only nor a good enough reason. It may be suggested that with the escalation of the Vietnam War and the formation, in 1966, of the anti-Communist Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), Holt could think that having full diplomatic relations with Taiwan, Australia would have been more highly regarded by the member nations of the Council.

Other reasons could be find in the argumentation that Australia tended to favor Taiwan because of its insistence of not “abandoning” the island. Canberra’s argument for the independence of Taiwan would carry more weight if it had an embassy there. ‘Australian policy-makers sympathised with the plight of a country that had a

90 K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia’s policies towards the People’s Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 50.

91 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 193.

92 K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia’s policies towards the People’s Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 52.

population about the same size as Australia's and was in danger of being cast aside by the international community for the sake of a dialogue with mainland China'.⁹³ Support for a Taiwanese right to self-determination became part of the rhetoric of Australian ministers: 'it was a matter of Australian honor because Australia had fought in two world wars for the right of people to self-determination and it ought not depart from that principle',⁹⁴ said Barwick. In 1969, the Taiwanese opened a third consulate in Australia, in Perth, and in 1970 they posted a Defence Attache to Canberra. Visits between Taiwanese and Australian Ministers continued.

Therefore, while Canberra was ready to help the ROC in various ways, it was opposed to any unnecessary provocation of the mainland by Taiwan. Australian policy-makers were treating Taiwan quite honorably in the 1960s but their inclination was to pursue connections with Beijing. As the ambassador in Taipei, F. Cooper, observed,

the Kuomintang needed reminding that it was long-standing Australian policy that the existence of mainland China could not be ignored and that an eventual accommodation was basic to our thinking on the China question. Chiang mainland policy was narrow, potentially dangerous and difficult to reconcile with Australia's wider interests of *détente* and ultimately an accommodation with the mainland. Australia should recognize that the more we become involved with Taiwan politically, the more difficult it may be to ultimately reach an accommodation with Beijing... which after all is the primary aim of Australian diplomacy in Asia.⁹⁵

With hindsight, Australia's China policy towards Taiwan seems to have been unreasonable but Australian policy-makers believed that the American ally was too important to chance an independent policy on China. The fears about Chinese communism were shared by many countries in the rest of the world and Australia was aligned with them. Furthermore, the enthusiasm of Harold Holt's Government towards the ROC worsened the situation when it decided to open an embassy in Taiwan. Holt's choices influenced the Sino-Australian relations until the beginning of the 1970s, when plans to cool the emotional overtones in the government's management of the Australia-Taiwan relationship quickly emerged alongside the push for "normalisation" of relations with Beijing.⁹⁶

93 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 44.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid, p. 49.

96 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the establishment of PRC 1949-1972*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Introduction.

2.5 “Swing of the Pendulum”

Whether many scholars sustain that the year 1966 may be marked the end of a new era but not the beginning of a new one in the Australian history, others consider it as the apex of Australian hostility towards China, after which, a more open policy began.

Although Menzies' departure from the political scene, which he had dominated for sixteen years, presented opportunities for changes in the government policies, anyone who expected innovations in Australian external relations was disappointed. The post Menzies era was not one of change; it did not see the emergence of a great political figure in the Liberal Party and the legacy of the past persisted. Shortly after taking office, Harold Holt embarrassed, even annoyed, Australians by promising President Johnson, during his visit to Washington in June 1966, complete support for the American escalation in the Vietnam War. Having pledged full support for President Johnson, he naturally came under strong pressure from Washington to increase the Australian troops level in Vietnam. At the end of 1966, at Holt's invitation, Johnson became the first American president in office to visit Australia.⁹⁷

Thus, the Holt Government brought no change to the basic tenets of Australian foreign policy, rather it reinforced the Australian ties with the United States, worsening the relation with the Communist China -even more after the establishment of the embassy in Taiwan.

In addition, the Chinese Cultural Revolution started in 1966 and made a big impact on almost all people in the world, doing little to improve China's international image. It was seen by many countries, including Australia, as a testimony to Beijing's propensity to use violence as a legitimate means of resolving disputes and achieving its political goals. It reinforced the fears that the Chinese leadership was becoming more and more dangerous to the world and that there could be an extension of domestic violence abroad as well as a further exportation of revolutionary ideas and practices.

On December 17, 1967 Holt tragically disappeared while snorkeling in Victoria. John Grey Gorton was elected the new Prime Minister and he soon showed his insensitivity to the changing realities of international politics. The government's view of an aggressive China remained essentially the same, despite changes in the American

97 R. Devetak, A. Burke, J. George, 2007, *An introduction to International Relations. Australian Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, p.73.

attitudes and the improvement of the Sino-American relations were taking place –particularly after Nixon’s election. However, prominent ministers like Hasluck or the minister for army Peacock, were becoming mildly critical about the new government’s stand on China.

One problematic question re-emerged: the Chinese admission to the United Nation. For more than one decade, both Taipei and Beijing wanted to participate in the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Specialized Agencies. The ROC held the seat since the founding of the United Nations but throughout the years the balance between Beijing or Taipei participation continued to swing, with new requirements for the participation, new events taking place and new fears to eradicate. The PRC, finally, commanded resources of considerable magnitude, and events of the second half of 1960s enhanced its claim to participation.⁹⁸ However, in November 1967, the Australian Government opposed the Italian resolution calling for the establishment of a non-partisan study committee –supported even by the United States. If accepted, it could have started some form of dialogue with Beijing and enabled Australia to consider more realistically whether the PRC should be brought back into the world community. As a matter of fact, the PRC renewed its diplomatic activities, sending ambassador back to resume normal duties overseas. The Cultural Revolution was coming to an end in the spring of 1969 and, finally, China’s relations with the United States was even more stronger. In fact, in view of the worsening Sino-Soviet relations,⁹⁹ the Chinese now found it necessary to reduce tension with the Americans.

Nevertheless, in November 1968 the Australian delegation to the United Nations opposed the Albanian resolution (calling for Beijing’s admission and Taiwan’s expulsion), denouncing China’s “aggressive policies” and urged the world body to avoid taking any action that would tend to support those policies.

While the United States was prepared to adopt a more positive approach towards China, Australia preferred to play a passive role.¹⁰⁰

At the end of the 1960s, Australians’ attitude made a shift in emphasis with regard to China’s United Nations representation. In 1968 Canberra opposed any action that could

98 M. S. McDougal , R. M. Goodman, 1966, *Chinese Participation in the United Nations: The Legal Imperative of a Negotiated Solution*, Faculty Scholarship Series Paper, Yale Law School Faculty Scholarship Repository, p. 671.

99 On 2 March 1969 Chinese and Soviet border troops had clashed at Zhenbao Island in the Ussuri River. The Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs making clear its willingness to accept the status quo. Five days later, a major clash erupted again in the same place. Moscow proposed the reopening of talks on the border question but new clashes occurred and the ensuing border talks yielded no result.

100 E. C. Keefer, June 1971, *The Nixon Administration and the United Nations: “It’s a Damned Debating Society”*, from National Archives, Nixon Presidential Material, see online.

be interpreted as sanctioning or endorsing Beijing aggressive policies. In 1969 it emphasized that China should make “some contribution” before being admitted to the United Nations. By “some contribution” it was meant that PRC had to assure ‘it would not threaten, harass or subject neighboring countries to armed attack’.¹⁰¹

This shift in emphasis was insufficient at a time when other countries, including Australia’s friends and allies, were already realistically reassessing their policies.

The Chinese, in the meantime, were softening their attack on the United Nations but the world body was still, in their view, dominated by the United States.

The Chinese felt that the ‘American imperialism had been bogged down in the predicament of increasing isolation and passivity’.¹⁰² The United Nations was still described as a ‘market place for political bargaining between the American imperialism and social-imperialism in a scramble for world hegemony’, but China was now keen to join. The following extract from the *Beijing Review* shows China’s anxiety and frustration:

The fact that the American imperialism had unlawfully excluded China from the United Nations over the past 10 years does not harm the Chinese people in the slightest. The Chinese people have been advancing in big strides along the broad avenue of socialist revolution and socialist construction all the same. No force in the world can prevent the great socialist China from playing her tremendous role and exerting a tremendous influence on the international arena.¹⁰³

If, according to Canberra, China needed to make greater efforts to project a better image of itself internationally, it was also expected that Australia would have shown itself interested in responding to whatever feelers Beijing might put out. What Australia could have done, if it were anxious to come to terms with the PRC, was to help to create a friendly atmosphere between China and itself or between China and its neighbors in order that China was not seen as the “evil force”.

Within the Conservative Government, there was little to be gained by departing from the anti-Communist position in the post-Menzies years. Besides, the Australian public opinion was changing ahead the government. Although China was still regarded as the chief threat, most Australians were now more favorable to recognizing the PRC as the

101 S. FitzGerald, 1977, *China and the world*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, p. 82.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid, p. 84.

legitimate government of China if this did not mean disowning Taiwan. As shown in the following table, the positive sentiment towards recognition had increased since 1951¹⁰⁴:

Table 2 *Australians and the Recognition of the PRC*

	Recognize %	Do not recognize %	Undecided %
1951	22	46	32
1958	41	34	25
1964	35	37	28
1969	47	33	20

Twenty-three per cent of those who favored recognition in 1969 said that the government should do so even if it meant severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Similarly, by 1968 the majority of Australians agreed that the PRC should be admitted to the United Nations:¹⁰⁵

Table 3 *Admission of the PRC to the United Nations*

	Admit %	Do not admit %	Undecided %
1955	51	28	21
1960	39	42	19
1966	42	39	19
1968 (December)	54	19	27

Most people, however, did not favor ousting Taiwan from the United Nations in order to admit the Communist China. Maybe, public opinion might have changed more rapidly if the public discussion on China in Australia were more promoted. The Australian electorate, misinformed, confused and psychologically conditioned to fear China, had little idea about the government's plans. When the world was starting to open its door to China, neither Holt nor Gordon nor any senior government members took any actions to remove some of the prejudices that hindered Australia's relations with China.

104 D. Syme & Co, 1991, *Age poll: Reprints of the series of articles from Age poll/The age*, David Syme & Co, Melbourne.

105 Ibid.

2.6 The economic relations in the 1960s

It is a paradox that by 1967 the PRC became Australia's fifth largest export market despite the criticism Canberra reversed towards Beijing. Throughout the 1960s, Australia and China intensified their trade.

The economical relations between the two countries were particularly relevant for what concerned the trade of wheat; as a matter of fact, in February 1961, more than a million tons of Australian wheat and 40 000 tons of flour were sold to the Chinese market. In October 1962, the Australian Wheat Board¹⁰⁶ reported huge credit sales to China, making the country the largest purchaser of Australian wheat; by 1963 it bought A\$ 300 million worth. A record sale in 1963-64 was valued at \$128.2 million.¹⁰⁷ Both China and Australia found that sales came at a fortunate time because the wheat production was increased in Australia and the amount of stored grain was dramatically increasing. The Board desperately needed new markets. However, political reasons made it difficult the transactions without rumors; as Albinski explained, the sales came at a time when the DLP was loud in its condemnation of China. In the meantime, trade with China was highly convenient to Australia and the government could not describe Beijing as the main enemy on the one hand and openly trade with it in the other. As a consequence, Canberra was deeply reserved –not to say evasive– about its policies. It insisted that it did not control or direct the Wheat Board, but merely hoped it to develop trade. As world prices fell while the record Chinese sales occurred, Chinese purchases were subsidized by the Australian taxpayer, to an estimate figure of more than \$50 million during the period 1960-65. On the one hand, some of the wheat was low grade and Australia had large surpluses which had to be moved. For the sake of the sales, the government was prepared to risk American displeasure. On the other hand, Canberra continued its embargo on strategic goods to China (see paragraph 2), as a compromise between the more rigorous American and the more relaxed British practice.

Extremists in the DLP disapproved any trade at all but for tactical reason they stipulated a set of conditions in which they tolerated some sort of exchanges, such as cash and no credit, etc. Meanwhile, they described the government's policy as 'sellout and morally

106 The Australian Wheat Board is one of the major grain marketing organisation of Australia, founded in late 1930s.

107 H. Albinski, 1965, *Australian Policies and Attitudes toward China*, Princenton University Press, New Jersey, pp. 502-504.

reprehensible'. They became, in Albinski's words, 'so paranoid about the catastrophe that would befall Australia through the China trade that they cooked up the completely impractical Pacific Confederation scheme'.¹⁰⁸ Even the Australian Labor Party could not resist joining the act and twitted the government for its inconsistencies. The ALP, however, was equally inconsistent because it attacked the government's trade policy but would have continued selling to China. It mixed trade with politics too. The Labor Party policy-makers would probably have been more effective if they had simply supported the China trade and used it as an argument in favor of recognition –but their own international divisions prevented this.

With the non-strategic trade so successful, Australians could afford to win American support by co-operating over the ban on strategic goods. The result was that in the 1960s Australia's wheat production doubled, just under half the increase going to China, while Australian wheat provided just under half of China's average annual import requirements.

By 1963 exports to China were ten times the value of imports and by 1966 the Chinese people ate twice as much Australian wheat as did Australians themselves and in 1969 the Wheat Board negotiated a further sale of A\$ 118 million to China.¹⁰⁹

In the general confusion reigning in the last years of 1960s, trade seemed the less controversial and more stable matter and Canberra decided to liberalize trade removing: in May 1971 the Chinese embargo on strategic goods were abolished.¹¹⁰

Trade, finally, became politics. Until 1970 the Chinese had scrupulously avoided mixing trade and politics. Ironically, it had been the Australian Government which began the link between politics and trade when in 1967 the Wheat Board was instructed to tell the Chinese that, if they did not cease interfering in South-East Asia, Australia would reconsider the supply of wheat. The Chinese ignored the threat. Then, in August 1968, Australia joined the International Grains Agreement (IGA), and one aim of it was to maintain stable the price of wheat sold around the world. The Chinese objected, both to the attempt to increase the minimum price of wheat and against what they regarded as a capitalist arrangement. They, therefore, offered a price for Australian wheat just below the IGA figure. Furthermore, in those months, there was a glut of wheat on the world market and the Chinese were in a good bargaining position. Economical relations were even more related to the political ones. For instance, since Canada recognized Beijing in 1970, the Chinese grant for a wheat contract to Canada worth \$ 142 million; this put

108 Ibid.

109 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 189.

110 Ibid, p. 198.

pressure to Australia, where some policy-makers were still totally convinced of the importance of non-recognition. As wrote Andrews, 'the loser in this situation, unless it moved quickly, could only be the Australian Government'.¹¹¹ In fact, at the end of 1960s, the Minister for Primary Industry, Doug Anthony, remarked: 'I would not sell my soul just to benefit trade'. China, naturally enough, objected to this statement and those made by other Australians; incomprehensions were so high that for the first time in a decade the Wheat Board failed to negotiated the sale of any wheat at all to China. Although sales of iron, steel and other metals were still made, wheat had caught the publics imagination and failure to sell it had political repercussions. The government was shaken by internal disagreement and Gorton was replaced by William McMahon in March 1971. Unfortunately, once again, the change did not do the Liberals the good they hoped. The new government made nothing more prominent than its predecessors apart from repeat the same old arguments against China; arguments which were becoming always more ridiculous and overtake. The change, however, was around the corner.

111 Ibid.

2.7 The McMahon Government: from bad to worse

Affected by the web of trade and politics and caught in a changed external influences, the new Liberal Party under McMahon was compelled to find a solution to the problems of its relations with the PRC. In particular, it was confronted with a choice: either make a fundamental policy change or be left with a policy that was incompatible both with international realities and with Australia's relations with friends and allies. When Canada and Italy recognized the Communist China, McMahon, even criticizing the decision, seemed aware of the new balance of power developing in the Asia-Pacific region; in fact, the new vote at the United Nations in October 1970, indicated that the hard line against Beijing would not be hold for long. On the basis of these statements, McMahon ordered a review of Australia's China policy but the Department of Foreign Affairs gave any radical approaches to the question. In 1971, the Chinese debate was studied by the Cabinet which decided to not pursue many of the questions discussed but to confine itself to only one issue: China's United Nations representation. Thus, the first tactical move of the Australian Government towards the PRC was focusing its attention on a separate issue from the question of diplomatic recognition.¹¹²

Australian policy-makers sustained that the evolution of bilateral relationships had to be a step-by-step process. The Chinese were prepared to talk. Two meeting were held in Paris in May and July 1971, between the Australian ambassador to France, Alan Renouf and his Chinese counterpart, Huang Zhen. The major critical point between the two countries was the question of Australian support for the two-China formula at the United Nations and the Australian diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The Chinese insisted that the dialogue would be useful only if Australia were prepared to sever relations with Taiwan. As a consequence, the dialogue amounted to nothing. The two-China formula remained the main obstacle in the improvement of Sino-Australian relations, a legacy of the Holt era; Australia's commitment to Taiwan was still couched in terms of "not deserting old friends". From Canberra's point of view, such a policy, if acceptable to Beijing and Taipei alike, would enable Australians to extricate themselves from the political morass on the China question into which they had fallen in 1966 when

112 K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, Universtiy of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 122.

an Australian embassy was opened in Taipei. However, this doctrine was unacceptable to either Beijing or Taipei.

On July 17, 1971 McMahon read news about the American president's visit to Beijing: '*Nixon mission to China. World welcomes "Journey for peace" to meet Chou En-Lai*'. Clearly, Washington did not consult its allies before accepting Zhou Enlai's invitation to visit China.¹¹³ McMahon was initially infuriated and embarrassed by the American president announcement, because he was neither consulted nor informed until twenty-four hours before. As Alan Renouf wrote, the Prime Minister, instead of admitting the gaffe, reacted by proclaiming that he welcomed the announcement without reservation, that he was informed of it in advance and that it was only fulfilling the publicly announced policy of the Australian Government for some time. According to Renouf, the American move was a 'record volte face ... the pledge of support revealed a servility to the United States which equaled the unfortunate predecessors'. He added that no Australian Government has ever been so discomforted in foreign relations.¹¹⁴

To worst the Liberal Party situation, some time before the American visit to China, on April 1971, a delegation of the ALP led by Whitlam had visited China and met Chou Enlai. McMahon had attacked the Labor leader for the visit and sustained that the Chinese had manipulated him. These accusations dissolved when Nixon announced his visit. Although Lord Casey, when Minister for External Affairs, had met privately with Chou Enlai at Geneva in 1954, the ALP visit had been the first really significant political contact between China and Australia since 1949. The Liberal Party had been defeated not only by its American ally but also at home by its political rival.

Public and academic opinions were slowly influenced by recent moves. Shortly after President Nixon's announcement of his intended visit to China, for the first time in more than twenty years, most Australians favored the recognition of Beijing as the government of China. In the space of five months the vote for recognition rose rapidly, as the following table shows:

Table 4 *Change in Attitudes towards Recognition of PRC in 1971*

	Recognize %	Do not recognize %	Undecided %
March	39	39	22
May	49	29	22
August	56	19	25

113 A. Renouf, 1980, *The champagne trail : experiences of a diplomat*, Sun Book, Melbourne, p. 112.

114 Ibid.

During the period 1971-72, the major policy-advisers generally supported a foreign policy based on *realpolitik* rather than on sentiments or fears of communism. This meant recognizing the reality of China although that involved closing down the Australian embassy in Taipei.¹¹⁵

The urgency of a new prominent government was even greater in Australia. The DLP was unable to assert itself internally and internationally: after been used “like a puppet” by the the Americans it still had the nerve to sustain the allies.

McMahon tried to make the best of the situation by claiming that Australia was ahead of the United States in seeking normalization of relations with the PRC. Furthermore, the Prime Minister was now talking about the possibility of diplomatic relations rather than the normalization of them.

China was finally admitted to the United Nations in October 25, 1971. Australia was one of thirty-five nations which voted against the resolution. Nigen Bowen, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, and McMahon repeated old arguments. Despite this, when Australia won the election to the United Nations Security Council, China did not remember old enmities and did not oppose it. The total disruption of the United Nations at the hand of the Chinese Communist, forecast by Liberals, did not seem to have occurred.¹¹⁶

The Australian Government lacked the imagination and initiative to “break the mold” and in late 1971 and early 1972 the Department of Foreign Affairs completed a reassessment on the China policy. Bowen was in favor of recognition but Cabinet was cautious and he sustained that Australia would recognize China without severing relations with Taiwan, taking time. It had been a grave mistake: ‘later, when it tried to climb on the Nixon bandwagon and to normalize relations with the PRC the Chinese was not willing to be as tolerant with Australia as they were with the Americans’.¹¹⁷ The Chinese were not interested in a Sino-Australian relationship along the lines of the accord with the United States. They made clearly understand that if Australia had difficulties, China could wait. The condition, in fact, were unmovable: recognize the PRC as the sole legal government which represented all Chinese people as well as the severance of diplomatic relations with the regime of Chiang Kai-shek and the promise for not support neither a two-China policy nor the fallacy that the status of Taiwan

115 See *Australian public opinion polls*, Australian Gallup Polls 1941-1973, Sydney.

116 A. Renouf, 1980, *The champagne trail : experiences of a diplomat*, Sun Book, Melbourne, pp. 106-108.

117Ibid.

remained to be determined. Clearly, China's bargaining position was enhanced since its admission to the United Nations. As a response of the Chinese conditions, the maximum Canberra was able to grant was Bowen's idea of "simple recognition", that is recognizing the PRC without disowning Taiwan.¹¹⁸

The offer of "simple recognition", approved by the cabinet, was made in May 1972. The reason for a mild change in the policy objectives was that Australia was seeking a seat on the United Nations Security Council for 1973-74 and it would be awkward for Australia to be on the Council without achieving some form of accommodation with the PRC, now a permanent Security Council member. However, Australians refused to withdraw their embassy in Taipei with the consequence that the new policy of "simple recognition" was nothing different from the two-China doctrine. Naturally, the Chinese did not consider the offer but 'while not giving ground to the Australian Government, they appeared to bear it no grudge'.¹¹⁹ The McMahon Government, in a belated attempt to normalize relations with Beijing, ignored the Chinese's legitimate aspirations to be brought back to the international fold as the sole legal government of China in the world community. China would not accept any type of bilateral relationship that did not take account of such aspirations. The Australian Government, if anxious for an accommodation with China, could have followed the Canadian recognition in September 1971.

Finally, in June 1972 the Australian Institute of International Affairs organized a conference with overseas and Australian specialists and scholars to discuss the China question. Held in Melbourne, it hosted different international presences which helped to better understand and guard the Chinese actions and policies. For instance, a lecturer from the University of Southampton, England, argued that the Chinese foreign policy was often a reaction to those of Western nations who threatening it, demolishing the argument that the ideology elaborated in China was inevitably a menace to those around her. A lecturer from Harvard pointed out that the Chinese Communists had been less inclined to demand the leadership of Asian peoples that it had been Chiang during the Second World War. Stephen FitzGerald placed Australia's importance to China in perspective. He argued for neutrality over the question of Taiwan and he sustained that it was in Australia's interest continue on the current moderate policy towards Chinese. According to him, the Australian Government needed to adopt a flexible and agile

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid, p. 110.

policy towards China, instead of giving priority to defense questions and threats posed by external menaces.¹²⁰

It was an impressive and a long overdue conference, from which a new body, the Australian Committee for a New China Policy, was subsequently formed with the aim to press for the establishment of diplomatic relations. It claimed to represent a wide cross-section of Australian opinion and to be apolitical. It had 114 members included academic, writers, clergymen and one senior diplomat.

These developments could facilitate McMahon to modify his position with regard to Taiwan and the PRC but *de facto* this was not so. On November, 22 he said on a Melbourne radio program that recognition of China was not fundamentally important to Australia and that his government would not “abandon” Taiwan.¹²¹

A change of government in Canberra was necessary to endorse a new China policy. The ALP did not have the same domestic and external difficulties of the previous governments. It was not responsible for Australia’s anti-Communist and anti-China policy and it did not suffer from the Menzies and Holt legacies. It had rejected the China threat concept and was opposed to total dependence on the United States. Some people sustained that the recognition of the PRC was a simply a matter of fact and that it would have been even if a new Liberal Government was elected. *De facto*, this will never be known and within few weeks from its elections in December 1972, Whitlam fulfilled his pledge to recognize the PRC.

120 S. FitzGerald, P. Hewitt, 1980, *China in the Seventies: Australian Perspectives*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 19.

121 *Ibid*, p. 24.

Chapter three

1972-2012: Forty Years of Diplomatic Relations

Fig.3¹ Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam with Chairman of Communist China Mao Tse-Tung in November 1973.



¹ H. R. Cowie, 1993, *Australia and Asia: a changing relationship*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 245.

3.1 The ALP policy towards China before 1972

Before examining the policy of the Whitlam's Labor Party Government towards the PRC, this chapter begins outlining approaches and opinions sustained by the Labor Party during the period 1949-1972, when the Liberal coalition was ruling Australia. On the China question, different ideologies between the Liberal and the Labor (ALP) Parties were already evident in the 1950s.

In 1950 Evatt, the Labor spokesman of external affairs and leader of the coalition after Chifley's death in June 1951, urged the government to recognize China in spite of the support for the Korean War. The primary criterion which underlined the necessity of recognition was the control of the territory which the Chinese Communists evidently exercised. Evatt took the traditional view that in international relations recognition of a government did not mean an endorsement of its social system and internal policy. This view was supported by a number of party colleagues –among them Whitlam. However, it was not until the March 1957 federal conference held in Brisbane that Australian recognition of the PRC became the explicit and formal policy of the ALP. Evatt made it plain that Labors felt that the omission of China from the United Nations weakened the organisation and made it impossible to deal with Beijing on international matters.²

During the period 1966-69, there was a significant change in Labor's perception of the China threat. The ALP was disturbed by the actions of the Chinese in Tibet, their incursion into India, their support of wars of national liberation in South-East Asia and their nuclear tests. Furthermore, the availability in 1966 of more reliable information on China from the United States and elsewhere by means of books, journal articles and interviews with American politicians, etc. had contributed to Labors' change of attitude. Arthur Calwell, who succeeded Evatt in 1960 as the party leader, was not particularly well disposed towards Beijing and he enjoyed a personal relationship with Chen Zhimai, the ambassador of the Republic of China in Australia.³

When Whitlam became the new leader of the ALP, he initially took an active interest in foreign affairs and by the end of the 1960s he sustained with emphasis the recognition of the PRC –although around 1966 he was reluctant to openly embrace an open stance

2 E.S.K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 36.

3 S. FitzGerald, 1972, *China and Overseas Chinese. A study of Peking's changing policy 1949-1970*, Cambridge University Press, New York, see Preface.

towards the Communist China. Whitlam sustained that the cause of trouble in South-East Asia was not China but the widespread official corruption and social injustice which indigenous Communist wanted to remove. Whitlam was more cautious than his colleagues because of China's continued support for insurgent movements. In his view, subversion, not aggression, was the great menace of South-East Asia: 'The chances of a Chinese invasion are small indeed. The chances of subversion are great. This should put the developed countries of the world on their mettle to compete to show that there is a better alternative to Communism'.⁴

The ALP warned that although China was not directing the war in Vietnam, there was a distinct possibility that it would intervene if it felt threatened by the American bombing of North Vietnam, which was getting ever closer to the Chinese border. Labor policy-advisers sustained that Australian actions in Vietnam only added to Beijing fears and distrust of the West. Thus Whitlam insisted: 'Australia is not guiltless in the international ostracism of China'.⁵

Vietnam was a very emotional and divisive issue, having a great impact on Australia politics and society generally. The emotionalism increased during the last years of the 1960s, which saw an upsurge of anti-war and anti-conscription demonstrations and protest movements in many Australian capital cities, with a significant section of the general public taking part, including dissenters among Protestant Churches, the Catholic community, as well as academics, artists and university students.⁶

Labor politicians were actively involved in a variety of ways, partly out of conviction of the injustice of the war and partly for political purposes. As a matter of fact, demonstrations against the war as violent as the protesters did, meant that the Australian public did no trust in the Australian foreign policy. The ALP had the possibility to redeem itself as the new guide for the country but although it gave a great attention to the Vietnam War, it failed in using public malcontent to formulate an alternative China policy.

What the ALP proposed to counter the China threat and try to find a solution for the China question was brought back the PRC into the international fold so that it would behave like a responsible member of the world community.

4 H. R. Cowie, 1993, *Australia and Asia: a changing relationship*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 241.

5 L. Cairns, H.M. Byrne, 1973, *China Trough Australian Eyes*, New Democratic Publications contributors, Canterbury, Victoria, p. 76.

6 H. R. Cowie, 1993, *Australia and Asia: a changing relationship*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 241.

A major development in this direction came in June 1968. Whitlam spoke about Australia's major responsibility beyond Vietnam and he mentioned China in terms of *detente* and in the context of a new shift from the American policy. He demanded the government to improve its engagement, combining efforts with the United States on the China question. Whitlam believed that Australia, together with Japan, could play a crucial part in bringing a more rational American approach to China. He said: 'There is no greater service Australia could do for America, for our region and for world peace than encourage the same *detente* with China which has been achieved between the United States and Soviet Union, an achievement which would have been thought quite impossible a decade ago'.⁷

Nonetheless, it was not until late February 1969 that for the first time the Labor coalition attempted to spell out the ways in which China might be recognised. Cyril Wyndham, the ALP federal secretary, promised that a Labor Government would recognize the PRC without disowning Taiwan. The existing situation of engaging in trade with the Chinese but withholding diplomatic recognition could not continue, he argued, as China considered itself as being isolated by the world community.⁸

Some practical questions arise. How could the ALP recognise the PRC without disowning Taiwan? Should Taiwan be expelled from United Nations in order to admit Beijing? Would Canberra ignore public opinion at home which mostly favoured Australia's continued recognition of the Nationalist Government? These questions remained unanswered until the end of the decade because the ALP, while taking a sympathetic view of the PRC, had its difficulties in dealing with the China problem. The party leaders were preoccupied with domestic issues and they were also aware that Australia public opinion did not agree in "abandoning" Taiwan. Finally, by the last months of the 1960s and the first months of the 1970s, the international community was moving in the direction of recognition of China, Italy and Canada established diplomatic relations in 1970 and the United States was also moving in a similar direction, revoking in 1969 the ban over "strategic goods". Furthermore, Nixon announced that he would visit China the following year.

It is remarkable that although the fear of China was already in decline before Whitlam became prime minister, his government made the real break between the fear that had once prevailed and an enduring friendship between Canberra and Beijing. It is also remarkable that the ALP was opposed to total dependence on the United States and the

⁷ Ibid, p. 243.

⁸ E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 78.

notion of basing Australian foreign policy on a unique relationship with one great power or on a “one way” issue such as anti-communist. For the ALP, normalisation of relations with China was a proper course which did not mean choose between the PRC or the United States. As a matter of fact, Whitlam, in July 1971, led an ALP’s delegation visit to China, which met with Premier Zhou Enlai. Whitlam assured the Chinese Premier that the Labor Party would switch recognition of China from Taipei to Beijing as soon as it was next returned to government. The tour included several people who were later to exercise a significant effect on Australia’s relations with China, including Tom Burns, later the Deputy Premier of Queensland, and Stephen FitzGerald.⁹ Both Whitlam and Kissinger were in Beijing at the same time, and both were on a mission involving Zhou Enlai and were pushing for new relations, including the establishment of diplomatic relations. The total secrecy of Kissinger’s visit meant that Whitlam knew nothing about it and the implication of this fact is that Whitlam’s actions were not directly influenced by the United States. Whitlam had been moving towards rapprochement far longer than the American ally, and he had taken independent action towards effecting his goal.¹⁰

9 C. Mackerras, *China and the Australia-US Relationship: A Historical Perspective*, Department of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith University, pp. 10-12.

10 Ibid.

3.2 The recognition of the People's Republic of China: first stages under Whitlam

“While it has long been recognised that Australia’s geographical position gives it special interest in the Asian region, up till now we have not come to terms with one of the central facts of that region, the People’s Republic of China”.

G. Whitlam (1972)

On December 5, 1972 Gough Whitlam held his first news conference as Australia’s Prime Minister. Among a number of other points, he announced that he had instructed the Australian ambassador in Paris, Alan Renouf to recommence negotiations with his counterpart, Huang Zhen, with a view to establishing full diplomatic relations. The negotiation in Paris were concluded in less than three weeks and on December, 21 1972, Australia recognised the People’s Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China, withdrawing the Australian embassy in Taipei and moving it in Beijing.

Professor Headley Bull’s comment that the recognition of China and the establishment of diplomatic relations with other Communist government were measure simply of adjustment to the era of *detente*¹¹ could be consider unfair. After all, Whitlam has gambled and has succeeded and this new openness towards China has meant a radical change in Australians’ mind.

Whitlam wanted to break down those barriers which separated the nations of the South-East Asia region. FitzGerald, the first Ambassador to the PRC, explained that rethinking the China policy had implications for all Australian foreign relations and breaking the bipolar balance, or what the Chinese call braking the super power monopoly, offered great opportunities for smaller powers to align themselves according to their own interests.¹²

Whitlam also sustained vigorously the Australian place and independence on the region

11 M. Simons, M. Fraser, 2009, *Malcolm Fraser: the political memoirs*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, p. 458.

12 S. FitzGerald, 1972, *China and Overseas Chinese. A study of Peking’s changing policy 1949-1970*, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 5.

and he made numerous statements explaining that regional cooperation would have been one of the keystone of Australia's foreign policy for the 1970s. Australia, in his opinion, should have undertaken a new road of collaboration with less emphasis on military pacts. One of the implication of the emphasis on regional cooperation, independence and regional community was strong opposition to racism or any suggestion of it. This ideal also came from the suppression of the *White Australian Policy* which Whitlam decided after his election. In sum, Whitlam's hallmarks of his foreign policy were based of an optimistic views of an improved collaboration of the South-East Asia Region, where Australia should have found its independence and leading place, the abolition of racial discriminations and the departure from the American dependence.

The next paragraphs will not deepen the question of the Australian place in the South-East Asia Region; they focus on the new Sino-Australian relationship which Whitlam set up, a relationship which created new political, economical and cultural ties and which signed the basis of a growing collaboration between the two countries.

The first Trade Mission and the second Whitlam visit to the PRC

In January 1973 Whitlam appointed Stephen FitzGerald as Australia's first ambassador to the PRC. FitzGerald accompanied Whitlam to China in 1971 and was in close contact with him as China adviser and personal friend. As a person sympathetic both to China and the new Australian Government and a man who knew the Chinese Mandarin, their system, culture and language, he was the ideal choice for the post. FitzGerald's first public statement after being named ambassador included major reference to trade. He declared himself unsure about the achievements that could have reached and warned against too much optimism: he expected trade to rise but it would require hard work.¹³

In a press conference in March 1973, Whitlam announced two Australian tours to China: the first in May, led by Jim Cairns, the Minister for Overseas Trade and Secondary Industry and the second tour, a visit led by Whitlam late in October.

It is noticeable that the day after Whitlam's announcement of the mission, a meeting in Sydney founded the Australia China Business Council, a semi-independent body designed to recommend policy for trade and cultural relations with China. It has been the premier business organisation dedicated to promoting business and trade between

13 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1,2*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 246.

Australia and the PRC.¹⁴

The members of the May trade mission met Zhou Enlai and they agreed in the intent to maximise all opportunities to increase trade between the two countries.

A major agreement was the largest order to that point for raw Queensland sugar: over fifty thousand tonnes. This was a significant opening order not only for the Australian sugar industry but also for the world sugar market. It was particularly important for Canberra also because the British Commonwealth Sugar Agreement was due to expire at the end of 1974. Furthermore during the Whitlam's visit to China at the end of October, the agreement was intensified from three to five years. Another aspect which greatly pleased the Australians was that the Chinese proposed to install specialised bulk handling facilities to make the imports of so much easier and to send a team to Australia to study its techniques in this regard.¹⁵

During the mission, Cairns invited the Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade, Bai Xiangguo, to return the visit. He accepted, starting the series of initiatives that began to come to fruition in the following years. The most important deal was the signature of the *Trade Agreement* on July 24, in Canberra. Three points in it are of special interest. First, both Australia and China gave each other "most-favoured-nation" treatment in trade. Secondly, Article 2 stipulated 'exploratory discussion for long-term commodity arrangements'.¹⁶ This clause was particularly favourable to Australia because it appeared to rule out China's suddenly cancelling or failing to renew contracts. Thirdly, a joint trade committee with designated representatives from both Australia and China was 'to meet once a year, unless otherwise mutually agreed, alternatively in Canberra and Beijing'.¹⁷ This appeared to guarantee that the momentum of the trade agreement could be kept going, even if the political good will which had engendered it were to flag.

The pleasure of Cairns after the signature of the agreement was naturally high, particularly by the inclusion of Article 2. He had hoped that the first result of the clause would have been the immediate signature of a long-term wheat contract when Bai

14 Today, it is a membership-based organisation, with Branches in New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria providing business-focused information and events for members in all industries (See *Connecting Australia and China*, Australia China Business Council, www.acbc.com.au/).

15 The agreement was signed in order to be finalised but it was never implemented. It was a time of violent international uncertainty over sugar prices and while the apparently success, the sugar deal resulted a failure. It has been, however, an important step in the improving relations between Australia and the PRC.

16 D. Lee, 2006, *Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century*, Circa, Beaconsfield, Victoria, p.185.

17 Ibid.

visited Australia later. Apparently, the Australian Wheat Board and the Department of Primary Industry did not believe actions would have been so fast. But a few months later the Wheat Board sent a delegation to China which signed a three-year wheat contract as Cairns had planned. On October 11, Cairns announced that the agreement provided for China to buy up to 4,7 million tonnes of wheat for over \$A6000 million over the following three years; the agreement was historic because it was the Australian first long-term wheat agreement with the PRC.¹⁸

Another event in the Sino-Australian economic relations was the announcement, in September 1973, that *Goldsworthy Mining Ltd* would send a trial shipment of iron ore to China. Although *Goldsworthy* was the smallest of the Western Australia Pilbara iron ore companies and the quantity was small, just over twenty thousand tonnes, the sale was significant because it marked the Australian entry into the Chinese iron ore imports.¹⁹

The Cairns mission was also a political event and so implied important and interesting non-economic implications. The major one related to the Chinese testing of nuclear weapons.

As a matter of fact, during his meeting with Zhou Enlai on May 17, Cairns raised the subject of Chinese nuclear tests, mentioning the objection of Canberra. Cairns himself described the conversation in detail when he returned to Melbourne. The question of nuclear testing was a controversial one in Australia. Whitlam had declared in his policy speech that a Labor Government would take the question of French nuclear tests to the International Court of Justice to get an injunction against further tests.²⁰ An obvious question arose: Why Canberra did not protest equally against the Chinese nuclear tests? Why it did not take China to the International Court of Justice? Whitlam argued that China was not a part to the agreement of 1928 whereby countries agreed to have disputes settled by the World Court or to the Statute of International Court of Justice. However, the Prime Minister went on reaffirming his protest to the Chinese and supported the objections of Cairns towards Zhou Enlai. As it happened, the

18 E.S.K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 170.

19 Ibid.

20 The Nuclear Tests dispute involved on the one side France and, on the other, a number of South Pacific States, foremost among them New Zealand and Australia. Since 1963, when the French Government announced its decision to move its nuclear firing ground from Reggane, in the Algerian Sahara, to the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa, in French Polynesia, nuclear tests have been an enduring sore spot in the diplomatic relations between France and the nations of the Pacific. (See C. Romano, 2000, *The Peaceful Settlement of International Environmental Disputes: A Pragmatic Approach*, Kluwer, London, pp. XLV-395).

International Court of Justice issued an interim decision that France should avoid testing. France ignored the judgement and detonated a nuclear explosion in July 1973. Australia, and many other nations, protested. On June 27, 1973 China carried out a hydrogen bomb test in Xinjiang. Whitlam immediately sent a “very firm” protest note to the Chinese Government.

Whitlam’s trip lasted from October 31 to November 4, 1973. Once arrived in Beijing he received a warm welcome. During his stay, he had a talk for over an hour with Mao, on November 2. Not very much is known about what was said at the meeting. One question became known quickly: the subject of nuclear explosions. One journalist claims that ‘Whitlam made what Australian officials described as a very forceful presentation of the Australian Government’s policy against testing. It was probably the first time such a protest had been made directly to Chairman Mao’.²¹

The Sino-Australian joint communiqué of November 4, which drew conclusions of the Australian Prime Minister’s visit, ‘had held talks in a cordial atmosphere on a wide range of international problems and on the question of further developing the relationship between the two countries’.²² Beijing and Canberra agreed to promote exchange of views between their officials. The talks with Zhou, as expressed in the joint communiqué, covered social matters as well as others. One subject mentioned was travel from China to Australia by relatives of Australian citizens of Chinese descents residing in Australia. Whitlam raised the matter in private talks with Zhou Enlai who made a public response. He explained that the Chinese Government shared the Australian concern for the reunions of Chinese Australians whose relatives lived in China. Zhou said that if the Chinese Australians wished to visit their relatives in China or to reunite with them, Beijing was willing to give them assistance. On the basis of his talks with Zhou, Whitlam announced that discussion would begin on a Treaty of Nationality which would follow the principle that Chinese who went to live abroad should take on the citizenship of the country where they resided.²³

Another topic touched in the Australia-China communiqué was that contacts in the cultural, scientific and technological fields between the two countries would be exchanged during the 1974.²⁴ The general topic of cultural exchange will be considered

21 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1,2*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 248.

22 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia’s policies towards the People’s Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 176.

23 Ibid, p. 178.

24 I. M. Cumpston, 1995, *History of Australian foreign Policy 1901-1991 Vol.1,2*, Union Offset, Canberra, p. 247.

in detail in the next paragraphs; for the present, it should be mentioned that the communiqué represented the first highest manifestation of collaboration in such exchanges.

Emerging problems in Canberra and Beijing

Whitlam filled the charge of Foreign Minister for almost one year after his election and in November 1973, he gave the place to the Senator Willesee. The Senator did not hold positive enthusiasm towards China and took few spectacular initiatives. Therefore, reasons for the change in style and content were more than simply Willesee's character. As a matter of fact, in both Australia and China, 1974 marked the beginning of an escalation in political struggle which signed an high lurch towards the right wings of the governments.

In Australia, the political situation was complicated. Whitlam's attempt to gain control of the Senate at the double dissolution elections of May 1974 failed, leading on increasingly bitter infighting within the Labor Party.

Summarising the troubles which affected the Whitlam Government, it is necessary to explain that many of Australia's present governmental institutions were created in the Whitlam era;²⁵ as a consequence money and skilful administration were needed to implement those new institutions. These social reforms were taken regardless of the effects on inflation and the difficulties of the world economy, with the oil crisis of late 1973 adding to the inflationary spiral and unemployment began to climb. It has been said that Whitlam was trying to do too much too quickly. Thus, the Labor Party won the May election of 1974 but with a reduced minority and no control of the Senate. The Opposition was ready to grasp any opportunity to gain influence and majority. Whitlam's term as prime minister ended in 1975 when he was dismissed by the Governor-General of Australia –the representative in Australia at federal/national level of the Australian monarch. His dismissal is one of the most controversial issued in the Australian history. The constitutional crisis erupted when the Senate refused to allow the government the money it needed to carry on its policies while the government refused to hold an early election. The governor-general, Sir John Kerr, resolved the

25 Women's Electoral Lobby; the Australian Heritage Commission; Law Reform Commission; National Sewerage Program; Industries Assistance Commission; Australian National Railways Commission; FM and community radio licensing; and the Prices Justification Tribunal.

situation through the unprecedented step of dismissing the prime minister.²⁶

Not only in Canberra but also in Beijing, the years 1974 and 1975 were very unstable. During 1974, the mass campaigns to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius ideologies began. These movement was the prompt for attacks on Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping by the radical left wing of the Communist Party led by the group later described as the “gang of four”. Zhou’s openness in foreign policy was cast into doubt as China adopted a much more sensitive attitude towards criticism of any of its policies and a greater suspicion towards the intention of the West.

The Chinese Government complained about misrepresentation in the Australian press of the anti-Confucian campaign. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs replied by saying that newspapers in Australia were free and not under the control of government, arising the irritation of Chinese.²⁷

In June the situation worsened; a film festival in Sydney and Melbourne and the ABC announced they wanted show the film *China* produced by the distinguished Italian director Michelangelo Antonini. Already in January a campaign in China had begun to discredit the film, clearly a part of the general feeling against foreign art. The *People’s Daily* initiated the diatribe by explaining that ‘the methods Antonini had used, belittled the achievements of China and wanted people to believe that the socialist China was the same as the semi-feudal, semi-colonial old China of the past’.²⁸

These minor diversions in the Sino-Australian relations did not prevent a visit to China by Senator Willesee in June 1975. Although there was none of the fanfare of the Whitlam visit, Willesee met Zhou Enlai, even though in hospital, where he died seven months later. In talks with his counterpart, Qiao Guanhua, Willesee pressed forward two questions raised by Whitlam some time before: the protest against the Chinese nuclear tests and the question of the agreement on family reunions for Chinese with relations living in Australia. More important than these questions was the Chinese attempt to involve Canberra in the Sino-Soviet conflict. In his speech at the welcoming banquet on June 6 Qiao Guanhua referred to the Soviet Union saying that it tried ‘to squeeze into the South-Asia region for the sole purpose of dominating the people there’. Qiao went on explaining that Australians should express themselves more firmly on the Chinese side because they were situated in the same region and they had the same interests. In his reply, Willesee avoided all mention the problem. The ALP Government had no wish to become involved in such an issue and it always refused to be drawn into the extreme

²⁶ See whitlamdismissal.com for further information.

²⁷ E.M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 215 and O. A. Westad, 2012, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750*, Basic Book.

²⁸ Ibid.

anti-Sovietism espoused by China.²⁹

Cultural, educational, scientific and sporting exchanges

Apart from problems just listed, the political relations between Australia and China remained stable during the Whitlam Government. Economic relations reflected the general and growing connections and *The Exhibitions* which took place in October 1974 represented the hope for a solid future in the Sino-Australian trade deals. The first was the Australian exhibition in Beijing and it was the largest Australia had ever mounted. A week after the beginning of the Australian Trade Exhibition in Beijing, Cairns came back to Sydney and opened a counterpart there.³⁰

Furthermore, like companies also nationals government commission activities delineated cultural, educational and sporting exchanges to improve relations among the Sino-Australian community public. About this question, a clarification is necessary.

In 1942, in his famous speech discussing the relationship between literature and the arts and revolutionary work in general, Mao made it clear that the Chinese Communist Party would use literature and art to achieve political goals. As a matter of fact, since 1940s art and literature have been inseparable from politics in China. For most of this period individual creation was not encouraged. After 1949 the official Writer Association, Artist Association and performing arts companies under the central, provincial or local governments, provided a network of financial support and political control.³¹

Because of the Chinese aversion to open its doors to other countries, in 1972, when diplomatic relations were established, the general public in Australia knew little about China. On the other side, Chinese people, scholars, writers and artist were allowed to have little contacts with foreigners. By the beginning of 1972 the CCP decided to use the culture as the instrument for breaking barriers between the two societies. The initial *Cultural Exchange Programmes* had the fundamental function of creating the basis for further exchanges in the future and took place in an atmosphere of immense interest and good will.³²

29 Ibid.

30 S. FitzGerald, "Whitlam's China masterstroke", *The Australian Financial Review* October 2012. See www.afr.com (November 2012).

31 See J. Chey, "From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy" in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, pp. 166, 167.

32 Ibid, p. 167.

In particular, by 1972 Beijing and Canberra invested on educational links, which were at first mainly used for purpose of public diplomacy. The main focus of the educational exchanged was studies of language. These new directions were supported both by Chinese and Australians. On the one side, the Chinese needed English speakers who acted as interpreters in international meetings and English speaker who taught the language. On the other side, Australians' wish to promote trade with China reinforced the needs for knowledge in Chinese language. To allow students and teachers to benefit from studying and teaching in China, the *Australian-China Exchange Scheme* was negotiated for the annual reciprocal exchange of five students and one teacher. The program grew systematically and in the five years between 1974-79, 51 Australians sustained a program in China and 61 Chinese in Australia. These programs have had positive long term effects and have continued to collaborate, arranging exchanges even more complex and successful, involving several Australian universities and individual study visits.³³

An important event was a major *Cultural Agreements* developed during 1975 and announced by FitzGerald in November 1974. One of its major aspects was that it was the first cultural deal to which the Chinese have agreed since the Cultural Revolution. It clearly reflected the growth of a slightly broader attitude towards foreign cultures since the height of the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius earlier the same year. Some of the aims of this agreement were an expansion of the student exchange and the beginning of one for teacher, mutual tours by performing arts troupes and sporting teams, and exchanges of artistic exhibitions.³⁴

Artistic and scientific exchanges started to develop under Whitlam, but they had been significantly improved only during the Fraser Government. As an example, in December 1972 Whitlam visited the Guangzhou Acrobatics Troupe performed in Australia,³⁵ an action which represented a symbolic openness towards the Chinese art. Furthermore, in 1975, the *Cultural Agreement* with China went into effect. An example of it was an exhibition of Australian landscape painting in September, shown in Beijing and Nanjing. It was the largest and more valuable art exhibition sent overseas by the Australian Government.

In March and April 1974 a delegation, mainly of scientists, visited China and a delegation from the Chinese academy of Science made a return tour later in the year.

33 Ibid, pp. 188-190.

34 Ibid.

35 Guangzhou Acrobatic Troupe China was founded in 1959. Over the years, it has inherited and developed traditional Chinese acrobatic skills while absorbing the essence of modern dance, artistic gymnastics, theatre and other forms.

These exchanges have been important because they promoted research and because they were set up in an equal level of participation from both Australian and China.³⁶

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In the light of these developments, it could be argued that the firsts years of official Sino-Australian relations have been profitable. Australia passed from a situation of non-recognition to one in which the two countries began diplomatic exchanges, created the first trade agreement and the first cultural exchanges.

Furthermore, despite the fact than Australia remained less important to China than China did to Australia, Beijing showed itself attached to Canberra. It did not perceive Australia too lie to super-powers, on the contrary, it hoped to obtain the Australian help for take a stronger position towards the Soviet Union. However, as explained before, Australians refused to take a strong and extreme position against Russian. This choice undoubtedly provoked Chinese displeasure and, added to the debates concerning Chinese nuclear tests, represented the greatest troubles in the rising Sino-Australian relations.

However, troubles apart, the Labor Government's policy on China must be accounted among the very best and most successful fields of its performance.

36 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 189.

3.3 A growing relationship under the Fraser Government

Improving the political and diplomatic relations

Malcom Fraser became Prime Minister after Governor-General, Jogh Kerr, dismissed the Whitlam Government in November 1975.

Whitlam and the Labor Government, in their short term of office, have succeeded in laying a new connection between Australia and the PRC and the Liberal Party inherited this relationship when it came to power.

However, under the Fraser Government, the moves towards China were slow in developing. As an instance, China was not an issue in the 1975 election and little was said about the Australian new policy on the PRC until May 1976, when Fraser announced his intention to visit China and Japan the following month together with Andrew Peacock, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. From that point, Fraser adopted an active approach to China and unlike Whitlam, who had toured Indonesia, Great Britain, India, Mexico, the United States and Canada before going to East-Asia, the new Prime Minister chose China and Japan as the first steps in his foreign tours.³⁷

It is assured that Fraser was treated better than Whitlam by the Chinese and the difference in the treatment lied, probably, in the greater hostility to the Soviet Union the Liberal he demonstrated if compared with the Labor predecessor.

The Soviet Union factor

Fraser's foreign policy were much more anti-Soviet than his predecessor and his hostility to the Soviet Union led him to adopt a very pro-China policy. As a matter of fact, one of the first major themes sustained by Fraser was scepticism about *detente*. To the declarations made in 1973 by Nixon and Brezhnev in favour of harmony between nations of different ideologies and social systems and the promotion of peace and security, Fraser commented that 'unfortunately, the reality had not matched those

³⁷ Y. Wang, 2012, *Australia-China Relations post 1949. Sixty Years of Trade and Politics*, Ashgate publishing Limited, England, see online Google.books (December 2012).

aspirations'.³⁸ Furthermore, Fraser, on a parliamentary statement, spoke of "Russian threat" and argued that Australia and China had interests in common: 'the Soviet Union is unquestionably committed to the avoidance of nuclear war. Reasonable people can however reasonably conclude that the Soviet Union still seek to expand its influence throughout the world in order to achieve Soviet primacy. Its actions all too often appear inconsistent when the aim of reducing world tension'.³⁹ At the time, China's foreign policy was dominated by the notion that the Soviet hegemony was the main threat to world peace. Thus, the policies of Australia and China were following the same scheme. There was fear in the Australian media that Fraser was involving Australia too much on the Chinese side in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Delegates from the Soviet Union boycotted the arrival of Fraser at Beijing airport and the evening banquet in his honour and they attacked Fraser for reviving the cold war.

When Fraser and Peacock returned from their visit to China, they probably realized they had gone too far in their anti-Sovietism *entente* and they assured that there were any implications for the Australian relations with the Soviet Union. Although the Liberal Government denied it was taking side in the Sino-Soviet conflict, it continued to adhere to the line, shared by China, that the Soviet Union constituted a military threat to the world peace and security. Fraser probably took advantage from the Chinese strong anti-Sovietism as the foundation of the Sino-Australian friendship.⁴⁰

A new shift in the anti-Soviet *entente* developed in August 1982, when Fraser visited China to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Chinese affirmed that they hoped for normalisation of the Sino-Soviet relations and they were trying to open the dialogue with the Kremlin. After the 1982 Fraser's visit to China a new era in the Sino-Australian relationship was beginning, based no more neither on in the exaggerated fear nor assumed convergence on interests, but on reality. The most important outcome of the Fraser's visit was an agreement, headed by the United Nations, between the two countries on the basis of which Australia and China agreed in the cooperation of the North-South dialogue to find ways by which richer

38 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, pp. 220, 221.

39 Ibid.

Fraser and Australian policy-makers were probably influenced by international events occurring at the end of the 1970s, when the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States was dominated by a series of conflicts over arms control issues and interventions in the Third World. These factors, added to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, destroyed *detente* and renewed Cold War rivalry in the early 1980s (O. A. Westad).

40 M. Simons, M. Fraser, 2009, *Malcolm Fraser: the political memoirs*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, p. 458.

countries could assist those of the Third World not so much through traditional aid as through trading practices favourable to the developed nations. The agreement was particularly important because it aligned Australia with China on an important matter of international economics. In August 1982 both Fraser and the Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang regarded the Australian visit as a suitable memorial of the tenth anniversary of their diplomatic relations.⁴¹

Evolution of the Immigration Policy

The Fraser Government was more relaxed than Labor on the matter of immigration. As Fraser explained, the Whitlam Government ended the *White Australia Policy*, ‘crossing the symbolic bridge of publicly ending the White Policy’.⁴² Therefore, he added, the Whitlam Government developed the concept of multiculturalism and the Fraser one ‘gave to multiculturalism form and definition’.⁴³ Since his first day as Prime Minister, Fraser advocated immigration as a means for boosting Australia’s population.

As a matter of fact, when at the end of the Vietnam War tens of thousand of Vietnamese asked for Australian refuge, the Liberal Government accepted a larger number of people than his predecessor. At the same time, it decided to increase the general migrant levels in order to create jobs by stimulating demand. In June 1976 it signed the Family Reunion Agreement with the Chinese Government and from 1979 to 1980 the number of new settlers rose by 31 per cent, from 72 000 to 94 000.⁴⁴

During the 1980s, multiculturalism became accepted as a model for diversity in Australia and without doubt relationship with the PRC took advantage from the new tendency. Travel restrictions were eased, organised tours to China multiplied and Australian tourist returned with positive impressions.⁴⁵

41 Ibid, pp. 470, 471.

42 M. Fraser, 2012, The Whitlam Oration given by Malcolm Fraser. *Politics, Independence and the National Interest: the legacy of power and how to achieve a peaceful Western Pacific*. See theage.com.au (December 2012).

43 April 2010. “Malcolm Fraser: a champion for immigration and a bigger Australia”, *Crikey. Independent Media. Independent Minds*, See www.crikey.com.au (November 2012).

44 M. Simons, M. Fraser, 2009, *Malcolm Fraser: the political memoirs*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, pp. 420, 428, 429.

45 See J. Chey, “From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy” in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, p. 171.

Background events

The Sino-Australian relationship continued to develop in spite of worldwide background events which influenced not only the Sino-Australian Governments but also the entire international community, being related with the Cold War matters.

By virtue of their importance, each event should deserve a detailed description but, in the present work, they will be only summarised in order to understand how they affected the relations between Beijing and Canberra.

The Cambodian-Vietnamese War

First of all, problematic issues were raised about Cambodian and Vietnamese political situations. In 1975, after the victory of the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea⁴⁶ and the one of the Communists in South Vietnam, the situations were of apparent stability.

Therefore, in July 1976 Vietnam was formally reunited as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge regime, headed by Pol Pot, revealed itself fanatical and genocidal. There were refugees from both Vietnam and Kampuchea throughout South-East Asia, Australia included.

When in December 1978 Vietnam launched a full-scale invasion of Kampuchea, overthrowing the Pol Pot regime and establishing a government headed by Heng Samrin, Canberra strongly condemned the action. In the same way, Beijing denounced the Vietnamese invasion, developing a united front with Australians of mutual concern. Vietnam, as known, was aligned with the Soviet Union and Cambodia with the PRC. Furthermore, few weeks before the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea, the United States had established full diplomatic relations with China. Thus, the main enemy for all three was the Soviet Union, enforcing the Australian position although the Chinese support for Pol Pot was stronger than the Australian one.

Australians' moves showed some incongruence; for instance, when China attacked Vietnam in February 1979, Fraser issued a statement calling for the Chinese withdrawal but he did not agree in imposing sanctions against China. The Chinese attack to Vietnam was a strategic matter which contributed to Fraser's anti-Soviet armoury.

Again, Fraser's support for Pol Pot continued, even knowing the evils of the Khmer

⁴⁶ Kampuchea is the name of Cambodia when it was controlled by the Khmer Rouge, between 1975 and 1979.

Rouge regime. Fraser even stated that it was one of the most horrific government in the whole history of human race.⁴⁷

The issue of the continued recognition of the Khmer Rouge was highly discussed in Australia. The ALP heavily denounced the Pol Pot regime and declared the absurdity of recognising it as the legitimate government of Kampuchea. Fraser responded criticizing the brutality of the regime but still persisting in the policy of recognising it as a way to force the Vietnamese to withdrawal.⁴⁸

A change in Canberra's policy occurred by October 1980, when it withdrawn the recognition of the Khmer Rouge regime and then came under heavy criticism from China, the United States and the ASEAN Nations for the decision that Australia would abstain in votes on the question of United Nations and other international forums seating for the Pol Pot regime. Tony Street, the Minister for Foreign Affairs after Peacock, strongly sustained the withdrawal because this position was more moderate and reflected the public opinion and opposition parties.

In June 1982, a tripartite coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea was set up, headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and including the Khmer Rouge; China immediately jumped to support the new regime.

Iran and Korea turmoil

Two minor world issues affected Sino-Australian relations but this time negatively: Beijing and Canberra, in fact, sustained different opinions.

The first event was related to the fall of the Shah of Iran in February 1979 and the proclamation of an Islamic Republic by the anti-American Ayatollah Khomeini. In April 1980, Jimmy Carter ordered that American aircraft were landed in Iran in order to attempt to rescue the diplomats Islamic students, became hostages when they occupied the American embassy in Iran the previous November.⁴⁹ China responded to the American moves saying that the action was not an helpful solution and it represented a violation of the Iran territorial integrity and sovereignty. Australian policy-advisers, on the contrary, supported the American action, disagreeing with the Chinese. However, the Chinese agreed with Australians where the Deputy Prime Minister, Doug Anthony,

47 M. Simons, M. Fraser, 2009, *Malcolm Fraser: the political memoirs*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, p. 479.

48 Ibid.

49 "American President: Jimmy Carter", *History.Policy.Impact*, see <http://millercenter.org/president/carter> (November 2012).

motivated Canberra's choice by saying that events in Iran contributed further to the instability of the West Asia region.⁵⁰

The other event which worried China and Australia was the visit of September 1982 to the PRC by the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung. Kim appeared to resolidify the old alliance between China and North Korea while Australia had few time before moved much closer to South Korea. Canberra continued to recognized both North and South Korean Governments albeit Kim wished to establish full diplomatic relations with Australia. Therefore, in 1981 Street defined unacceptable a restoration with the Kim Il Sung Government.

In any case, the Chinese and Australian policy-makers made it clear that they had no intention of threatening their close friendship because of the Korean issue.⁵¹

Improving the economic relationship

The economy was another motive for improving relations between Australia and China in the 1970s, albeit a problem was emerged in the last period of the Labor rule. By 1974-75, in fact, the value of the Australian sales to China had risen to over \$250 million, while purchases from China equalled \$81 million. The balance of trade was heavily in Australia's favour. The Chinese pointed this out and they were not more happy when, despite the agreement, restraints on textile goods from China were imposed in 1974 and import quotas were placed on clothing in 1975. The Labor Party had took these measures because it showed naturally more concern for safeguarding Australian workers than the Chinese.⁵²

On the contrary, the Liberal Party, more anxious than its predecessor to promote trade at all costs, had few of Labor's reservations. In particular, wheat trade and iron ore sales were, like in the past, the most significant businesses confirming the traditional major deals between China and Australia. China's main export to Australia were still textiles, clothing and footwear, agricultural produce and petroleum. Quite clearly the trade had its weaknesses also during the second half of the decade, the most important ones were still the imbalance in Australian favour and the fact that the Chinese commodities

50 M. Simons, M. Fraser, 2009, *Malcolm Fraser : the political memoirs*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria, pp. 477. 478.

51 Ibid, p. 484.

52 Australian Parliament and Senate, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, 1996, *Australia China relations. Report of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 21.

competed with similar low-priced goods coming into Australia from other Third World Countries. On the other hand, the Chinese trade with Australia would be devastated by any serious attempt to limit the sales of Chinese textiles, clothing and footwear, whatever the effect these sales might have on Australian employment. As a matter of fact, because of continuing high unemployment in Australia, restraints on purchases of these goods remain a sensitive element in the relationship.⁵³

The situation got better at the end of the decade when the trade imbalance which had caused the Chinese worries was drastically reduced. Export to China dropped quite quickly from 1979-80 to 1981-82. There was a weak rise in imports in 1979-80 and again in 1980-81 and 1981/82. While Australian wheat export fell, those of sugar rose to a peak in 1980/81 but declined a few in 1981-82. Imports of petroleum and of textiles and clothing both rose in absolute terms in the last year from an already substantial quantity in 1979-80. As a proportion of total imports from China, textiles and clothing fell from 61 per cent in 1977-78 to 49 per cent in 1981-82, while fuel rose from 1 per cent in 1977-78 to 10 per cent in 1981-82. In other words, the changed economic policies in China since the end of 1978 have had little effect on the composition of Australian imports.⁵⁴

An important evolution in the Sino-Australian trade was the opportunity for the Australian technology to develop in China. Examples are the Australian expertise in dry farming, animal husbandry and steel-mill modernisation. In 1979 the Australian Government arranged \$50 million credit through the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation to buy technology. The first result was the construction of eight self-contained tourist motels. In May 1980 an agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology was signed to coordinate the various Australian involvements.⁵⁵

These are few examples of the growing Sino-Australian trade, which has continued to develop.

Improving the cultural relationship

The 1970s saw the establishment of an high number of cultural exchanges which continued to flourish over the decades. List each exchange or program would result impossible, because of their largeness but some examples are given below. The majority

53 Ibid, pp. 20-23.

54 Ibid, p. 28.

55 Ibid, p. 47.

of these programs are still in force, certainly renewed and adapted to the recent demands and opportunities.

Collaborations

An high number of Australian people travelled to the PRC, assisting the Chinese in training of various kinds. As a matter of fact, when China opened its doors to the other countries, Australia became one of the Western Chinese's friends. It had the abilities and the will to contribute the success of China's modern economy and society.

The two countries sustained collaborative studies in various medical fields, researches on geological and climatic shifts and training assistance in sport, exchanging visit and competences.

Another area of exchange was that of joint seminars for Australian and Chinese journalists to discuss of professional issues. The first examples came from a group of senior Chinese reporters who, in January 1977, toured Australia. In October, five Australian editors returned the visit. The two delegations, for the first time, had the opportunity to observe at first hand the situation in China and vice versa.⁵⁶

Both China and Australia undertook projects which contributed to understand and know each other. In 1978, Australia made it through a series of five films called *The Human Face of China*. They did not attempt deep analysis of Chinese history and society but they showed aspects of life in China and everyday human activities. The Chinese responded by producing six films of their own on Australia. A group of four Chinese arrived in Australia and stayed four months working on the film, analysing the Australian history, geography, landscape and livelihood. These are the first two examples of how the Sino-Australian cinema began to collaborate and contribute to the organisation and the creation of future Chinese and Australian film festivals.⁵⁷

56 See J. Chey, "From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy" in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, pp. 169, 170.

57 See Australia-China Council, 2006, *Australia-China Council Annual Report 1979-2006*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Arts and Exhibitions

In 1976, during Fraser's first visit to China, FitzGerald signed the most important event of the period under discussion, *the Chinese Exhibition of Archaeological Finds*. The Exhibition toured in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide the following year and the number of visitors was extremely large, six hundred thousand people, proving an high level of interest and curiosity towards the Chinese history and archaeological treasure. The 1977 Chinese exhibition was followed by an exhibition of Australian landscape painting from colonial to contemporary times entitled *Moon and Moment: A Century of Australian Landscape Painting*. Also this tour attracted a hundred thousand visitors over the two weeks it was shown in Beijing.⁵⁸

In both exhibitions, there was a political influence from the Chinese's side.

Certainly, *the Chinese Exhibition of Archaeological Finds* 'fulfilled the Chinese purpose of contributing to the promotion of understanding and friendship between the PRC and Australia'⁵⁹ and without doubt its success in achieving that aim was brilliant. After having denounced all form of traditional culture from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the *Exhibition* was part of the Chinese new policy to show the world how much they still cared for their ancient culture.

In the case of *Moon and Moment: A Century of Australian Landscape Painting*, the Chinese officials hosted the exhibition and censored the moral and political content, examining the origins of the artists, banning scenes of violence and of nude figure, considering them too attached to the Western culture.⁶⁰

Performing arts group during this time included the *Australian Youth Orchestra* in 1979 and the *Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe* in 1980.

This initial period of cultural exchange was marked by a high degree of control from both side of governments but, despite the limitations, they laid the foundation for later direct contacts between artist and writers, particularly thanks to the work of the Australia-China Council (ACC), founded in 1978.

58 Public Affairs Unit - University of New South Wales, 1988, *Australia in Asia : the next 200 years*, Papers from the University of New South Wales, Kensington, pp. 12-15.

59 E. S. K. Fung, C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship. Australia's policies towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-1982*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 215.

60 Public Affairs Unit - University of New South Wales, 1988, *Australia in Asia : the next 200 years*, Papers from the University of New South Wales, Kensington, p. 15.

Australia-China Council

The Australia-China Council was established by the Australian Government in 1978 to improve and develop relation with China in the fields of the humanities, the sciences, media, sport and other cultural areas. Its objectives are:

- Promote in Australia a greater awareness of China;
- Promote in China a great awareness of Australia;
- Enlarge areas of contact and exchange between China and Australia;
- Provide a focus for the collection, exchange and dissemination of information;
- Provide a source of advice on ways in which relations may be encouraged, strengthened and developed;

The Council co-operate with departments involved in official exchange programs with China, especially in culture, science, technology and agriculture.

Many activities are involved in Australia-China Council, in particular: communications (press, radio, television, film), special events (sporting, exhibitions, arts), study tours (conference, lecture tours, short term visits), fellowships (research, long-term teaching), institutional, regional and local links, Chinese studies and Chinese language.⁶¹

The majority of cultural programs set up after the establishment of the ACC could be linked with it.

Therefore, give an example for each activities of the Australia-China Council would be impossible but some of them are available on line in the website of the Australian Government.⁶² The activities are really a great number and cover all points previously listed, even if the majority of them concern the educational aspects. Scholarly exchanges, individual study visits, colleges and universities agreements and teaching abroad were the high means for extending each other's cultures.

The ACC represents the highest representation of the Sino-Australian desire of intensifying their cultural ties.

61 See Australia-China Council, 1985, *Australia-China Council review 1978-1985*, Ron Patten Publicity for the Australia-China Council, St. Leonards.

62 *ACC Newsletter* published quarterly for the Australia-China Council Department of Foreign Affairs, Canberra (State Library of Victoria) and www.library.uq.edu.au/ojs/index.php/asc/issue/archive (March 2012).

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The Fraser Government has continued Whitlam's policy towards China and it also reinforced the relationship. Probably, the Liberal Government disposed more time to create new ties with the PRC and it was not still facing problems emerged same years later, such as the human rights debate, Tiananmen Square and the problematic question of the American presence in the South-East Asia Region.

3.4 Thirteen Years of Labor cooperation with China

The thirteen years, from 1983 to 1996, in which Bob Hawke and Paul Keating led the ALP Government saw the intensification of Australia's presence in the South-East Asia Region and, as a consequence, in the PRC.

The 1980s is often defined as the decade of the "special relationship" between Australia and China, when Senior Chinese leaders came to Australia for the first time: the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Ziyang, in April 1983, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, in 1985.

The tragic event of June 1989 in Tiananmen Square led to a significant change of attitudes. The relationship was re-established few time later but some themes, such as human rights, assumed new relevance.

When Bob Hawke was elected Prime Minister, the most important Australian connection with China were certainly the economic one; the mutually beneficial trade also helped to underpin other aspects of the relationship, namely scientific and technological cooperation, legal and cultural activities, human relations and person to person contacts. The present chapter will analyse the Sino-Australian relationship during the thirteen years of Labor's rule in broad lines, focusing few on specific agreements and giving a more general view of the contacts from the half of the 1980s.

Hawke's collaboration with China and the breakdown of 1989

Bob Hawke won the election of March 1983 and led the Labor Party's return to office and the record of five terms with Labor election wins in 1984, 1987, 1990 and 1991 with Keating.⁶³

The Hawke years are often described as the high level of the collaboration between Australia and China, being the new Prime Minister one of the most enthusiastic promoters.

⁶³ National Archives of Australia, *Australia's Prime Ministers: Bob Hawke In Office*. See primeministers.naa.gov.au (November 2012).

The Labor Prime Minister made great efforts to cultivate relation with the PRC but in the meantime he did not focus the attention of Australia's foreign policy exclusively on China. He linked the Australian interests for China to its involvement with the entire South-East Asia Region, in the effort of integrating Australia in the region as a whole. Thus, Hawke took some initiatives for reforming the Australian involvement in the region. Domestically, for instance, he lowered the protection rates for various industries, he lifted restrictions on foreign investments, he promoted the export of high value-added goods and he sustained the creation of the Cairns Group. The Cairns Group was established in 1986; it is a union of nineteen agricultural exporting countries, which aim is contrast policies of protectionism and bilateralism, dangerous for small and medium trading nations.⁶⁴

Hawke sustained the institution of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), created in 1989. APEC is a forum of twenty-one countries and its purpose is the promotion of free trade and economic cooperation from Europe and North America to Asia and the Pacific.

From the domestic point of view, Hawke also took a measure which has been decisive for the enforcement of Australia's foreign policy, that is the creation of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), an evolution of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Trade. The creation of DFAT has represented an influential innovation especially for the Australian relationship with the PRC. In some occasions when relations with China were at strain the DFAT represents a guarantee for the economic exchanges.⁶⁵

When Deng Xiaoping succeeded Zhou Enlai in 1978, the new Chinese leader embarked on an ambitious programme of economic reform. In the 1980s, Deng began to transform a commanded economy, in which the government allocated resourced to construct a domestically oriented heavy industrial apparatus, to one more responsive to the signals of market. The new Chinese economy gave priority to the development of the import-substituting and exporting sectors, located mainly on the China coast.

Simultaneously, Deng opened the Chinese economy to the west by encouraging loans, investments, trade, technology and tourism. Deng's policy resulted in the formation of two different realities in the country: the developed coastal part of China, producing goods for international export and integrated in the world economy and the inland

64 Y. Wang, 2012, *Australia-China Relations post 1949. Sixty Years of Trade and Politics*, Ashgate publishing Limited, England, see online Google.books (December 2012).

65 Ibid.

country which remained undeveloped, agricultural, domestically oriented and self-contained.⁶⁶

Internal troubles did not prevent the success of China's modernisation programme⁶⁷ and the Open Door Policy⁶⁸ adopted by the Communist Party by the end of the 1970s, which increased the Chinese connections with other countries, involved Australia too. Canberra was well placed to take advantage from the new opportunities gave by the Chinese and in that moment, as never before, it needed to 'not to be left behind such historic developments but vigorously implement efforts towards China and the Asia Pacific Region in general'.⁶⁹

In such historical moment in which the Sino-Australian relationship was becoming ever more eased by the international distension, the leader of both countries had to continue pursuing their own purposes without relaxed their efforts. The process towards a strongest reinforcement of the relationship was begun but it could find difficulties and stalemate: June 1989 is the best representation of that risk.

Before 1989

When Hawke returned from his first visit to China in 1984, where he enthusiastically met Premier Zhao Ziyang, he claimed that China would provide an immense market for Australian raw materials and manufactured goods. Hawke urged every Australian to approach with the PRC, reading about its story, stimulating new interests, choosing China as tourist destination in order to take advantage from the new opportunities the Chinese reforms presented. Members of the Hawke Government began to speak of a "special relationship" with the PRC and in 1984 alone, 70,000 Australians visited China. Chinese businesses seminars proliferated and Australian policy-makers were 'poised to expand the Australian economic border and conquer the Chinese market'.⁷⁰

66 D. Lee, 2006, *Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century*, Circa, Beaconsfield, Victoria, pp. 226, 227 and O. A. Westad, 2012, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750*, Basic Book.

67 The Four Modernisation included the modernisation of agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology and were promoted by Deng Xiaoping after the death of Mao.

68 The Open Door Policy was adopted by the Chinese Communist Party in order to increase the trade relations with the global community and reinvigorate the unproductive economy which characterised the Cultural Revolution.

69 "Hard Work Required", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.1 April 1986, p. 1.

70 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia.

As a matter of fact, the greatest impact of the Hawke Government flowed from the economic reforms that abandoned the traditional Labor reliance on tariffs to protect internal industry and jobs. During its terms from 1983 to 1991, the government reduced the protectionism of the Australian business and industry, increasing competition and achieving, at the same time, improved employment participation.⁷¹

The Chinese Ambassador to Australia Zhang Zai, expressing his views about the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and China, noted that the two countries shared ‘an excellent political relationship in which China and Australia had many common interests and similar views on many international and regional issues’.⁷² Trade and economic relations experienced remarkable growth and development. In 1987 Australia became the fifth largest trade partner of China and China was the biggest market for Australia. At that moment, the record in their trade was signed in 1986 when the total Sino-Australian trade value reached US\$ 1,617 million, about 18 times more than the US\$ 86 million in 1972 when diplomatic relations were first established. In 1986 the Chinese imports from Australia were US\$ 1,407 million while the Chinese export to Australia were US\$ 209 million.⁷³

Agricultural cooperation was another growing sector which strongly affected the relation between Australia and the PRC. As a matter of fact, agricultural was a central feature of the economy of both Australia and China and has been an important part of the relationship for a number of decades –trade with China has been dominated by bulk commodities such as wheat, wool and sugar.

In particular, in May 1984, the *Australia-China Agricultural Co-operation* was signed in Beijing and it represented a milestone in the agricultural relationship. The aim of the agreement was to draw together widely dispersed co-operative activities in agriculture with the aim that Australian efforts would achieve maximum impact in terms both of what Australia could learn from the Chinese agricultural experience and of what China could learn from Australian technology and research. Furthermore, the growth in the Chinese economy, increased standards of living and changes towards a higher protein diet were expanding the demand for higher quality agricultural means in China requiring the Australian assistance in the application of advanced technology.⁷⁴

71 National Archives of Australia, Australia’s Prime Ministers: Bob Hawke In Office. See <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/> (November 2012).

72 “Work together for even better relations”, *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.5 April 1987, p. 5.

73 Ibid.

74 “Agricultural Co-operation”, *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.1 April 1986, p. 9.

Zhang Zai explained that more and more people in China and Australia were conscious of the positive roles that the two countries played in promoting economic prosperity and peace in the Asian and Pacific Regions. In order to develop the ties, the government leaders, the departments and the social circles had to consolidate the links created in the past. In addition, further strengthening of cultural and educational links and exchanges would bring about a better knowledge of each other's different culture, philosophy and values and a deeper understanding of each other. These improvements reached not only governments but also people to people contacts, the non-governmental organisations, institutions and friendship societies.⁷⁵

As often repeated, the variety of social and cultural issues which involved Australia and the PRC included education, immigration, sport, arts and music. Some examples were given in the previous paragraphs. Here, it will give an example of another area of exchanges: the one of Academies of Humanities and Social Sciences. Since 1981, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and the Australian Academy of the Humanities conducted an Exchange Scheme with the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) to enable the scholars in the social sciences and the humanities from each country to visit each other, usually to further their research on a particular subject. The fields covered by the visitors varied widely. In 1987 the Australian visitors were a marine archaeologist, a philosopher of religion, a director of prisons, a psychologist interested in the family and a constitutional lawyer. The Chinese visitors comprised a party of agricultural economists, two other economists concerned with resources and with advertising, a researcher on ethnic minorities and two senior administration of CASS itself. The exchange had a significant part in increasing contacts between Australia and China and its influence has not been limited to visits under the Exchange itself. Such visits, in fact, have sometimes resulted in a succession of further contacts.⁷⁶

Tiananmen Square and Canberra's reactions

The events of June 3 and 4, 1989 in Beijing sent shock waves throughout the South-East Asia Region and few countries were as swift and outspoken as Australia in responding their criticism. Few hours after the events occurred in Tiananmen Square, Hawke and

⁷⁵ "Work together for even better relations", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.5 April 1987, p. 5.

⁷⁶ "Exchanges by Academies of Humanities and Social Sciences", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.9 April 1988, p. 12.

the Foreign Minister G. Evans strongly condemned the Chinese Government's actions and called for a quick return to a more moderate behaviour. Hawke claimed:

our optimism was shattered as we watched in horror the unyielding forces of repression brutally killing the vision of youth. Unarmed young men and women were sprayed with bullets and crushed by tanks. Innocent people were shot and beaten in the streets and in their homes... Thousands have been killed and injured, victims of a leadership that seems determined to hang on to the reins of power at any cost at awful human cost.⁷⁷

In particular, the Hawke Government was the first in the Sino-Australian historical relationship which criticised so heavily the Chinese. At regard, Stuart Harris remembers the tacit reactions of Australians to the savage outcome of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and to the deaths which in each case reached at least tens millions.⁷⁸

In the sequence of events which lead to the June crisis Evans had remarked the Chinese Government that Australians hoped it resolved without violence and 'in a manner which would have not jeopardised the significant achievements of the PRC'⁷⁹ the protests of the Chinese students began in April 1989. In China there was little evidence that the government was prepared to pay much attention to calls for restraint. Thus, the patently false nature of the Chinese Government about the number of people killed and injured in Tiananmen Square and the summary way it used in dispensing justice to those implicated, angered Canberra and on June, 12 Hawke wrote directly to the Chinese Premier Li Peng expressing his 'deep sense of tragedy and sympathy for the people of China and plead that Beijing replaced the processes of violence with the one of dialogue, the processes of repression with the one of tolerance, the processes of suspicion with the one of trust'.⁸⁰

The Hawke Administration continued to level strong criticism against the Chinese actions and some sanctions were imposed. The government cancelled or suspended future visits to the PRC and two projects of development assistance were affected. On

77 T. Kendall, 2007, *Within China's Orbit. China through the eyes of the Australian Parliament*, Parliamentary Library, p. 72.

78 S. Harris, "Australia-China Political Relations 1985-95: Fear, Friendly or What?", in C. Mackerras, 1996, *Australia and China. Partners in Asia*, Griffith University, Melbourne, pp. 9, 10.

79 "Australian Government Statements", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.14 June 1989, p. 7.

80 See R. Trood, "From Cooperation to Conflict: Australia and China in 1989", in C. Mackerras, K.B. Bucknall, R.B. Trood, 1989, *The Beijing tragedy: implications for China and Australia*, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Division of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, p. 69.

July a second set of sanctions were imposed, suspending ministerial visits, party and parliamentary visits and constrained official contacts at senior level until the end of 1989. Defence visits and public security visits were also suspended indefinitely. New aid proposal would require review and Canberra announced support for the initiatives of international financial institutions to defer consideration of new loans to China.⁸¹

These sanctions were carefully controlled because Canberra was anxious to avoid precipitate actions which might have the effect of foreclosing later policy options; Australia policy-makers were anxious to keep open lines of communication with possible moderates in Beijing. With the exception of defence and security visits and sales of defence equipment, most sanctions were removed by 1991. The general view was that any policies likely to retard the process of reform, such as the imposition of trade sanctions, should be avoided. Rather, it should attempt to keep lines of communication open in the hope of encouraging those elements of the Chinese leadership still anxious to maintain the ways of reforms.⁸²

The members of the Australian business community with interests in China shared this opinion. From the beginning of the crisis they urged that the emotional shock of events in Tiananmen did not obscure the Australian long term commercial interests there. While there were elements of uncertainty in that situation, Australia's trade prospects remained good and because of China's proximity and regional importance, it was necessary to avoid actions that might push it towards isolationism. Not only Canberra desired to keep the lines of communication open but it also finally decided against any other cuts to the aid programme or any limits on cultural, economic⁸³ and student exchanges.

By the way, the Hawke Government extended visas of thousands of Chinese students in Australia. A large number of them sought to stay after June 1989 and Hawke reassured them that no Chinese students would be returned to China in that current situation. The students succeeded in obtaining residences, becoming the largest onshore migration intake in Australian history.⁸⁴

81 See Ann Kent, "Human Rights: From Sanctions to Delegations to Dialogue" in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, p. 149.

82 See R. Trood, "From Cooperation to Conflict: Australia and China in 1989", in C. Mackerras, K.B. Bucknall, R.B. Trood, 1989, *The Beijing tragedy: implications for China and Australia*, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Division of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, p. 70.

83 The events of May and June had little direct impact on Australia's exports to China, reflecting the composition of its exports, which comprised largely bulk raw materials, particularly wool, wheat, iron ore and sugar.

84 T. Kendall, 2007, *Within China's Orbit. China through the eyes of the Australian Parliament*, Parliamentary Library, pp. 72, 73.

Australia remained committed to a long-term co-operative relationship with China with the aim of continue a strong bilateral relationship based on respect, common regional interests and mutual benefit;⁸⁵ in doing so, and as a consequence of June 1989, the Hawke Government promoted human rights pushing them to centre stage.

Hawke has the merit of having introduced the matter of human rights into the Australian public opinion. The problem naturally existed also before the Hawke Government but he made great efforts in promoting it even keeping communication channels with China open in order to preserve the opportunity to influence directions in the long term.

Keating and Australia's engagement with Asia

Paul Keating replaced Bob Hawke as leader of the Labor Party at the end of 1991. His election created considerable impact on domestic policy but it had little immediate repercussion outside of Australia. When he took office he immediately emphasised the importance of Asia in Australia's foreign relations. Keating highlighted the necessity for Australia of abandoning its British legacy and move towards Asia. He also suggested that Australia should change its form of government and become a republic, explaining that Australia could not act as an independence power of the South-East Asia Region while retaining constitutional allegiance to Great Britain.⁸⁶

After the breakdown of 1989 at Tiananmen Square, the new Prime Minister significantly recovered the Sino-Australian relations over the period 1991 to 1996 although he made it clear that he did not regard the relationship as "special", as often defined by Hawke. Keating, of course, emphasised the importance of China for Australia but the PRC could not preclude the importance of other countries of the region. After Tiananmen, he was worried to understand which place China might have took into the international community and in the South-Asia Region at the beginning of the new decade.

Australia had vital economic and security interests in Asia but still limited influence. According to Keating, 'Australians needed to find some way of leverage for entering in the region and they would protect their interests and make some modest contribution to managing the its equilibrium'.⁸⁷

85 "Australia Policy on China", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China* Vol.1 No.15 October 1989, p. 5.

86 F. A. Mediansky, 1997, *Australian Foreign Policy: Into the New Millennium*, MacMillan Publishers Australia, South Yarra.

87 Keating, 2000, *Engagement. Australia faces the Asia-Pacific*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, p. 46.

China, with which Australia was in good relations during the 1980s, was seen after 1989 with a sort of diffidence; thus, before going on in strengthening their ties with the PRC, Australians needed to better understand what was happening in the third largest landmass of any country in the world.

China in the 1990s and Keating's guidelines

In the 1990s China, with nearly one quarter of all people on the globe, still faced enormous problems which included the different rates of development between the coast and the hinterland; high levels of poverty, with 70 million Chinese, especially in rural areas, continuing to fall below the poverty line; huge problems of unemployment as the government began to reform calcified state-owned enterprises; and dangerous environmental pollution. Only 14 per cent of people in rural area had access to safe drinking water and in those areas land was degraded by soil erosion, salination and deforestation. Furthermore, 17 million Chinese had to be housed and fed each year.⁸⁸

China's economic reforms were continuing in areas like prices, import liberalisation and the extension of open-city status to many interior centres. Beijing's control over the provinces was becoming more tenuous and entrepreneurial attitudes were emerging, freer of ideology of the past. The economic grew reached nearly 13 per cent in 1992 and more and more of that growth was coming from the burgeoning non-state sector. Some coastal areas were growing at more than 25 per cent, enlarging the disparities between the coastal and the interior cities. The Chinese leadership had to bring the "massive" China into the modern economy, maintaining social stability and equity between regions; it had to find jobs for young people and for those displaced by economic reforms. All these changes were taken in a context in which fiscal and monetary instruments were, despite rapid development, still rudimentary by the standards of the developed economies.⁸⁹

From the Australian side, trade with China was growing rapidly despite the turmoil of Tiananmen. It was dominated by commodity exports from Australia, especially iron ore and wool, clothing, textiles and electronic goods. By 1993 about 540 joint ventures contracts were signed by Australian business which wanted to enter in the Chinese market. Keating's aim was integrate more closely the Sino-Australian business; he made an example: as China moved towards an annual steel production target of 100 million

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 48.

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 48, 49.

tonnes, Australia could encourage further investment in the extraction and early processing of steel-making raw materials such as iron ore and metallurgic coal. Opportunities also existed to better integrate the Australian wool production and the Chinese textile industry. However, such ambitions, the Prime Minister explained, required a more transparent environment in which the two countries could develop their trade. This was the reason why the Labor Minister wanted to see China as a member of GATT and APEC. The South-East Asia Region would be happier and more peaceful if the Chinese neighbours were self-confident, if their own relationships were in good repair and if all the countries of the region felt that they could help shape their future by participating in active regional institutions. This placed a heavy responsibility on China's neighbours themselves to maintain their own relationships and to develop solid, working regional institutions. That was one of the function of APEC and that was why the leadership meetings were, and still are, so important.⁹⁰

It is interesting read the point of view of the Chinese over their 1990s, gave by the writer Li Haibo. In 1994, in an article for *Action China*, he wrote as follows.

Whatever the next century will bring, China will certainly undergo more profound changes and have a stronger voice in the new era. This is a logical conclusion if one assesses the country's economic performance in this decade.

The 1990s will probably be the most glorious decade for China since the 1940s, the beginning of her modern history. China boasts one of the fastest growing economies in the world and this economic boom started in 1978 when reform and opening policies were initiated by the supreme leadership headed by Deng Xiaoping. This brought about one of the greatest and most rapid improvements in national strength and welfare in world. Real GNP (gross national product) has grown by an average of 9,3 per-cent each year for the past 16 years [...]. By 1999, when the PRC celebrates her 50th anniversary, the country's economic and social development will have entered a new stage. Although the per capita GNP will still be comparatively low, the Chinese as a whole will be able to lead a relatively comfortable life [...]. In 1978, about 250 million Chinese were reported to have been living in "absolute poverty". Now, the number is 8 million and they are expected to be lifted out of poverty by 1999 [...]. The trend of industrialisation and urbanisation is clear everywhere in China. Cranes and bulldozers are changing cities' facades and expanding their limits. The number of cities had increased to 512 in 1992 from 193 in 1978 [...]. China proclaimed in 1992 that the object of the country's economic reform would be to establish a socialist market economy. Last year the authorities stated that such a market economy would be set in place by the end of this century. Then, in term of global trade, market size and sheer economic bulk, China will

⁹⁰ bid, pp. 55-60.

be an independent and indispensable force in the international economic system. Meanwhile, in the global political arena, China, then a more integrated nation, will speak with a louder voice that will command even more attention in the international community.⁹¹

The article makes clearly understand why the Australian Governments gave a particularly emphasis on trade and investments in China: it offered a great and in expansion market, even more open towards the third countries.

The openness towards third countries represented in the 1990s as never before a new strengthening in China's relations but it also presented a controversial matter which in those years involved China with black marks, the human rights dialogue.

The Human Rights Dialogue

The issue of human rights entered in the Sino-Australian dialogue with the suppression of independence demonstrations in Tibet in the autumn of 1987. In that circumstance, young monks and nuns led non-violent forms of demonstrations which initiated a new phase of protests against the Chinese rule in Tibet. From that point, Tibetans associated their struggle for independence with demands for democracy and human rights, giving their voices to the outside world.⁹² Furthermore, from June 1989, Canberra prompted human rights in its connections with the PRC, condemning it for the abuses towards the protesters.

In 1991, the Chinese sought to reopen relations with the West and invited an Australian delegation to China to study the situation; in November 1992 Keating invited Li Peng to send a similar delegation to Australia.⁹³

Human rights represented a complicated issue between Canberra and Beijing and despite the efforts of the Australian delegation to China at the beginning of 1990s, it was not until 1998 that it accepted to send return delegations to monitor and assess the condition of Australia's human right. On the other hand, Australia had a special interaction with China on the question if compared with other middle powers. Because

91 "Heading for the 21st century", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China*, November 1994, pp. 7, 8.

92 R. D. Schwartz, 1994, *Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising*, C. Hurst&Co. Ltd, London, see Introduction.

93 Keating, 2000, *Engagement. Australia faces the Asia-Pacific*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, p. 57.

of its geographical location in the South-Asia Region, Australians perceived themselves to be under stronger pressure than others in promoting human rights interests.⁹⁴

As said before, a particular human right issue regarded Tibet and after the visits of the Dalai Lama to Australia in 1992 and 1996, most Australians shared with him a belief in non-violence and a widespread sympathy for the Tibetan position. When the Dalai Lama visited Keating and Evans in May 1992, he asked for the permission to set up a Tibet Information Office in Australia, which was subsequently granted. This office was a sort of embassy and it represented the Tibetan people, particularly irritating the Chinese. The Dalai Lama accused them of cultural genocide after have undermined the Tibetan religion and not provided sufficient support for the Tibetan development. Concern was expressed in particular for the treatment of Tibetans in the suppression of protests against the Chinese rule.⁹⁵

The debate over Tibet has become complicated, having on one side the Tibetans who repeatedly denounced Beijing and its aggression and on the other side the Chinese who denounced the Tibetans of exploiting their cause to move closer to middle powers. The Chinese objected that the Tibetan culture, which according to the Dalai Lama was under threat, was in reality flourishing in the 1980s and 1990s; moreover, the Tibetan population, who the Dalai Lama defined 'under constant threat' was in truth rising: the 1990 census counted 4.593 million Tibetans over the 1982 census which counted 3.874 million.⁹⁶

Obviously, the Chinese reacted negatively to the Australian defence of the Tibetan cause. The reactions were more sharply after the election of John Howard, who renewed the Australian ties with the American allies, decreasing the closeness with the Chinese.⁹⁷ The Sino-Tibetan cause continues to be a reason of contention and Canberra has always felt itself as challenging between its reliance to the Chinese friends and its involvement in the Tibetan cause; although the Australian criticism would never put aside its dialogue with the PRC and the Australian Government turns a blind eye for the sake of their ties, Beijing has often denounced Canberra for taking the Tibetan side. There are lots of disapproval notes make public by the Chinese in which they accused Australia of

94 See Ann Kent, "Human Rights: From Sanctions to Delegations to Dialogue" in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, pp. 147, 148.

95 See S. Harris, "Australia-China Political Relations 1985-95: Fear, Friendly or What?", in C. Mackerras, 1996, *Australia and China. Partners in Asia*, Griffith University, Melbourne, p. 13.

96 "The Dalai Lama and his visit to Australia", *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China*, February 1997, p. 6.

97 See next paragraph.

making ‘ill-founded comments on the question of Tibet’.⁹⁸ Australians’ aim is that the Chinese will consider those ‘ill-founded comments’ in order to erase the discordance over the human rights issue.

“The market of the educational exchanges”

The most relevant guidelines of the Hawke and Keating Governments in connection with the PRC have been respectively the “global liberalism” and the “regional integration”. On the one hand, Hawke transformed the Australian economy and the traditional protectionism culture into an open economy with one of the lowest rates of tariff protection of developed countries. On the other hand, Keating replying to the question ‘Where are Australia’s primary foreign policy interests at the end of the twentieth century?’ he said that ‘the Australian future is in Asia and among the bustling, high-performance economies of the South-East Asia’.⁹⁹

Both of these policies served to get Australia closer to China and they made it exploiting some of the Sino-Australian keystones, in particular, in economy and culture exchanges.

To understand how these two concepts took a new account in the 1990s, it is important to analyse the course of changes occurred in China and Australia in the 1980s. China’s rapid economic growth and its social transformations presented great opportunities to the outside world. After the disruption of the Cultural Revolution over the decade 1966-76, the Chinese needed a review of their systems, which included education, arts and sciences.

Furthermore, important changes occurred within the Australian society, such as a redefining of Australia’s identity and self-image, a reinterpretation of Australian history, a growing sense of multiculturalism and a greater recognition by the wider community of their involvement in Asia, of which China was an essential part.¹⁰⁰

What the Australia policy-makers and academics made was exploited the new opportunities that education and science exchanges provided.

98 See for example S. O’ Mallei, 2009, “China blasts Australia over Tibet Stance”, *The Age*, see www.theage.com.au (December 2012) or Unknown author, 2012, “Australian diplomat in China in Tibet visit request” *BBC News China*, www.bbc.co.uk (December 2012).

99 R. Devetak, A. Burke and J. George, 2007, *An introduction to International Relations. Australian Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, pp. 24, 25.

100 See E. S.K. Fung, “Education, Science and Culture”, in C. Mackerras, 1996, *Australia and China. Partners in Asia*, Griffith University, Melbourne, p. 121.

In particular, aside from the exchanges of teachers, scholars, students, writers, artists, etc. which have been described in the previous paragraphs, in the period in which Hawke was in charge, an important public policy was undertaken. Under the influence of the so-called “economic rationalists”, ministers and senior bureaucrats of the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) decided that Australia could earn substantial foreign exchange through the export of education, that is short-term English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) programs. Educational entrepreneurs soon set up numerous English-language schools in order to cash in on this new source of income.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, by 1992 the DEET, developed a long-term strategy towards education and training relations with China with the following objectives:

- to maintain mutually beneficial educational interaction with the PRC as an integral part of Australia’s bilateral relationship with it and as part of the efforts to maximise the ability of Australians to compete internationally in diplomatic, economic and intellectual arenas;
- to develop educational and research exchanges which benefit Australia by enriching education curricula and delivery systems and contribute to China’s national development and the well-being of its people, as well as securing advantageous conditions for and furthering Australian interests in employment, education and training sectors regionally and globally;
- to take advantage of current commercial opportunities in education in the PRC, including through multilateral aid channels and to position Australians as well as possible for future commercial opportunities in this field and
- to reinforce other trade links with China, particularly rapidly growing regions in Southern China.¹⁰²

These objectives were the principles guiding of the Australian economic imperatives and they helped in ‘shaping attitudes in way favourable to Australia’.¹⁰³ In fact, strengthening the Australian Studies in China and vice versa was by far the most notable way to reduce cultural distance and made the Australian market better known to the Chinese. As an instance, since 1990 three biennial Australian Studies conferences have been organised in China with funding from the Australia-China Council. Their initial interests were in literature but they expanded including economy, society, politics

101 B. Jacobs, O. Yu, 1995, *Bitter Peaches and Plums. Two Chinese novellas on the recent Chinese student experience in Australia*, Monash Asia Institute, Clayton, Victoria, see pp. IV, V.

102 Ibid, pp. 124, 125.

103 Ibid, p. 133.

and environment. In addition, because of some stereotypes perceptions that China and Australia still had of the other, the Council sought to overcome the problems with the following aims:

- promote in China a greater awareness of Australia, with a view to disseminating an image of Australia as technologically sophisticated, multicultural, open and liberal society increasingly oriented towards Asia and
- to promote in Australia a greater awareness of China, with a view to disseminating a sophisticated knowledge of contemporary Chinese society, particularly where this is fundamental to Australia's national economic performance and commercial strategies.¹⁰⁴

These developments succeeded in promoting even more the economical ties as well the cultural ones between Australia and China.

The same thing can be said about the Hawke and Keating Policy towards China: they succeeded in strengthen the Sino-Australian dialogue, using different approaches but obtaining the same positive achievements.

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Before analysing the new Liberal Government of John Howard it is necessary clarify the further developments of Australia's relations with the Republic of China, which has continued to represent an important partners for Australia, above all from the economic perspective.

104 Ibid, pp. 133, 134.

3.5 The relations with the Republic of China: further developments

How the relations between Australia and the Republic of China have been affected since 1972 when Australia recognised the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China? Needless to say the bilateral relationship suffered severe repercussions after 1972 and the Australian shift towards the PRC was at the expense of Taiwan.

In the year preceding the recognition, as it is well known, despite the economical trends between Australia and Taiwan were high,¹⁰⁵ the Department of External Affairs affirmed that ‘the Australian broad objective was to gradually lower the level of official contacts with the Republic of China and avoid further engagements, without publicity’.¹⁰⁶

On December 1972, the ROC ambassador, S.C. Shen, put his residence in Canberra on the market. The Embassy of Taiwan located in Melbourne was closed and Whitlam said that since Australia could not recognise any other government outside the Beijing one, its diplomatic relations with Taiwan ended on December 22, 1972. The PRC became a political reality for Australia on the contrary to Taiwan that was geographically a part of China but not under its control from the political point of view. Thus, in the 1970s, relations between Australia and Taiwan were at minimum. Canberra avoided or reduced all contacts with the island, from the economical to the diplomatic ones and, what is more, for the Taiwanese became extremely difficult also obtain a visa for Australia.¹⁰⁷

If Fraser followed Whitlam’s standpoints upon Taiwan, the Prime Minister Hawke, reinforcing the Australian interests towards the PRC, with which Australia was *lao pengyou*, old friends, distanced even more Taiwan from his country. Hawke’s special engagement with Beijing excluded Taiwan at the point where he warned his backbencher not to travel to Taipei with their parliamentary passports and to avoid all official contacts with the Taiwanese. He persuaded the countries in the South Pacific

105 In June 1971 the Taiwanese contracted to buy 250,000 tonnes of wheat from Australia and in 1971-72 Australia exported good worth around \$A 55,7 million to Taiwan compared to \$ 38,9 million to the PRC.

106 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia’s Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 36.

107 See J.B. Jacobs, “Australia’s Relationship With the Republic of Taiwan” in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, p. 58.

Forum to postpone Taiwan's application for observer status.¹⁰⁸ He sustained that one of the most exciting developments in the Western Pacific was China's modernisation and openness to the outside world and he involved Australia as much as possible in a closest collaboration with the PRC. With these ideas and objectives in minds, it was difficult to pursue a more flexible policy on Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

However, Hawke and his emphasis on the economical achievements and his reluctance to improve diplomatic ties did not preclude Australia from establishing new trade agreements with Taiwan, expanded during the 1980s. In particular, in 1989 an influential Australian economist, Ross Garnaut published a report on the North-East Asia economic importance for the Prime Minister Hawke. The report noted that North-East Asia had emerged as one of three main centres of world production, trade and savings. Australia, according to Garnaut, had to respond to the powerful and direct implications of this growth and among the powerful new economies there was Taiwan. For the sake of trade, also some person-to-person contacts were set up: two Australian senators and a key university vice-chancellor visited Taiwan and in 1995 an Australian office was established in Taipei. These relations were defined Australia's "unofficial official talks with Taiwan" and were strengthened during the 1990s.¹¹⁰

The recover of the ties with the ROC occurred first of all after the democratisation of the island. The Kuomintang had imposed the martial law on Taiwan in 1949 and initiated a program of liberalisation which started in 1987 and ended in early 1990s. Civil and political rights were obtained, the state institutions were reformed, establishing social structures necessary for democracy and the power of the Kuomintang were eroded.¹¹¹

As a consequence of this process of democratisation, many countries supported new interactions with the ROC, and Australia re-started official contacts, including not only economy but also diplomacy.¹¹² The political power in the island was passing increasingly to native-born Taiwanese, who gave voices to their rights also as members of the South-East Asia regional integrators. Keating in particular strongly sustained an Australian overture towards the old friends because he 'could not think that Australia could seriously work towards an South-East Asia economic community without having

108 J. Atkinson, 2012, *Australia and Taiwan: Bilateral Relations, China, the United States, and the South Pacific*, see online on Google.books (December 2012).

109 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, pp. 67, 68.

110 Ibid.

111 A. Wachman, 1994, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, An East Gate Book, New York, pp. 30, 31.

112 Ibid.

Taiwan in it'.¹¹³ The Prime Minister clearly referred to the Taiwanese participation in APEC, participation which was desirable also for removing barriers and discriminatory measures blocking the access to the Taiwanese market.

Another reason why the relationship got closer was attributable to the Tiananmen factor. Among the numerous condemnations which were moved towards the PRC, one is of particular relevancy as well as unexpected. Stephen FitzGerald, on November 1989, called for much more attention to be given to Taiwan. He sustained that Australia's naivety and ineptitude was no-where more clearly displayed than its policy towards Taiwan. FitzGerald also claimed that

Australia had fallen into a national embrace with China that at time seemed to lose all perspective, with large amounts of money spent on our trade efforts in China for unspectacular returns; our infatuation with China led Australia to place a reduced importance on the other China. Australia had put nothing into its trade relations with Taiwan yet on many occasions since the Australian trade with Taiwan had exceeded trade with China.¹¹⁴

FitzGerald's words resulted of course heavy and upset by the June events. Without Tiananmen, probably, the process for the overture towards Taiwan would have required more time, although "unofficial official talks" continued.

In the meantime, the Foreign Minister Evans reassured the 'old friends of the PRC that they should not worry about Australians' revised position on Taiwan because they would always honour the commitments they had made with Beijing'.¹¹⁵

Actually, by the 1990s, the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, J. Button, announced the government's support for closer economic ties with Taiwan; thanks to the complementarity of the two economies he had expected that the trade between them grew over the following two decades.¹¹⁶

In March 1991, a commercial aviation agreement established direct air links after several years of 'difficult negotiation'.¹¹⁷ The same month, Evans announced that Taipei

113 P. Keating, 2000, *Engagement. Australia faces the Asia-Pacific*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, p. 58.

114 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 85.

115 See The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, *An island tiger : report of an unofficial visit to Taiwan*, Australian Parliament, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Canberra.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

could open a commercial office in Canberra; the Taiwanese presence in Canberra facilitated negotiations over trade-issue. In general, by 1991, the Australian export to Taiwan were worth over \$A 2 billion. The island became its fifth largest export market. For Taiwan, Australia became the fourth most important source of imports after Japan, the United States and Germany. By comparison, the Australian trade with the PRC in 1991 was \$A 3250 million, about 30 per cent less than trade with Taiwan. Australia had the raw materials and food as well as some very impressive technological achievements; Taiwan had manufacturing and electronic industries and marketing skills.¹¹⁸ They needed each other for developing resource projects and joint ventures in agriculture.

Australia needed to develop trading partners in Asia like Taiwan, being it a resource rich country in need of foreign capital and a Chinese connection in East Asia. Economy was obviously connected with the diplomatic aspects and unofficial ministerial visits to and from Taiwan became an accepted part of Australia's new policy on Taiwan –despite reservations from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and attempts to ensure the Department retained the right of veto over all future visits.¹¹⁹

Finally, a cabinet submission of May 1992 recommended that the Taiwanese had to be granted diplomatic privileges in Australia. Later, these diplomatic privileges and immunities were expanded to some Taiwanese officials in Canberra using *the 1963 International Organisation Privileges and Immunities Act*.¹²⁰

Canberra reciprocated the Taiwanese visits on October 1992, when the Minister for Tourism and Resources, Alan Griffiths, went to Taiwan for the first time after more than twenty years. The visit clearly arranged commercial objectives and was intended to achieve a number of specific outcomes on market access for Australia commodities and arrangements. On the contrary, from Taiwan's perspective it was more than a commercial visit. It amounted to Australian recognition of the Taiwanese respectability and its status as an economic power in the South-East Asia Region. Ministerial relations, broken off in 1972, were resumed.¹²¹

118 See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1999, *Country economic brief. Taiwan*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1991-1999, Canberra.

119 G. Klintworth, 1993, *Australia's Taiwan Policy 1942-1992*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 111.

120 See The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, *An island tiger : report of an unofficial visit to Taiwan*, Australian Parliament, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Canberra.

121 Ibid.

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In the light of these developments, it is clear that although Australians have affirmed their direction to “One China Policy”, trading with Taiwan and continuing recognize the Beijing as the capital of China, they were *de facto* moving towards a policy of “One China” only in name and “Two China” in practice.

Further implications in the Australia’s relationship with Taiwan will emerge with the Howard and Rudd Governments.

3.6 The double-faced policy of the Howard Government

If in early 1990s connections with China were among the most important of Australia's foreign policy, maintaining good relationships represented the most difficult challenge for John Howard when he was elected in March 1996.

Howard and his administration will succeed in strengthen the Sino-Australian ties but in a first moment they were in danger of being seriously damaged. For this reason the analysis of the Howard Government can be divided into two distinct periods.

1996: A year of friction

The Howard Government came to power determined to adopt a different policy of its predecessor's big picture campaign for engagement with Asia. Howard used severe words arguing that Australian diplomacy in Asia would take into account a major interests for his country; the coalition approach would be "Asia first, but not Asia only" and it would not involve 'perpetual seminar on Australia's identity'.¹²²

The election of the Howard Government raised a collective disapproval because the political campaign was marked by racist statements and because the Labor Coalition had strongly supposed that the new Liberal policy-makers might have damaged the Australian relations with the Asian neighbours, being mainly American oriented.

Furthermore, Howard was involved in the "Pauline Hanson Case". Hanson was a member of the Australian House of Representative and for her maiden speech to Parliament he warned that 'Australians were in danger of being swamped by Asians' and made the sweeping statement that Asian migrants 'had their own culture and religion, form ghettos and did not assimilate.'¹²³ She called for a radical review of immigration policy, for a halt to immigration in the short term and for the abolition of multiculturalism in Australia. Howard was strongly criticised because he did not

122 M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, p. 9.

123 See chapter one, paragraph 5.

condemned Hanson's words and this led to an outbreak of public and media comment on related issues.

From that moment on, each gaffe, scandal or offensive remark provoked heavy wake of apprehension towards the activity of the government. Among observers of Australian foreign policy, it was stated: 'Australia, at the moment has a Prime Minister manifestly uncomfortable with Asia, weak Foreign and Defence ministers' or 'the Howard Government is damaging Australia's relations with South-East Asia Region, with which the official relations are more fragile and less productive than at any time for several decades'.¹²⁴

The question of the Liberal Government policy on Asia goes beyond the scope of the present dissertation but it has represented great repercussion also in the Sino-Australian relationship. As a matter of fact, a number of actions made by Canberra in 1996 led Beijing to believe that Australia was changing its China policy.

First of all, one of the first action of the Howard Government was the announcement of its intention to reinvigorate the Australian alliance with the United States. Canberra reinvoked its traditional agenda, which involved the conservative Western allies on the other side of the world.¹²⁵

Beijing criticised Canberra's policy in March 1996, in the context of the protests against the Chinese missiles tests in the Taiwan Straits. In that months, indeed, Taiwan held its first fully diplomatic presidential election. The Chinese Government, in an effort to reassert its continuing claim to sovereignty over Taiwan and to influence Taiwanese electors not to vote for pro-independence candidates, began a demonstrative series of missile tests in the Taiwan Straits. In response, the American Government moved two aircraft carrier groups into the area to monitor the tests and to affirm its interest in the security of Taiwan. One of the first foreign policy actions of the Liberal Coalition was to call the Chinese Ambassador in Australia to express its concern about the mounting tensions between China and Taiwan. The new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, also welcomed the American decision to move warship into the Straits as a sign of common commitment to the security of the East-Asia Region. Rather, Downer's statement represented the strongest support by any government in the region.¹²⁶

124 M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, p. 18.

125 See J. George, "Theory and Practice in Australian International Relations: The Search for Identity and Security" in R. Devetak, A. Burke, J. George, 2007, *An introduction to International Relations. Australian Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, p.25.

126 S. M. Sherlock, 1997, *Australia's relations with China: what's the problem?*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, p. 6.

Beijing lunched a series of denunciation in the Chinese and international media, where the main target of criticism was Canberra's undisputed allegiance to Washington. Australian actions were appreciated in China until the middle of the 1990s because they were made independently from the Americans but in 1996 the Chinese had no intention of following Australians' views, strongly influenced by the American desire to prevent China from taking its place among the major players on the world stage.

Beijing began to register great sensitivity to Australian dealings with the government in Taipei. In July, the Mayors of Beijing and Shenzhen declined to attend an Asian cities' conference held in Brisbane in protest against the attendance of the Mayor of Taipei, a leading figure in the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party. In August, reports that the Australian Government authorised negotiations for the sale of uranium to Taiwan drew a strongly negative response from Chinese Government representatives. In September, the Chinese Government criticised the visit of the Minister for Primary Industries, J. Anderson, to Taiwan with a businesses delegation.¹²⁷

Another event which damaged the Sino-Australian relations was the decision, in April 1996, to abolish the Development Import Finance Facility (DIFF) a concessional finance scheme for developing countries. Founded as part of Australia's overseas aid scheme of soft loan for projects in Asia involving the Australian companies, the project had been controversial for some time and the government decided to abolish it as a part of efforts to reduce budget expenditure. The Chinese reacted with dismay saying that they had not been forewarned about the decision and that a number of Chinese agencies had put time and money into investigating the feasibility of several DIFF proposal. The Chinese Ambassador said that the move 'not only caused financial loss on the Chinese side but also did not give good Australian credibility and businesses interests in China. All those projects were committed by the two governments and if they were not carried out, they were not in line with international practices'.¹²⁸ The Chinese were particularly concerned that the cancellation of DIFF funding was part of a wider campaign by Western countries to restrict the flow of development assistance to the PRC. Australia's move came at a time when other countries were reducing their concessional finance to China and the American representative in the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were pressuring those institutions to rule China as ineligible for soft loans on the grounds of its growing economic strength.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 7.

¹²⁸ M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, pp. 13, 14.

Canberra showed a reinvigoration of ties with Washington when, in July 1996, it used the occasion of the annual Australia-American defence talks (AUSMIN) consultation to sign a new security declaration and agreed to expand the range of joint exercises, including regular participation by American personnel on Australian soil. Chinese reactions to the development came quickly and stridently from the *People's Daily*, which denounced the United States for using Australia and Japan as the two “anchors” of its security arrangements in Asia. Chinese also compared Australia to a bat which gave its allegiance to the mammals when they triumphed, but showed its wings and declared itself a bird when the birds were victorious. Australians seemed ‘suffering from the same confusion and embarrassment of forty years before and it still never had a truly independent defence policy’.¹²⁹

The final element of friction in the Sino-Australian relations during 1996 was the visit of the Dalai Lama to Australia –in September. As soon as it was announced that the Buddhist leader and symbol of the Tibetan independence struggle would be visiting Australia, the Chinese Government began protesting against any suggestion that the Dalai Lama would meet Howard. Beijing repeated that the visit would produced negative impact on their relations, affecting political and economic relations.¹³⁰

The worsening in the relationship between China and Australia was fixed as soon as it started. In the book *The Howard Paradox*, Wesley explained how it has been possible that the Australian Government, once deteriorated the relations with China, repaired them so quickly –in few years. Rather, it reached a level of intimacy with the PRC that was never reached before. A range of observers gave some explanations for justifying the so-called “Howard’s Paradox”. It was explained that Howard was matures as a foreign policy practitioners; that Australia’s enhanced global standing due to its strong economy and high-profile involvement in counter terrorism increased respect for Australia in the Asian countries; that the Australian society became less “Asiaphobic”; that Howard “rediscovery” the Labor Party’s formula for managing the regional relations; that Howard insisted on cultural difference and on emphasis on bilateralism. In brief, the “Howard’s Paradox” showed that many of Howard’s critics overestimated the damage made by some of the Liberal Government actions.¹³¹

129 S. M. Sherlock, 1997, *Australia's relations with China: what's the problem?*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, p. 8.

130 “The Dalai Lama and his visit to Australia”, *Action China. Promoting understanding and interchanges between Australia and China*, February 1997, p. 6.

131 M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, pp. 24-26.

Towards a stronger relationship

Concerned to prevent any further deterioration in relations, Howard moved, in November 1996, to reassure the Chinese that Australia had not altered its China policy following the election of a Liberal Party Government. He took the opportunity of the APEC summit in Manila to meet with the Chinese President Jiang Zemin and discuss of the problems emerged during that current year. In that occasion, China ended the hostile public critique of Australian policy. The meeting was described by a Chinese presidential spokesman as very friendly. 'The meeting could not resolve all problems but the two leaders reached a common understanding in overcoming their difficulties and keeping better relations for the future'.¹³² Jiang Zemin invited Howard to reciprocate an official visit to China in 1997. Following the meeting between the two leader, some observers suggested the the problems affecting the relationship were partly overcome. The whole affair, however, underscored the inherently touchy nature of the relationship with China.

In January 1997, the Chinese deputy Foreign Minister, Chen Jian, told an Australian journalist that 'understanding had been enhanced and there were good prospects for the further developments of Sino-Australian relations'.¹³³ He went on explaining that the difficulties in 1996 were due to 'the Australian Government which taking some actions that hurt the national feelings of the Chinese people and as long as the two countries respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, bilateral relations would continue to develop as well as potential for cooperation'.¹³⁴

After having initiated a period of recovery with China, the relationship remained stable, bolstered by a booming trade connection. Some diplomatic collision has arisen, especially because of Howard's little emphasis in maintaining a "special relationship" with the PRC and his great attention for Japan and United States as strategic partners.

At the end of 1996, Howard announced that China's rise 'was the most significant strategic development for the neat fifteen years' and that 'the future policies of the United States and Japanese towards China, and China's aptitude in dealing with them, will determine the future stability of South-East Asia'.¹³⁵

132 S. M. Sherlock, 1997, *Australia's relations with China: what's the problem?*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, p. 10.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Roy Campbell McDowall, 2009, *Howard's long march: the strategic depiction of China in Howard government policy, 1996-2006*, ANU E Press, see online Google.books (December 2012).

In August 1997, the DFAT published a White Paper entitled, *In the National Interest*, reaffirming the importance of China for its region and the central role it recovered in the relationship with Australia. However, alongside the opportunities offered by China, there was also a more cautious view of its rising power in the South-East Asia. The Howard Government felt sometimes uncomfortable with the strategic developments obtained by China –economic growth, increases in defence funding, access to modern technology and air and marine forces. Instead of seeing these achievements as an opportunity for Australia, Howard and his administration have never totally reached a “spirit of detente” with the PRC, maintaining always the need of the American presence in South-East Asia as a guarantee and stability for the region.¹³⁶

Canberra, however, in order to not incur in Chinese’s displeasure, put great attention by steering a careful course between the demands of Washington and those of Beijing. Howard and Downer ‘did not indulge in the alarmist rhetoric about China heard so often in Washington during the Bush administration’¹³⁷ and sought instead to reinforce a web of political, diplomatic and military links with Beijing. It had yet been demonstrated to Australians in 1996 how they could incur the displeasure of the the Chinese.

Slowly but surely, the Australian policy-makers distanced themselves from Washington’s public criticism of China’s authoritarian political structures and human rights record. Canberra supported from the beginning the Chinese entry in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and refused to join the Americans in lobbying the European Union to maintain restrictions on weapons sales to China.¹³⁸

Howard visited China more often than any previous prime minister and high-level Chinese officials visited Australia. The most important was the visit of the Chinese President Hu Jintao, who became the first non-elected foreign leader to address the Australian Parliament when he appeared before a joint sitting of both Houses the day after a similar address by President Bush in 2003.

Visiting Beijing in 2004, Downer said that he agreed with Premier Wen Jiabao that ‘Australia and China would built up a bilateral strategic relationship, that we would strengthen our economic relationship and we would work together closely on South-East Asia issues, be the economic or security issues’.¹³⁹ Australia and China cooperated

136 Ibid.

137 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 69.

138 M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, p. 127.

139 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, pp. 69, 70.

on counter-terrorism and the Royal Australian Navy conducted a joint exercise with the Chinese Navy. Furthermore, the Howard Government was aware that Australia's future would be closely linked with the one of China, which year by year was buying more and more of Australia's coal, iron, iron ore, wool, petroleum, aluminium, liquefied natural gas and other resources.

On Beijing's side, the post-Deng Xiaoping leadership realised the importance of continued economic growth for internal stability in China, aware that increasing integration with world markets and institutions such as the WTO was necessary to continue that growth. Beijing was even more aware that an important part of securing China's future growth would be the ability to reassure the international community that it not would be disruptive like previous rising powers. Over time, this became known in China as the "peaceful rise policy": assuring other states that China was, and would be, a benign, non-aggressive, essentially status quo power.¹⁴⁰

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The Howard years have not been the disaster that many had forecast. Of course, Australia got closer to the United States and renewed the alliance with them but it also maintained the Hawke-Keating "integrationist project" with the South-East Asia Region and had enhanced the Australian relations with ASEAN, China and Japan.

Two questions still remained unresolved: Australia's position over the Sino-Taiwanese relations and the human rights in the PRC.

Since Canberra has pondered each of its actions in order to not incur in the American or Chinese displeasure, it faced a difficult situation. In front of Washington's attacks to Chinese ambiguous movements towards Taiwan, Canberra needed always to take into consideration the American position and reassure the Chinese that Australians 'have had a "One China Policy" since 1972 and they simply urged all the parties involved to settle their differences peacefully'.¹⁴¹

About human rights, Howard decided to distanced himself from the question which will be reconsidered under the Rudd Government.

140 M. Wesley, 2007, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006*, ABC Books, Sydney, p. 93.

141 See J.B. Jacobs, "Australia's Relationship With the Republic of Taiwan" in N. Thomas, 2004, *Re-orienting Australia-China relations. 1972 to the present*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, pp. 45, 46.

3.7 The “Asia Pacific Century”

Kevin Rudd and Australia’s new engagement with Asia

In 2007, after eleven years of Liberal Party Government, John Howard was replaced by the Labor Party Coalition, led by Kevin Rudd.

Someone likes to define Kevin Rudd as an ambitious Prime Minister because, in contrast with the restricted diplomacy of the Howard Government, ‘Rudd’s aim was the creation of a global coalition which collaborate in the international system’.¹⁴²

At regards, Rudd inherited the Hawke-Keating focus on the Asia Region and in June 2008 he broached his “Asia-Pacific Community concept”, which would enable countries of the region to jointly security, economic, social and trans-boundary issues. China’s role in Rudd’s vision was clear: it will be central to the development of a cooperative security community in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Rudd was the first Western leader who spoke a fluently Mandarin and this capability certainly pleased Wen Jiabao, who was one of the first foreign leaders to congratulate himself with the new Australian Prime Minister. Before the elections, there was a great consensus among the Chinese citizens that Rudd, whether elected Prime Minister, could play a good role in strengthening the Sino-Australian relationship.

On the contrary to the Howard bilateral approach towards countries of the Asian Region, Rudd sustained a policy of bilateralism, highlighting the importance of collaborate together to improve the regional relationships. In this regard, Rudd supported the creation of an Asia Pacific Community (APC) which was supposed to include all countries of the region with the aim of promoting economic, political and security dialogue. The project did not succeed in its creation but it assumed great relevance, demonstrating Rudd’s willingness to engage both the United States and China within the same forum. A result emerged in the East Asia Summit in 2010, where the both the Chinese and the Americans participated.¹⁴³

142 The Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2008, *Ambition: The Emerging Foreign Policy of the Rudd Government*, Sydney, p. 15.

143 Y. Wang, 2012, *Australia-China Relations post 1949. Sixty Years of Trade and Politics*, Ashgate publishing Limited, England, see online Google.books (December 2013).

Rudd's interaction with Hillary Clinton and other member of the American Administration certainly exerted a strong impact on Washington's thinking of China and especially in the need for strengthening the American presence in Asia.

Rudd's diplomacy contributed the decision of the Obama Government to attend also the East Asia Summit in 2011 alongside Russia and China and exerted its influence on Washington in relation to the enhancement of the G20.

The 2009 Defence White Paper, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, reinforced Rudd's engagement towards Asia. The White Paper provides the guidelines of Australia's defense policy over the period 2009–2030.

This represents an important document for Australia, first of all because Canberra has not edited a similar text since a decade, and secondly because publishing it Canberra emerged as a promoter of the South-East Asia regional security cooperation. From the section dedicate to China, it has emerged as follows.

South-East Asia needed a regional stability and security for sustaining reasonable rates of development. As concern China's place and role, it was described as the country which would become a major driver of economic activities in the region; considering the Chinese growing importance not only at the regional but also into global level, it was explained that the crucial relationship for the stability of the South-East Asia Region will be the one between the United States and the PRC.

The paper wrote that some problems could emerge over the region, creating discrepancy between Washington and Beijing, and giving an example, it mentioned the Taiwanese question: 'for this reason, all parties will need to work hard to ensure that developments in relation to Taiwan over the years ahead are peaceful ones'.¹⁴⁴

The document also considers China's military capabilities as a necessity for the development of a regional security. However, calling for a common structure for the regional security, the paper affirmed that 'the pace, scope and structure of China's military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern if not carefully explained'.¹⁴⁵ Namely, Beijing should openly declare its military plans because China's rising power involved the regional interests.

The Chinese Government reacted negatively to this assessment, assuming that it was directed at countering Chinese military capabilities.¹⁴⁶ Of course, China has begun to assume a peaceful position in recent years but, the White Paper wrote, it needs to do

144 Department of Defence, 2009, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Defence White Paper, Australian Government, p. 34.

145 Ibid.

146 W. B. R. Chair, 2009, *American Foreign Policy: Regional Perspectives*, U.S. Naval War College, Rhode Island, see online on Google.books (January 2013).

more, particularly as the modernisation appears potentially to be beyond the scope for a conflict over Taiwan.¹⁴⁷

Other reasons of friction between Beijing and Canberra under the Rudd Government was the matter of human rights. Rudd did not refrain from openly criticize the Chinese human rights record in particular in the Kaader and the Stern affairs.

Stern Hu is an Australian citizen who was responsible for marketing iron ore to Chinese steel mills. He has been sentenced by a Shangai court in 2010 to ten years of imprisonment for taking bribed and stealing trade secret. However, since of the reasons of the condemn were not clear enough and the Chinese did not give valid explanations, the case created high criticism in Australia.

Rebiya Kadeer is an American-based activist for the self-determination of the Uighur people, many of whom live in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Beijing denounced Kadeer of being a terrorist and accused her group of planning and instigating the death of 190 Uighur people. When the Melbourne Film Festival planned, in 2009, to screen a documentary about her life and troubles with the Chinese Government, Beijing objected, demanding in vain that it was not shown and that Kadeer was not welcomed in Australia.¹⁴⁸

It is interesting that in these case, like in the past, Rudd did not hesitate in condemning China's abuses of human right even knowing that the reaction could be strident. Another example comes from Rudd's discourse at Beijing University in 2008, where, talking about the Tibetan problem, he said: 'Australia, like most other countries, recognised China's sovereignty over Tibet. But we also believe it is necessary to recognise there are significant human rights problems in Tibet and the current situation is of concern to our country. We recognised the need for all parties to avoid violence and find a solution through dialogue'.¹⁴⁹

The expected answer of Beijing was that Tibet is a purely internal affair of China and no foreign country had the right to interfere.

In spite of these discussions, the annual China-Australia human right dialogue¹⁵⁰ continue to be held. It serves the interests of both government. In particular, it offers to

147 Department of Defence, 2009, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Defence White Paper, Australian Government, p. 34.

148 For further information see July 2009, "Australia defies China to host Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer", *The Telegraph*, www.telegraph.co.uk (January 2013).

149 S. Firth, 2011, *Australia in international politics: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*- Third Edition, National Library of Australia, p. 326.

150 The first China-Australia human right dialogue took place in 1997.

Beijing the tangible evidence to the world that it takes human right seriously and is open to foreign criticism.

As it occurred in the past, political troubles between Australia and the PRC did not prevent them to persist in their economic ties.

In August 2009, the Australian Resources Minister, Martin Ferguson, met Zhang Ping, Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission in order to conclude one of the the Sino-Australian largest businesses deal. PetroChina and Exxon Mobil Corp signed \$ 50 billion contract which has stipulated that Australia would supply Liquefied Natural Gas from its Northwest coast to China's booming regions for 20 years.¹⁵¹ By the last year of the Rudd Government, China became the world's second largest economy and remains Australia's largest trading partner.

*

Wang assumed that due to Rudd's popularity at home and his knowledge of Mandarin he would have had a major success in making a difference to Australia's engagement with China.¹⁵²

Perhaps, Rudd could be in a measure justified considered the brevity of his mandate which impeded him to carry on its innovative ideas for the South-East Asia Region. Rudd probably made a mistake because he did not considered that his "creative diplomacy" had to find an international correspondence to be successful.

Therefore, the Rudd Government has the merit of having strengthened Australia's presence in Asia and China, even maintaining close ties with the American allies.

Beijing, on the contrary of what it was done during the Howard Administration, seemed to be less bothered by the American alliance with Australia. This attitude could be explained in different ways: Sino-Australians relation reached levels of closeness which do not trouble Beijing –who probably had finally taken Canberra's alliance with Washington as given.

The Rudd Government has finally demonstrated that Australia, a middle-power of the South-East Asia Region, could have its voice heard.

151 Y. Wang, 2012, *Australia-China Relations post 1949. Sixty Years of Trade and Politics*, Ashgate publishing Limited, England, see online Google.books (January 2013).

152 Ibid.

Julie Gillard: Australia and China towards the future

The new Prime Minister Julie Gillard has succeeded Kevin Rudd who became the Foreign Minister of the new government, under which the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between China and Australia has been celebrated. Forty years of growing relationship represent an opportunity to advance the Sino-Australian strategic dialogue, the communication on economic issues and the mutual confidence on security matters.¹⁵³

Julie Gillard has advanced Rudd's engagement towards Asia with the publication of the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper. The Prime Minister emphasised that 'whatever this century brings, it will bring Asia's rise, where Australia should actively plan and shape its national future',¹⁵⁴

The White Paper provides some guidelines for Australia's success in the region for the next decades. If Australia starts this process from a position of strength –including Australia's world-beating actions to avoid the worst impacts of the Global Financial Crisis– it also because its region has given Canberra the possibility to develop financial, political and cultural links with countries of Asia.

But 'Australia's success will be based on choice, not chance', the Paper explains. In order to succeed in "the Asian Century" Australians need to invest in their economy, collaborating with other Asian markets; they need to invest in job-specific skills education; they need to deepen their understanding of Asian cultures and languages.¹⁵⁵

Australia's future in the region 'is also irrevocably tied to its stability and sustainable security'.¹⁵⁶ By "sustainable security" the Paper means that 'the American presence in Asia will support regional stability, as will China's full participation in regional developments'.¹⁵⁷ This last point contains some critics, moved towards Gillard and the White Paper; some policy-makers sustain that the it promotes a "containment strategy" towards China by considering the American presence essential in Asia.

Critics grew when, in November 2011, President Obama made his speech in the Australian Parliament explaining that the Americans will contribute to the Asia-Pacific security deploying 2,500 troops in Darwin by 2016.

153 F. Li , 2012, "The Sino-Australian Relationship: Towards A Brighter Future ", Published by *Future Directions International*, West Perth, Australia, p. 5.

154 2012, *Australia in the Asian Century*, Foreword by Julie Gillard, see www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au

155 2012, *Australia in the Asian Century*, Executive Summary, see www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

Thus, the alliance with the United States has remained a cornerstone of Australia's national security strategy although in her visit to China in April 2011, Gillard had assured Premier Wen Jiabao that even confirmation Canberra's fundamental alliance with Washington she rejected any accusation that the Americans and their allies should seek to contain Beijing's rise.¹⁵⁸

China naturally reacted adversely to the deployment of American troops in Darwin and to Obama's words. According to Beijing, the strategy of Washington aimed to take advantage of Asia's development prospects and count China's superpower status.¹⁵⁹

Gillard replayed to the Chinese critics by saying that 'Beijing has nothing to fear from an American military build-up near Darwin: as Chinese know, Australia and the United States are long-time allies'¹⁶⁰ but at the same time Australians have deep relationships with China at every level, and they will continue to build on them.¹⁶¹

As a matter of fact, regardless of debates arose, the Sino-Australian dialogue has continued, the forty years of diplomatic relationship have been celebrated and further meetings to promote greater cooperation between the two countries in all areas have been scheduled.

Australia's purpose for the future is well determine to take Asia with it. The greater trouble will probably remain the fragile equilibrium between Washington and Beijing, equilibrium from which depend also Canberra's relations.

The greater risk, it is said, is that Australia will need to make a choice, one day, between its geography and its history. However, the only alternative for Australians is to encourage both China and the United States to develop positive dialogue at every level because the future stability of the Asia-Pacific depends on their peaceful relations.

158 April 2011, "Julia Gillard rejects need to contain China", *The Australian*, see www.theaustralian.com.au (January 2013).

159 S. Mahmud Ali, 2012, *Asia-Pacific Security Dynamics in the Obama Era. A new world emerging*, see online on Google.books, p. 79.

160 November 2011, "Gillard tells China not to fear US marines", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, see www.smh.com.au (January 2013).

161 November 2012, "Gillard vows to deepen China ties after Asia policy criticism", *The Australian*, see www.theaustralian.com.au (January 2013).

Chapter four

Australia's Relations with China: Other Voices

The relation between Australia and the People's Republic of China is not limited to the foreign policy connections. Through the decades policy-makers, writers, journalists, artists, students and, immigrants have contributed to develop Sino-Australian relations. With the aid of novels, comic strip, dossiers, government documents, public polls, politicians' pronouncements, oral history interviews and personal narrative this chapter describes as Australians and Chinese have understood, imagined and interacted with each other.

Starting from the invasion anxiety and going on with the yellow and red perils, the chapter will turn the subject explaining how, in recent years, the Chinese presence in Australia has been governed by the policy of multiculturalism.

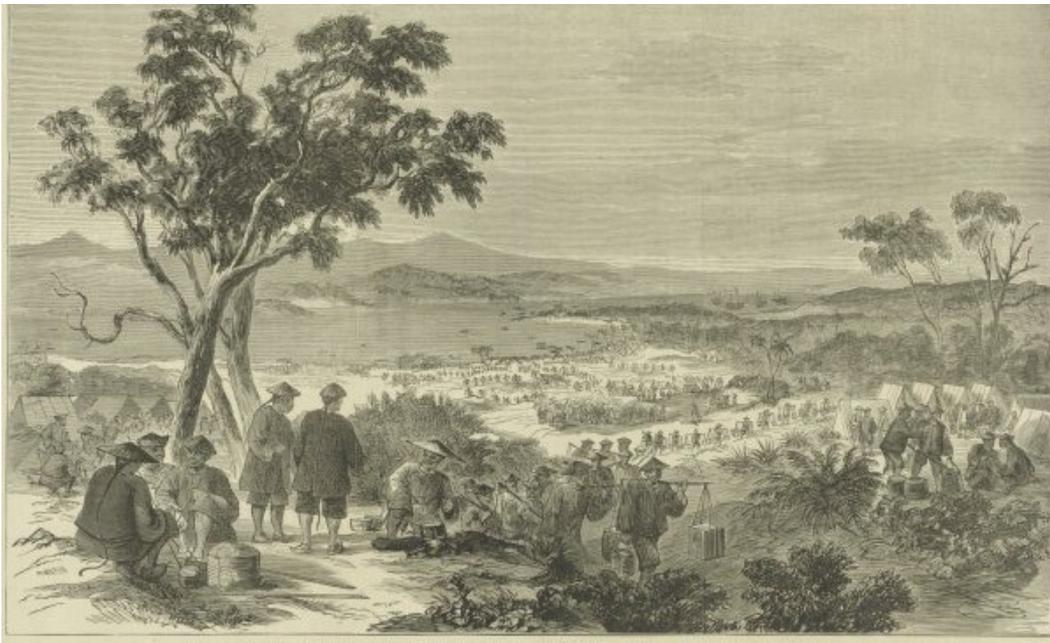
These last pages will be a cultural counterpart of the political and diplomatic histories described in the previous chapters.

4.1 The Chinese peril: how it was born

Gold Rush Migration and Yellow Peril

Fig. 4 ¹ Chinese landing at the mouth of the Endeavour River.

The Chinese Invasion, Northern Queensland, 1877



The first Chinese migrants arrived in Australia in 1830 working as shepherds and shearers. They were the mainstay of the pastoral industry because at that time it was difficult find white men who made such kinds of works.²

At the beginning of the 1850s news of the gold discoveries in Australia travelled quickly to China and many men of the impoverished southern province decided to seek

1 E. and D. Syme, 1877, '*The Chinese Invasion. Northern Queensland*', La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

2 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 4.

their fortune there. Most of those arriving came from Canton (Guandong province), which had been ravaged by rebellions, over-population and famine.³

However, it was not until 1854 that Chinese diggers reached the Australian land in large number: 3.000 in the first part of the year and 7.000 by the end of it.⁴

In 1858 the Chinese population of Australia reached a peak of 40.000, representing the 3,3 per cent of the total population –this number was not reached again until the late 1980s. In 1855 there were 8.000 Chinese diggers in one camp of north of Ballarat in Victoria; worried about an uncontrolled growth, the Victorian Legislative Council ordered to have all Chinese repatriated back to their homeland. The Council did not succeed in obtaining the repatriate but it introduced a pall tax of 10 pound on every Chinaman⁵ landed the colony. This move was in effect useless, rather it caused a major problem: many Chinese continued to enter to Australia illegally from other states creating in this way a problem of people smuggling.⁶ In 1857, the government imposed a 6 pound annual licence fee on Chinese mining for gold in Victoria. Many refused to pay the tax and by 1860, 2000 Chinese miners were jailed.

High percentages of Chinese were also present in other areas of Australia: the peak was of 30.000 diggers in the Queensland goldfields, whilst the Chinese population in New South Wales by 1887 had reached 60.000 –15 per cent of the population in the colony.⁷ Restrictions were also placed on the entry of Chinese into Queensland in the 1870s and discriminatory legislation passed to exclude the Chinese from the goldfields.⁸

Across the goldfields whole Chinese towns were created. Self-supporting communities, with temples, bookshops and theatres toured from Canton and associations were formed to protect the interests of those from the same countries. Many of those working in the goldfields were bound by contract to Chinese businesses men or their clan leaders. In return for the cost of their passage they agreed to work to repay the debts. Almost all were country people, peasants or labourers. After repaying their debts the gold seekers usually returned to their homeland with any additional earnings; many stayed in Australia and constructed a new life.⁹

3 Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

4 E.M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p.5.

5 *Chinaman* was the way in which Chinese people used to be called in the 1800s.

6 Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

7 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, see pp. 4, 36.

8 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbours. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, p. 205.

9 Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

The presence of this large number of foreign people, with their different cultural and religious backgrounds and no knowledge of English language, created friction among the diggers and outbreaks of violence. The Chinese were considered “different” because of their distinctive appearance and their unfamiliar customs. They were even criticised because they were too much adaptable or resourceful, they isolated themselves from the group and they sent their remittance back home without favouring the Australian economy. As the resentment towards them grew, they were associated with diseases, vices and immorality. One of the charges hurled by Australians against Chinese was that they gambled too much:

If ever there was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, this was it, but the average Australian evidently saw no incongruity in castigating his Chinese neighbour for spending their time playing fan-tan¹⁰, whilst at the same time he was busy losing his pay-packet and his shirt on the race track.¹¹

Furthermore, the majority of Chinese who migrated to Australia at the first stages of the gold rush did not bring their wives or families with them and their camps on the fields were almost exclusively male. As a consequence,

it was the considered opinion that the Orientals indulged in the “Chinese Vice” (i.e. sodomy). With the passing of time the Chinese formed liaisons with white girls, a subject that tended to inflame the average red-blooded Australian even more than the more unconventional vice of which the Orientals were so freely accused. Accusation of unmentionable acts, sexual depravity and white slavery were freely heaped on the heads of the Chinese. Whilst these charges reflected the vivid imagination of the accusers, they had little basis in fact.¹²

The disdain for the Chinese did not involve only the workers in the goldfields. The desire to keep them away from Australia was promulgated also throughout the national press and largely widespread among citizens. From the 1870s, national publications like the *Bulletin*, the *Boomerang*, *Punch*, *Queensland Figaro* and the *Illustrated Australian News* began to produce incendiary anti-Chinese propaganda that cautioned Australians about the dangers of economic competition, the threat of moral and spiritual corruption and the consequences of miscegenation. White settlers were consistently warned that

10 Fan-tan was the great Chinese gambling game; only Chinese took part in it.

11 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 26.

12 Ibid, p. 18.

Chinese immigration would result in disunity, moral degradation and ultimately the loss of the white self.¹³

*'Australia... objects to them (Asians) because they introduce a lower civilisation. It objects because they intermarry with white women, and thereby lower the white type, and because they have already created the beginnings of a mongrel race, that has many of the vices of both its parents and few of the virtues of either.'*¹⁴

The Bulletin, 1901.

*'I would rather see my daughter... dead in her coffin than kissing one of them on the mouth or nursing a little coffee-coloured brat that she was mother to. If this is a wicked thing to say, then I am one of the wicked ones, and I don't want to be good either; and I'd pray daily to be kept wicked if I thought there was any chance of my ever getting to think that the colour didn't matter.'*¹⁵

Labour Leader, William Lane, 1892.

Fig. 5¹⁶ *The Chinese Pest*, 1888 The Only Way Cartoon



13 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, p. 23.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid, p. 19.

16 Image provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

Chinese and “Asiatics” in general, were inferior racially and culturally and had to be excluded; their populous countries in the north of Australia represented a major threat of invasion; trade should have been primarily with Great Britain and Australian industries had to be protected from the low-wage economies of Asia.¹⁷ Discrimination had been finally perpetuated and crystallised into the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, the act of the Australian Parliament which originated the infamous *White Australian Policy*. Its intention was to completely excluded “coloured” immigrants although some thirty thousand Chinese and seventeen thousand other “non-Europeans” already lived in Australia.¹⁸

Fig 6²⁰ *The Yellow Terror In All His Glory*, 1899 editorial cartoon.



17 N. Knight, 2004, *Understanding Australia's Neighbours. An introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, p. 206.

18 T. Hyland, 2012, “Chinese history cash plan”, *The Sunday Age*, March 2012, p.13.

20 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Peril

The grudge towards the Chinese and the fear of their “invasion” led to the creation of Yellow Peril concept, represented by the fear of the threat posed to Australia by “Asia”. The menace of the Yellow Peril could take different forms such as the physical attack, the uncontrolled immigration, the ideological subversion and also the economic competition.¹⁹ For long time it has been spoken of Yellow Peril, and its usage sadly entered in the ordinary life of Australians.

The Invasion Literature

The anxiety of the Australian colonies towards Chinese –and Asian immigration in general– was reflected also in the creation of a variety of *Invasion Literature*, models of composition which developed in different narrative forms.

Australian writers, following Britain’s influx, began to use a new kind of storytelling form, the commonly named *Nineteenth-century Invasion Narrative*. Like the British model, which used this storytelling to forecast the imminent invasion of Great Britain during the Franco-Prussian War, also Australian writers adopted the invasion motif to express local anxieties about Australia’s proximity to Asia which entailed the danger of the Chinese “flood”.²¹

It is interesting convey other forms of *Invasion Literature* emerged long time after the period under discussion.

In particular, another model is represented by the *Cold War fiction* which became popular during the years following the Second World War. Throughout stories of different characters these fictions expressed the most common fears of the time, namely: the invasion of the armies of the over-populated countries to the north, the genetic corruption and the dissolution of white racial purity and the appropriation of Asians in Australia’s vast and arable lands to produce food for Asia’s communist masses.²²

The Cold War provided a fertile ground for the development of another pattern of *Invasion Literature*, the *Captivity Narrative*. Traditionally, this narrative expressed an anxiety about engaging with racial and cultural difference by the perspective of a white person –they were usually told to white audiences. During the Cold War The *Captivity*

19 Ibid, p. 28.

21 Ibid, see pp. 21-28.

22 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see p. 43.

Narrative became inextricably linked to the way that the PRC was imaged in countries like Australia, Great Britain, France, Canada and the United States.²³

The presence of the Chinese in Australia has been narrated in many ways; as follows, two particular examples are recounted.

A Nice Cup of Tea, 1966²⁴

If it wasn't for the fact that Australians consumed vast quantities of tea the country may never had a Chinese problem in the 19th Century.

This rather intriguing theory is advanced by Geoffrey Blainey in *The Tyranny of Distance*, and it explained it as follows:

“When Melbourne became a second San Francisco and was packed with ships that lacked a cargo for the long homeward passage to Britain, some ships went to China to find a cargo. Even before the gold rushes, when Australia population was small, a score of ships carries in cargoes of green and black China teas. The average Australian even then drank more tea than the average person in any country outside China. When the gold rushes increased Australia's population, Australia became the fourth largest tea importer in the world. In the early 1850s the fleet of ships sailing from Australia to fetch China tea was swollen by the fast Clippers which carried migrants from England to Melbourne, sailed in ballast to China, and took on a cargo of tea from the long passage home to England. In the tea season of 1853-54, when the glut of shipping in Australian ports was most acute, so many ships arrived in China in search of a cargo of tea that for perhaps the first time there were not enough tea cargoes available. It is possibly significant that large scale Chinese migration to the Australian goldfields began in that season; presumably some ships, unable to get a cargo of China tea, had contrived to arrange the only alternative freight which was profitable, Chinese passengers... [...].

As many ships which carried Chinese to Australia probably made only the one voyage, and therefore did not worry if the condition in the ships earned them bad reputation, the traffic was specially prone to abuses. What is surprising is the size of the emigration of Chinese to lands that were much farther away than any other lands to which Chinese had previously migrated. The orthodox explanation is that China had poverty and that across the Pacific was rich of gold; hence the movement of Chinese... one may suggest that but for the importance of the tea trade in attracting ships to China and but for the unparalleled scarcity in the 1850s the exodus of Chinese might possibly have been too slight to cause concern in the gold countries to which they went. After all, China did not

23 Ibid, pp. 57-61.

24 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 7.

have its own fleet of ships capable of sailing long distances. It depended on foreign ships that came to trade”. - Extract of *The Tyranny of Distance* (Sun Book, 1966).

*Human Packhorses, 1959*²⁵

In any assessment of the role of the Chinese in the early development of Australia, it should be kept firmly in mind that many thousand arrived in the country not as gold-seekers but as coolie labourers. They were exploited not by the white settlers but by their own brethren, wealthy Chinese merchants who used them as human packhorses.

Sir Raphael Cilento in *Triumph in the Tropics* summed up as follow the position which prevailed in Queensland:

“Ships laden with diggers from all the Australian Colonies and from New Zealand made for the mouth of the Endeavour River, where Cook had careened the “Endeavour” in 1770. Men streamed from California, South Africa and many other parts of the world. Two ships, the “Scotland” and the “Japan” brought 2200 Chinese in one voyage in July 1874. Around the port Cooktown sprang into existence and within weeks was a city of canvas tents and slab huts, housing 5.000 people. In three years 15.000 whites and 20.000 Chinese passed through the port travelling to the diggings. The shiploads of Chinese were mostly coolies “imported” by wealthy Chinese; herded into compounds, and then drafted into gangs of “human mules” for the portorage²⁶ of supplies to the goldfields”. - Extract of *Triumph in the Tropics* (Published in 1959).

Alternative voices

Intolerance towards the first Chinese diggers reached levels of nonsense resulted in heavy cases of violence. Levels of high intolerance towards Chinese are told in the sad episode occurred at Lambing Flat (New South Wales) at the end of June 1861. In that occasion, more than 3.000 diggers attacked the Chinese settlements beating the Chinese, cutting their traditional pigtails, stealing their gold and firing their property. This episode represented the worst outbreak of racial violence experienced in Australia; riots and violence also expanded outside Lambing Flat goldfield insomuch as the authorities of each Australian state took steps to guard against a recurrence of the trouble on other fields. In the Lambing Flat episode, the Chinese diggers made scarcely resistance, as

25 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 14.

26 The transportation of burdens by porters.

documented in the following article in *Illustrated Sydney News* newspaper of August 1880. This article represents one of the few examples in which the Asian's innocence was defended.

*Lambing Flat Riot, June 1861*²⁷

Meanwhile matters were approaching a crisis: fifers and drummers were obtained, and flags bearing patriotic sentiments were hoisted. Fire-arms and other weapons were procured; public-houses and booths were rushed and plenty of Dutch courage imbibed. All these preparations and precautions were considered necessary by thousands of brave men (?) in order to successfully attack a few hundred defenceless Chinese.

The poor Asiatics made scarcely any resistance. All who could do secreted their gold, and many of them lost their lives for refusing to tell where it was; others who were not quick enough in getting out of the holes and drivers were buried alive in them –just for fun.; such of the tents and goods as were not appropriated by the civilisers were collected in heaps and burned, and thus the work of murder and robbery went bravely on. - From *Illustrated Sydney News*.

Another “alternative voice” was given by the *Sunday Review* which provided a forum for liberal thought and presented a more detailed and free assessment of political changes throughout South-East Asia. The review offered a balanced representation of the communist governments and analysed recent events in China. In 1971 it run a full-page comic-strip, entitled *Iron Outlaw and Steel Sheila* which parodied stereotypes, ignorance and extreme panic dominating among Australians, unable to understand political and cultural differences. The story was the following:

The comic-strip tells how Iron Outlaw and Steel Sheila work tirelessly to combat the evils that permeate Australian society. Iron Outlaw, quite literally a synthesis of Ned Kelly and Superman, represents the interests of “the Australian Everyman”. He and his accomplice and second-in-command, the shapely muscle-clad superhero Steel Sheila, encounter a range of sinister underworld types who threaten the Australian social fabric. From April 1971 these paragons of Australian sexuality seek to arrest the incursion of Orientals to Australia. This encounter takes place over five instalments and is titled “Iron Outlaw and Steel Sheila face the Yellow Peril!” The comic-strip locates a series of contemporary Australian phobias – it parodies the vast repertoire of popular Australian clichés about Chineseness, mocks Australian cultural insularity and

²⁷ Unknown author, 1880, “Lambing Flat Riot June 1861”, *Illustrated Sydney News*, vol. XVII, no. 8, August 5 1880, p. 2.

lampoons the fear of a Chinese invasion.²⁸

Fig. 7²⁹ The following snippets represent some images of the series.



28 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 21 and T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see pp. 48,49.

29 B. Hornadge, 1971, *The Yellow Peril. A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, Review Publications, NSW, p. 21

4.2 From Yellow Peril to Red Menace

Fig. 8³⁰ *The Chinese in Australian History*, 1976



Australian 22 June 1976

The Chinese in Australian history

30 E.M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 245.

As a result to the growing hostility towards the Chinese diggers and the resulting Australian immigration policies of 1901, the following decades saw a percentage of non-European population which declined considerably. The number of Chinese in Australia fell from about 50.000 in the 1880 to about 9.000 by the 1940s. Their communities withdrew into the Chinatowns of the big cities and began to face extinction. Apart from certain areas, especially in Queensland and the Northern Territory, flourishing settlements disappeared, leaving no trace behind them. The new generation of post-war Chinese usually knew nothing of compatriots who had come before them.³¹ In a census of period between 1891 to 1947, it is possible to observe the decline on the total number of Chinese present in Australia:

1881	35.800
1901	32.700
1911	25.800
1921	20.800
1933	14.000
1947	12.100

Changes in the administrative rules governing the admittance of non-Europeans allowed a considerable increase of Chinese population after the Second World War. Furthermore, with the introduction of the Colombo Plan in the 1950s, many Asian people arrived in Australia to study. Most of them came from China where it was difficult receive a university education.

In 1954 Canberra stepped forward signing the 1951 Refugees Convention. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and defined who was a refugee, which were its rights and the legal obligations of states.³² After it had become a member of the convention, Australia accepted Asian refugees under a migration scheme.³³

Nevertheless, despite the recent openness, new troubles affected the Chinese migrants in Australia; as a matter of fact, the rise of communism in Asia renewed suspicion towards Chinese migrants and the concept of *Yellow Peril* took a new connotation and was revised into the *Red Threat* concept. From that moment on, the invasion anxiety was

31 E. M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, pp. 236, 237.

32 See www.unhcr.org

33 R. Devetak, A. Burke, J. George, 2007, *An introduction to International Relations. Australian Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, p.358.

represented by the Chinese Communist, who were considered more dangerous than the gold diggers. The present dissertation, especially chapter two, has widely traced the events and problems related to the question. Many Australian policy-makers struggled long time to contrast the Communist expansionism.

It has been explained as the Menzies Government repeatedly spoke about the menace of Chinese Communism, its primitive and aggressive violence. For ever two decades Australians were fed a diet of racism and anti-communism propaganda; radical position at the government, obsessed in containing Communism, reproduced an array of stereotypes about China, its people and its culture.³⁴

Another party which strongly denounced the peril of Communism had been the Democratic Labor Party³⁵. During the federal election of 1963, this party produced an advertisement with the following message:

Communism, the evil force that enslaves one-third of the world's population, is moving perilously close to Australia. If you vote ALP you are voting for a party that works with and helps communists. Communist influence in the ALP today is frightening and if the ALP wins this election our very freedom is in danger. The way to stop communism, the way to keep Australia free is to vote Democratic Labor Party, the party sworn to stamp out communism.³⁶

Public opinion's percentages

Analysing "other voices" of the relations between Australia and China involves also the study of the Australian public opinion's behaviour towards the Chinese migrants to Australia.

The present section will report some public opinion conducted by the late 1960s.

An Australian Reader in Political Science, Arthur Huck published some studies documenting the Australian community attitudes towards China and the Chinese. They revealed the linkages existing between the fear of invasion and the Chinese factor.

34 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see p. 32.

35 The Democratic Labor Party was a product of the split in the Australian Labor Party in 1954. Its policy supports social conservatism and opposes neo-liberalism.

36 T. Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see p. 33.

In a study he conducted in 1964, he made some questions to 103 Melbournians adults about their attitude towards immigration by the following national or ethnic groups:

ENGLISHMEN, GERMANS, GREEKS, BLACK PEOPLE, IRISHMEN, JEWS,
ITALIANS, CHINESE

They were asked to express their opinions on a “voting list” which offered four choices:

Keep them out
Let only a few in
Allow them to come in
Try to get them to come

The results showed that the English were clearly the most preferred group; they were followed by Irish, Germans, Jews, Greeks, Italians, Chinese, Black people.

The Chinese did not occupy a ranking position above any European group.³⁷

In a second study Huck examined the results of four Gallup polls conducted between 1967 and 1970 to investigate the Australian community’s long-standing fear of being attacked or overrun by Asians. At least two thousand people had been surveyed. In 1967-1969 the participants were asked: ‘In your opinion are there any countries which are a threat to Australia’s security?’, while the 1970 question had become: ‘In your opinion, is Australia likely to be menaced by any country in the next ten years, requiring more spending on defence?’. Over the four-year period there was little variation in the opinions expressed. Half the group felt that some country threatened Australia; the remaining 10-16 per cent did not have an opinion. Those participants who indicated a fear of threat were asked which country posed the greatest danger to Australia. Of those who identifies a specific country, 30 per cent named China, 14 per cent Russia, 10 per cent North Vietnam, 8 per cent Indonesia, 6 per cent Japan and a small number named the United States and German. These opinions were distributed fairly evenly across states, sexes and ages. The principal source of variation existed in political allegiance. Among those who voted for the Australian Labor Party, 44.8 per cent felt that some country represented a threat to Australia, while 58.5 per cent of Liberal-Country Party voters, and as many as 61.8 per cent of Democratic Labor Party voters, felt threatened. Among those who identifies China as the most likely threat, this pattern was every more extreme.³⁸

37 A. Huck, 1968, *The Chinese in Australia*, Longmans, Melbourne, pp. 66-68.

38 A. Huck, 1970, “Images of China, *Australian Outlook*. Vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 318, 319.

Another interesting study was conducted by Jonathan King of the University of Melbourne in the 1970. He tried to identify the factors that influenced the perceptions of those who considered China to be a threat to Australia. His sample group consisted of one hundred people: fifty Labor and fifty non-Labor voters drawn from a wide range of Melbourne suburbs. King explained that 'A questionnaire was developed in two parts: an open-ended set of variables in fixed answer scale which considered could influence the images'. The respondents were rated according to their knowledge of China on a scale of one to ten. An individual's score was determined by the answers to a questionnaire that asked factual questions about China's geography and political character. While many Australians expressed strong opinions about China, few had an understanding of China's political and physical geography. These responses reveal the basis of the participants' anxieties about China and the Chinese. One respondent claimed that 'China is always a threat to Australia; they've got to advance somewhere and they look to the vast areas of Australia'. Representations of China were dominated by stereotypes about over-population and birth control, the hostile nature of the Chinese character and the sinister effects of communism: 'It is very poor because there are so many people eating up whatever is produced'; 'I wish they still threw their babies in the Yangtse like they used to do, then they wouldn't be so overcrowded'; 'The way they breed they have to find another continent'; 'China is like a mad dog'; 'China is nationalistic, aggressive, will not listen to reason'. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of King's study is that in choosing to employ old metaphors of fear, the respondents failed to mention China's nuclear capabilities. Nonetheless, the responses revealed that many held views of China, and the world more generally, that appeared to oscillate between complete indifference and extreme panic. Not surprisingly, the respondents who considered China to be less of a threat were better informed about the country. They mentioned the state of the Chinese navy and army, distinguished between Maoist and communist ideologies and spoke of China's strained relations with the Soviet Union.³⁹

39 T.Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see pp.45-48.

4.3 Chinese migrants' stories

Chinese traditions

Chinese who went to Australia in the nineteenth century encountered high level of discrimination, caused by the widespread ignorance of people who expected that migrants assimilated their culture and tradition with theirs, without considering the great obstacle produced by the different language.⁴⁰ The Chinese migrants naturally integrated with members of their own community and they continued to speak their language and practice their costumes.

Over the years, Chinese have largely contributed to bring to Australia their culture and tradition. In particular, early Chinese migrants maintained many of their traditional customs. In the 1800s a lot of Chinese men wore their hair pigtailed and dressed in the loose top and white trousers worn in China. They set up temples where they could carry out religious ceremonies and worship their gods. Moreover, by the late 1800s, the famous Chinatowns began to develop. In these space, Chinese migrants could find the same temples, theatres, gambling saloons, food stores and eateries they had at home. Unfortunately, when the anti-Chinese laws were introduced, a lot of these traditional customs decreased and even died. When Chinese students came to Australia under the Colombo Plan in 1950s, they found that very little Chinese culture was celebrated.

The new wave of Chinese migration which followed the abolition of the *White Australia Policy*, allowed a revival in the celebration of Chinese culture in communities around Australia. Chinese community associations and clubs was created in many Australian cities and towns and they have helped to maintain links with China. They have also contributed to establish schools for the Chinese Australian-born children: in these spaces, they could learn to speak their parents' native language and gain an understanding of Chinese cultural traditions. Finally, the new associations contributed to the enlargement of Chinese churches in many Australian cities and towns. Some of them are Christian while others celebrate eastern religions.

The major legacy of Chinese migration to Australia are listed below.

40 G. Chapman, 2007, *Multicultural Australia. The Chinese in Australia*, MacMillan Library, South Yarra, p.12.

TRADE

One of the most important ways Australia has benefited from Chinese migration has been the opening up of trade between Australia and China. Many Chinese migrants possess language skills and business knowledge which allows Australian business to trade successfully with China. They are prominent in the business community and many run successful companies of their own. This international trade is worth billions of dollars to Australia's economy.

SMALL BUSINESS AND AGRICULTURE

Today, many small businesses run by Chinese Australians are thriving. They carry on a tradition of success established by Chinese migrants in the 1800s. For many years, Chinese market gardeners and fruit growers were major food producers in Australia. The fresh fruit and vegetables Australians enjoy today are a direct result of the industries founded by Chinese migrants.

Chinese skill at cultivating vegetables and fruit meant that the market gardening industry from the 1850s to the 1950s in New South Wales and Victoria was predominately run by Chinese growers and merchant. They could provide fresh fruit and vegetable in the hot climate of Australia.

In the tropics of Queensland, Chinese turned their hand to banana cultivation in the 1870s and 1880s, establishing this industry in Australia.⁴¹

CHINESE CUISINE

Chinese food and cookshop entered in Australia with the first gold miners.

By the 1920s, Chinese restaurants made up around ten per cent of Melbourne's restaurant sector.

Australian eating habits changed as a result of Chinese migration. Prior to the 1950s, rice was primarily thought as a dessert food to be used in puddings. The arrival of Chinese restaurants introduced new dishes to dinner tables. Some of the most popular Chinese food was Cantonese cuisine. It features delicious meat, vegetable and rice dishes enhanced with exotic sauces.

HERBAL REMEDIES AND ACUPUNCTURE

From early time of the goldrush era, Chinese traditional medical practitioners were common in town and in country Australian life. In the nineteenth century their clientele were mainly Chinese but by early twentieth century there was a widespread non-Chinese support for herbalist.

The Second World War and the restriction during the early decades of the PRC

⁴¹ Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

Government disrupted supplies of herb to Australia. The 1980s saw a resumption of migration and brought a new wave of professionally trained herbalist and the resurgence of the Chinese medicine in Australia.⁴²

Today, many Australians perform daily tai chi exercises and use acupuncturists for regular treatment. Others rely on the care of many Chinese doctors who specialise in modern medicine in Australian hospitals and general practices.⁴³

CHINESE MUSIC AND OPERA

Chinese music was brought to Australia by goldminers in the 1850s. Cantonese opera was the main source of entertainment and a major source of spiritual education for Chinese miners. It also provided an important place to socialise and a means for self expression. Chinese opera was performed in gambling houses and for occasional festivals, ceremonies and charity occasions. By the early 1900s younger Australian-born Chinese were more likely to accept Western culture and music and opera societies were formed to entertain and maintain cultural ties.

In modern times, Chinese music in Australia has benefited from an influx of talented musicians from China.⁴⁴

Chinese students in Australia

As introduced in the first chapter of the present dissertation, a prominent place in the story of the Sino-Australian relations has been represented by the Colombo Plan, which has operated since July 1951.⁴⁵

Today, the Colombo Plan is remember for the sponsoring of Asian students who learnt or trained in Australian universities, technical institutes and administrative programs. Between 1951 and 1980 more than 20.000 Asian students came to Australia under the plan.⁴⁶ Its purpose was to train young Asians in skills that would enable them to play leading roles in the social, economic and political development of their nations.⁴⁷ By the 1980s a massive flow of Chinese students came to Australia. This move had been

42 Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

43 G. Chapman, 2007, *Multicultural Australia. The Chinese in Australia*, MacMillan Library, South Yarra, pp. 28, 29.

44 Information provided by the Chinese-Australian Museum of Melbourne.

45 See Chapter 1.

46 Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 2004, *Australia and the Colombo Plan 1949-1957*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, pp. XXV, XXVI.

47 Ibid. p. XXXII.

possible by the “China’s open-door policy”⁴⁸ and its demand for a skilled and highly qualified workforce to meet the needs of the “Four Modernisation Program”.⁴⁹ As a consequence, a relevant number of Chinese students applied for coming to Australia to complete and improve their studies.

Actually, education was not the only and major reason why the students left China. The internal situation in the PRC such as political alienation, low incomes, poor career, unstable prospects and bad living conditions were daily worries which everyone had to live with, pushed the young Chinese to emigrate. The “West” was a “powerful magnet” which attracted those who were seeking political and personal freedoms, career opportunities and a most generally a better life.⁵⁰

The new wave of departing Chinese students to Australia during the 1980s was defined “The Second Gold Rush” because of the high number of people involved:

Like a hundred years later, the beginning of 1980s saw a new generation of Chinese who came as students and formed another yellow tide in Australia [...].

Everywhere [...] one can see them. Like their forefathers they number about 40.000. But they are no longer gold diggers dressed in rags [...] and they seem to have many other beautiful aspirations and a sense of freedom.⁵¹

Before 1988, there were about 200.000 Chinese living in Australia and the students represented about 20.000 of them. In the twelve months following the Tiananmen incident of 4 June 1989, 22.000 more students came to Australia. Upset from the recent events and discontent at home, they chose Australia for searching of a better life, full of hope, optimistic and determined to succeed in a country they idealised.

However, the life of these students was not always easy as they expected. Although they realized that life in this country could be better than at home, after living few years or few months in Australia they encountered difficulties and problems to overcome.⁵²

Their dreams were quickly disenchanting by the reality of living in a society completely different from the one they left, where they had little money and few opportunities for a

48 In 1979, the People's Republic of China developed the so-called “Open Door Policy”; its aim was to increase trade relations with the global community in addition to reinvigorate the economy.

49 When Deng Xiaoping went to power, it called for new important achievement for China, concerning: agriculture, industry, science and technology, national defence. In order to improve the economy, new skilled students had to be trained.

50 E. S. K. Fung, C. Jie, 1996, *Changing Perceptions: The Attitudes of the PRC Chinese Towards Australia and China, 1989-1996*, Australian-Asian Paper No. 78, Griffith University, see p. 4.

51 J.B. Jacobs, O. Yu, 1995, *Bitter Peaches and Plums. Two Chinese novellas on the recent Chinese student experience in Australia*, Monash Asia Institute, Clayton, Victoria.

52 Ibid, p. 1.

good job. Most of the students, worried in satisfying their daily needs, did not give great importance to the English courses or the studies in general and they simply looked for find jobs and save money.

Many Chinese in Australia wrote their experiences; they represent an important source of knowledge and they contributed to create a new genre of narrative, the *Overseas Students' Literature*.⁵³

One of the most famous novellas among this genre, setting in Australia, is the story wrote by Huangfu Jun, entitled *Australia-Beautiful Lies*. This novella is located in Melbourne and tells the experience of Ho Xiaobo, a Chinese student who arrived in Australia in December 1989 under the ELICOS program.⁵⁴

The translators of this novella, J.B. Jacobs and O. Yu, sustained the importance of this model of literature because it gives a Chinese image of a country,

which is often thought as a large, empty country with a preponderantly agricultural and mining economy, strange animals like kangaroos and koalas, a *White Australia Policy* which discriminates against its aboriginal population, extensive beautiful sandy beaches, good sportsmen and women and a British offshoot located in the Pacific.

[...] Australia is described as a country with free speech and civil liberties where police will not check one's identification without reason. It also refers to Australia's racism but at the meantime acknowledges that important forces in Australian society oppose racism.

While some of these images are correct, they ignore the importance of industry and the services in the Australian economy, the advanced science and technology which this country has developed, the artistic attainments, the importance of *Multiculturalism* and Australians' concern with creating a racially non discriminatory society and the significance of its relationship with Asia.⁵⁵

In the introduction of *Australia-Beautiful Lies*, the translators also explained that the image of Australia presented in this novella is "quite limited". In fact, it concentrates on the Chinese student communities which were basically introverted and which had few interactions with the Australian society. Chinese students usually joined their countrymen, avoiding interactions with foreigners. How it is wrote in the novella,

53 J. B. Jacobs, O. Yu, 1995, *Bitter Peaches and Plums. Two Chinese novellas on the recent Chinese student experience in Australia*, Monash Asia Institute, Clayton, Victoria, p. I.

54 ELICOS programs was designed for creating short-term English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). See Chapter three of the present dissertation.

55 Ibid, see introduction.

All this (the new places, people and customs) silently told the Chinese that the world was becoming larger and larger more and more unfamiliar [...]. The Chinese society in Australia was only a tiny world, but due to its existence among foreigners, the innate character of its people manifested itself more strongly, more densely and more completely than it would otherwise have. Within this small world, Chinese could see their own images more clearly and could more penetratingly understand their own souls.⁵⁶

Furthermore, many Chinese students faced unpleasant racial problems, which discouraged them to join Australians:

‘Go home Chinese Pigs!’ Such posters hung outside factory gates next to signs which said ‘No Work’ in both English and Chinese. Many Melbourne factory gates had these signs [...]. But in a world with billions of coloured peoples, a few million white people could not keep a continent for their sole enjoyment and use, just as apartheid could not be maintained in South Africa. The absolutely majority of Australians decidedly did not consider honourable the exclusion of coloured peoples, which created a distance from neighbouring countries and aloofness in the world. Under assault for several decades from waves of immigration, the “White Australia Policy” had already collapsed and Australians have awakened from the ignorance of racial prejudice [...]. The “White Australia Policy” has become history, but under specific circumstances and specific times, its sediment can rise to the surface; the shadows of racial superiority have not completely vanished. When Ho Xiaobo was swimming at the beach, he encountered something offensive [...]. Sitting on the jetty, there were two Australians next to him. He heard their conversation, part of which went like this:

‘Do you like Chinese?’

‘No’

‘Recently, another large number of Chinese have come. They’re like tramps’.

‘No. They are Chinese pigs, presumptuous Chinese pigs’.

When they finished speaking, they triumphantly looked at Ho Xiaobo with provocative eyes. The Chinese students who were with him did not react. It was not fear, but apathy. On the question of racial prejudice, the Chinese students preferred to sacrifice their dignity by remaining silent.⁵⁷

56 Ibid. pp. 176, 243.

57 Ibid, pp. 227-229.

Probably, some Chinese students had no interests in integrating in the Australian society and learn English. They had a visa for only six months in which they hoped to work as much as possible. As a matter of fact, the ELICOS courses were not cheap at all. The tuition fee in an English training institution was at least A\$5500 for six months course. For the majority of Chinese, it was a huge sum. Most of them resorted to large amount of borrowing from relatives on the assumption that the debt could be paid back over a period of work in Australia. Finding a job and making money was the priority rather than study English.⁵⁸

The language courses were just a springboard for the Chinese students. [...] of course, the vast majority of them did need to improve the level of their English and surmount the language barrier. Some of the students could not even recite the 26 letters of the alphabet nor could they understand any question. Among the Chinese students who had come to Australia, there were many like Ho Xiaobo who worked diligently and conscientiously. They arose early in the morning and hurried to work, carrying their lunch boxes, like indentured works in their past. After a day's hard work, they would hurry back to their homes, cook and eat dinner and prepare the next day's lunch before finally collapsing into bed. The next day as soon as the alarm rang they would rush off with sleepy eyes. This happened day after day. Each day they spent about fifteen hours travelling and working.⁵⁹

The Australian government divided Chinese students into two categories: those who arrived before June 1989 and those who arrived after. The latter, were asked to return to China when their visas expired. For several reasons they tried to find a way to stay longer in Australia.

Some of them get married, others fled, others became illegal residents. Because of they feared the authorities discovering them, they would hide all day. No matter where they were, they would turn their heads and leave when they saw a uniform policeman. They often change their addresses, terminated contacts with classmates, friends and even relatives and cancelled their telephone services. No one, other than themselves, knew their address. They reported false tax-file numbers and used false names. When they earned money, they dared not put in the bank, and immediately sent it to friends or relatives in Hong Kong or to their families in China. They knew that if the authorities

58 E.S.K. Fung, C.Jie, 1996, *Changing Perceptions: The Attitudes of the PRC Chinese Towards Australia and China, 1989-1996*, Australian-Asian Paper No. 78, Griffith University, see p. 6.

59 J. B. Jacobs, O. Yu, 1995, *Bitter Peaches and Plums*. Two Chinese novellas on the recent Chinese student experience in Australia, Monash Asia Institute, Clayton, Victoria, p. 194, 195, 203.

discovered them, they would not only be deported, but that all of the money and properties which they had exchanged for blood and sweat, would be confiscated. In order to correspond with their families, they rented a private mailbox under false name and wholly entered a sunless underground existence without even knowing the day they would finally be able to leave their underground tunnel. They had no interest in being illegal residents in Australia as this lifestyle was unendurable, like being fried in an oil wok but they had come to an impasse, and they had taken the black road when they had no other alternatives.⁶⁰

The Australian Government, in its own interests and in accord with its own law, began large-scale arrests of Chinese students living illegally in Australia. But the number of Chinese students who had become illegal residents or worked more than twenty hours a week was huge and they were spread across almost every corner of Australia's biggest cities. The strength of the Immigration Bureau was limited and it was difficult to arrest people efficiently. The government took finally a drastic measure: it asked the Chinese students who had information about their "lost friends" to come to the Immigration Bureau and informed the authorities. Informing against one person brought A\$400. Nonetheless to say, the move perfectly worked.

In September 2012, applications from mainland China to Australian educational institutions were rising after several years of decline; today, around 300,000 Chinese students leave China to study abroad every year and they choose Australia for its liberal immigration policy.⁶¹

60 Ibid.

61 www.workpermit.com

4.4 Australian Perspectives

After the recognition of the People's Republic of China, Australian diplomats, students, journalists and teachers went to China to live, work and study.

Politicians and cultured men often urged the importance that not only policy-makers but also Australian citizens assumed the importance of China's place in the Australian community, giving their personal opinions.⁶²

Both Australians and Chinese felt that a new, important relationship could be improved between them. In 1972, the Australian Minister of Tourism, Murray Byrne, affirmed that 'in contradiction of the great fears and the aggressive propaganda against suggested enemies of the nation, the Chinese are desperately anxious to promote friendship and to have closer ties, particularly with the smaller countries of the world'.⁶³

Such words was in contrast with those expressed by Simon Leys in his book *Chinese Shadows*. Referring to some tours made by foreign visitors to the PRC, the author explained that Chinese revealed only a constricted part of their country. The poor and problematic face of China was not showed as well as the restrictions that Chinese were obliged to submit. He wrote that 'in the tours, always superbly organised, everything that might be unpredictable, unexpected, spontaneous or improvised was ruthlessly eliminated'.⁶⁴ Hence, most travellers who visited China in these ways returned home with favourably opinions. Furthermore,

the Maoist authorities have accomplished a strange "tour de force": they have managed to limit China –that immense and varied universe, for the exploration of which, however superficial, a lifetime is inadequate– to a narrow, incredibly constricted area. China had hundred of cities; only about a dozen are open to ordinary foreigners. In each one, the foreigners are always put in the same hotel –usually a huge palace, set like a fortress in the middle of a vast garden, far away in a distant suburb [...]. Needless to say, the local public is not admitted: watchmen at the gate check the identity of all Chinese visitors. In this way, the only the travellers have with the towns they "visit" is as they speed past along the boulevards, driving to factories and hospitals in the routine way

62 See for example The Minister for Overseas Trade and Secondary Industry Jim Cairns in J. Cairns, H.M. Byrne, 1973, *China through Australian Eyes*, New Democratic Publications, Victoria.

63 J. Cairns, H.M. Byrne, 1973, *China through Australian Eyes*, New Democratic Publications, Victoria, see introduction.

64 S. Leys, 1977, *Chinese Shadows*, The Viking Press, New York, p. 2.

[...]. The only Chinese people one can talk to without getting troubles were servants (personal provided by the service section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), bureaucrats one meets at official gatherings, guides and interpreters provided by the government's travel agency and "professional friends".⁶⁵

Correspondents' visits

Stephen FitzGerald, talking about his visits to China, explained that due to a restrictive Chinese policy –which limited in various ways the contacts between Chinese people and foreigners– he encountered difficulties in experiencing directly and equally the local traditions. Australians in China confronted problems of access to ordinary people in addition to being outsiders in a world which was ideologically and culturally different. Sometimes those limitations seemed overwhelming.⁶⁶

However, a record of eye-witness, observations and experiences have been collected along the ages. They are of great importance for two reasons. First of all, they tell the experience of Australians in China. Secondly, the 1970s in China were remarkable for being a period of major historical transition and Australians who spent sometime in the PRC had the opportunity to understand the political, economical and social changes which were taking place.⁶⁷

In the book *China in the Seventies: Australian Perspectives*, FitzGerald and Pamela Hewitt, gave a record of eye-witness, observations and experiences of Australians who went and lived in China in the 1970s.

Among them, there was Yvonne Preston, a correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Beijing in 1975, a time when correspondents faced a 'total hard news vacuum. For correspondents in China, the lack of real communication in the period until the end of 1976 was professionally more taxing than it was for anyone else. It demanded an unusual measure of that patience and good humour so necessary in China in that period'.⁶⁸

In *Resident Correspondent in Beijing*, Y. Preston told his experience as one on only two Australian correspondents 'whose daily task was to file supposedly meaningful reports

65 Ibid, pp. 8, 9.

66 S. FitzGerald, P. Hewitt, 1980, *China in the Seventies: Australian Perspectives*, Australian National University, Canberra, see Introduction pp. I, II.

67 Chou En-lai and Mao died, the 'Gang of Four' was overthrown, China's new leaders set about reversing the extreme ideological policies inaugurated during the Cultural Revolution.

68 Ibid.

to Australian newspapers or radio stations from a country thousands of miles distant, both physically and culturally'.⁶⁹

In his record, he explained that correspondents in China, Australians and not, had to work without access to those sources, material or facts not laundered through the propaganda machine. He wrote:

I can still vividly recall my almost daily despair as my interpreter would read snatches of the *People's Daily* into my disbelieving ears. The waves of appalling Marxist jargon of class struggle, vigilance against class enemies, economies and the theory of productive forces, capital readers, bourgeois rightists, hegemonies, imperialists and counter-revolutionaries, poured endlessly into the total hard news vacuum in which we lived.

[...] Besides the *People's Daily* we endured the twice daily outpourings of Xinhua (the New China News Agency) and our single other source of official information –the only sort we were supposed to have– was one telephone extension in the Information Department of the foreign Ministry.

Our requests for help, answers, news, facts were almost invariably received with polite but firm replies which were all variations on the no comment theme. 'I will take note of your question'. 'I think you know the answer to that question'. 'We have no comment and you may not say that we have no comment'. There were no other numbers we could ring for information in the entire city of seven millions souls.

[...] For months I was impressed by the range of knowledge of the diplomatic corps, their finger on the pulse and their ears to ground, and appalled by the daily revelation of my own ignorance. It was not until the second half of my first year in China that I realized we were all alike, equally flailing in the dark, the difference between us only in the amount of confidence we exhibited in our own theories [...]. A great deal of what we did, outside of regurgitating and assessing the official news reports, was guesswork. [...] Basically the job of the resident correspondent in Beijing remains almost an impossible one, unless one is content largely to retail official news. Anyone who has lived in China through the before and after Gang period must be wary of reporting which does no more than that. Had we faithfully retailed the official news in 1976, as did many "China friends", how wrong we would now appear.

The degree to which things improve for journalists in the future will reflect the official assessment of the basic dilemma now facing China's communist leaders. How far can you go in terms of freedom and open expression of opinion –necessary to spark initiative and encourage the technological and educational development of modern China– before the Party begins to feel that its role, power and authority are at risk?⁷⁰

69 Ibid, p. 1

70 Ibid, pp. 1-16.

To report life in the PRC was an hard work because correspondents had never real and relaxed interchange of opinions and experiences with the Chinese population. In some occasions, when they went for organised tours –always followed by cadres who were their guides, the correspondents found a way to exit and ‘embarked on a far more productive venture into the city itself’.⁷¹ In some occasions they could ‘break through the bamboo curtain which descendent on all real news in China’.⁷²

Preston explained that sometimes correspondents could see with their eyes the extent of poverty outside Beijing –while the Chinese propaganda declared its country prosperous and expanding.⁷³

Australian students to China

Unlike the correspondents, the Australian students who went to the PRC enjoyed a wider access to Chinese society and Chinese people, students and co-workers.

A good example of student exchange experience was given by Beverly Hooper who spent sixteen months in China as an Australian exchange student in late 1975 and reported her experience in the book *Inside Peking*. She did not experience the frustration of ‘enforced segregation in the “foreign ghetto”’.⁷⁴ She shared a room with a Chinese girl, working with Chinese factory workers and she studying with local students. Beverly, like other students, experienced China at best, having the opportunity to “understand” a little more what life in China meant.

Exactly, *Liaijie Zhongguo*, understand China, what did it mean?⁷⁵

During one class, a Chinese teacher asked the Beverly: “How do you understand China?”. The girls replied saying that to her, ‘understand China meant finding out all she could about the country, assessing it in the light of her own experience’.⁷⁶ The answer did not satisfy the teacher because according to the Chinese, “Understanding China” meant something different to “Western” point of view. The author explained:

Chinese explained China to us and we were supposed to understand their explanation. So, China had to be “understood” in the context of its ideological framework. First one

71 Ibid, p 13.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid, p. 7.

74 B. Hooper, 1979, *Inside Peking. A personal Report*. MacDonald and Jane’s, London, p. XI.

75 Ibid, p.51.

76 Ibid.

had to “accept” the validity of that framework. For example, if I told a teacher ‘I didn’t like the “compulsion” aspect of studying at the Institute’, he would most likely say ‘but you don’t understand China’s socialist system. What he meant was ‘you don’t accept/agree with China’s socialist system’.

How did the Chinese persuade us to accept the system? Basically, by telling us how wonderful it was in practice: from the economic aspect of efficient factories and thriving communes, to the social aspect of schools, hospitals and womb-to-bomb welfare societies. [...] it had all been possible, as we were constantly reminded, by the ideology of Marx, Lenin and especially Mao Tse-Tung.⁷⁷

Along the book, Hooper told that more than once the Chinese teachers tried to give their thoughts to the foreign students. For example, in one occasion, speaking about the Chinese diet, a foreign student suggested that it was too poor; the teacher had a ready response and said that ‘Australians eat too much meat in their capitalist countries and drink lots of milk and eggs. That’s way they suffer from heart diseases’.⁷⁸

When the Australian girl did not attend an examination, she was obliged to submit a “criticism session”. There, the teacher spoke with the student for almost two hours explaining how much important the exams were, what were the Institute rules, how different are Chinese education system from the capitalism one and so on. Finally, trying to end the stressing conversation, the student replayed pronouncing the words the teacher would heard: ‘It’s very difficult for foreigners to become accustomed to China; it’s probably my bourgeois class background. I just don’t have a proletarian outlook’.⁷⁹

Hooper’s book reported the attitudes of Chinese people towards foreigners during the last wave of Maoism. She explained that it was a time when, despite public pronouncements of “international friendship” and great efforts to impress foreign tourists, resident foreigners were regarded as strange and suspect representatives of the bourgeoisie –the major enemy of the Chinese proletariat. The Communist treatment of foreigners varied according to the regimes’ ideologies. By the early 1970s the violent anti-foreign excess of the Cultural Revolution gave way to improved relation with foreigners. China established diplomatic relations with more countries, set up cultural exchanges, sent students overseas and admitted small number of foreign students to its place. By 1979, a number of Western countries, including the United States, Great Britain and Australia, had already been sending students to China for over five years.⁸⁰

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid, p. 5.

79 Ibid, p. 50.

80 Ibid, see Introduction, XII.

Inside Peking narrates lot of interesting facts experienced by Australian students in China. Unfortunately, report everything it is not possible.

In general, Hooper gave good impression of her experience in China; according to her, her colleagues and, most in general, to many Western visitors,

China was an exciting, dynamic country. What they discovered was the ultimate alternative society, which seemed to have none of the problems plaguing their own countries: unemployment and inflation, widespread crime, drugs and alcoholism, deserted wives and disaffected youth [...]. Everything seemed so orderly; the people seemed so secure and life so uncomplicated.⁸¹

However, at some point of her experience, the girl wondered herself if, after experimented “the Socialist way”, she would ever be able to ‘think again and to weight up ideas without being told what was correct and what was incorrect’.⁸²

During a trip around China it happened that after visited factories, communes and schools and met Chinese people who spoke about the Chinese socialism and their campaigns against the capitalism, she started to think about the validity of socialist system and the paradox of the capitalist one. She suddenly feared that she was ‘fell under what foreign commentators called *brainwashing*’.⁸³

She wondered about Chinese’s thought and life which ‘was really quite straightforward. There was a single ideological line, a single mode of correct thought –if you veered off the correct line you must reform your thought’.⁸⁴ There was no way out from that ideology; it pervaded every aspect of Chinese life and created problems for some foreign students. Hooper reported a dialogue:

‘I wish my room-mate went home on Sundays, so I could have the room to myself for a while’, I said one day in the canteen.

‘That’s a bad attitude. You should be thinking of mutual cooperation. You must reform your thought’, said a Canadian student.

‘I don’t want to reform my thought’, I said. ‘I want to be allowed to think what I want to think’.

‘That’s bourgeois individualism’.⁸⁵

81 Ibid, p. 54.

82 Ibid, p. 59.

83 Ibid, p. 58.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

Brainwashing

The idea of *brainwashing* expressed by Beverly Hooper was not new in the story of Sino-Australian relations. Australian policy-makers and public opinion had used the notion of *brainwashing* at the beginning of the 1950s to describe the treatment the Chinese reserved to the prisoners of war during the Korean conflict. It was assumed that when Chinese captured a prisoner their aim was re-educate him and teach him the truth about the “Western world” and the capitalism.

Timoty Kendall, in his book *Ways of Seeing China* examined the treatment of the prisoners of war during the Korean conflict. Analysing a series of documents and interviews he observed that accusations of violence and coercion towards the prisoners were often exploited to aggravate the *Red Peril*. It is interesting to give the explanation of *brainwashing* used by Australians in the 1950s.

During the Cold War it was believed that people who had been detained under Chinese control had been exposed not only to the communist evils, Marxist-Leninist ideology and Maoist propaganda, but also to a range of sinister communist manipulations, but also to a range of sinister communist manipulations, such as indoctrination and *brainwashing*.

The term *brainwashing* appeared for the first time in 1950 when the American journalist Edward Hunter translated the Chinese colloquialism *xi nao* (“wash brain”), an expression that he claims was used by the Chinese informants he had interviewed following the Communist takeover in 1949. Hunter employed the term to explain the re-education techniques used to coerce Chinese citizens, and non compliant nationalists, into the Chinese Communist Party. It was alleged that the Chinese had employed a series of psychological procedures that attacked a prisoner’s belief system and made them vulnerable to conversion to communism. An American collection of texts written by soldiers repatriated from the Korean War in 1956 demonstrated that the soldiers were in reality not too drastic in thinking about their captors. Often they were welcomed into captivity. Mao maintained a policy of converting rather than punishing POWs, and believed that captivities should be given a revolutionary education. The Chinese considered the prisoner of war a student and would try to teach him the “truth” about the war.

The Australian experience in Korea would, by a large, corroborate this tactic. During the 1953 two separate groups of Australian POWs were released from captivity. The first group consisted of wounded prisoners released as part of the Little Switch. Five injured men, who had spent three months in Chinese hands, were exchanged at

Panmunjon in April. In their reports it was explained that there was no organised attempt to indoctrinate them and warns that some of the stories told by Americans POWs about their mistreatment should be threatened with caution. In later interviews it became clear that while there were no formal attempts at communist indoctrination, the five Australians attended screening of Chinese and Russian films, found Maoist, Marxist and Leninist reading material widely available and spoke of the prevalence of anti-American wall poster. The interviewees explained that their Chinese captors generally found it incomprehensible that the Australians were volunteers for American capitalism and therefore “educated” them about the dangers of US imperialism. The notion of *brainwashing* combined with the concept of thought reform with a range of Orientalist myths to produce a sinister fantasy about Oriental despotism. This word came into common use in American texts and became central also to Australia’s Cold War experience to witness to the capacity of US political and cultural notions to pervade and dominate the Western imaginary.⁸⁶

Two different words

Relations between Australia and China faced serious difficulties largely provoked by their high cultural divergence. For this reason, when Australians went to China for the first time in the 1970s, even knowing something of the Chinese word, they personally expertises the Chinese traditions, founding some differences to overcome.

In her record *Between Two Worlds* published in *China in the Seventies: Australian Perceptive*, Mary Farquhar tells the “rural” and basilar differences between Australia and the PRC. The author went to Beijing in the 1970s working as teacher and she was impressed by the fact that China was still strictly tied to the rural aspects of life. As an instance,

in China the weather and food go together, steamed dumplings in winter, crisp, green vegetables in spring, watermelons in the heat of summer and persimmons in trees and tables in autumn. You eat the sun in a Beijing peach. But the season also dictates life-style. [...] there is a season for blossom and a season for taking off your padded clothes, even you shoes [...]. Food and weather were fundamentals when living in Beijing. [...] Both were so fundamental that while I knew thousand died in a Chinese winter before 1949 or that the Yangzi River floods brought untold deaths, misery and disease, it was only when I felt the cold and thought about the number of people that I realized what

86 T.Kendall, 2005, *Ways of seeing China. From Yellow Peril to Shangrilla*, Curtin University Books, Western Australia, see pp. 62-69.

the Chinese had done to feed and clothe their people. Immediately you have tasted the season and food you are in touch with a pulse at the hearth of Chinese culture. This aspect of Chinese culture is not rural nostalgia but rural reality. Australian urbanisation and technological comforts divorce us from the season: we keep apples in cold storage.⁸⁷

A second immediate aspect of Chinese culture which distinguishes itself from Australia is the sense of history. Farquhar explained:

It is a “sense” of history and not a textbook awareness of its length. It would be impossible to grapple with the enormity of facts and changes since Chinese civilisation began the Yellow River valley or even since the beginning of recorded history in the early centuries of the first millennium before Christ. It surrounds the casual visitor in buildings, archaeological sites and museum. But a student is immediately aware that it has a living consciousness in the minds of Chinese people, that it binds them to an historical process in a continuum of past, present and future, that it exerts a strong influence in any social change. [...] It was the importance that Chinese gave to history which made it so exciting. When I came back to Australia, I saw it not as the dead hand of the past but as something living, not as catalogue of facts and dates but as something in the making. I saw the very shortness of our own history as historical fact and not historical inadequacy and part of what Australia is now.⁸⁸

Cultural difference is a means by which cultural asset is developed. However, by reason of huge level of difference between Australia and China and huge level of prejudices and ignorance towards the PRC, Australians who first went to this country made great efforts for “understanding” and appreciate the “diversity”. Perhaps, understand China and its tradition in a fully way is easier owing some historical knowledge of it as well as the ways people live.

Concluding with the words of M. Farquhar, it could be argued that

understand China demanded ‘an imaginative reconstruction of its past and the way people think. To do that honestly required you look at Australia’s past and the process sloughs off some of your own preconception which bind you to another time and place. You move physically and emotionally from Australia to China; you analyse and compare even if it is a sensuous and not articulate comparison; you move between two

87 S. FitzGerald, P. Hewitt, 1980, *China in the Seventies: Australian Perspectives*, Australian National University, Canberra, pp. 176-178.

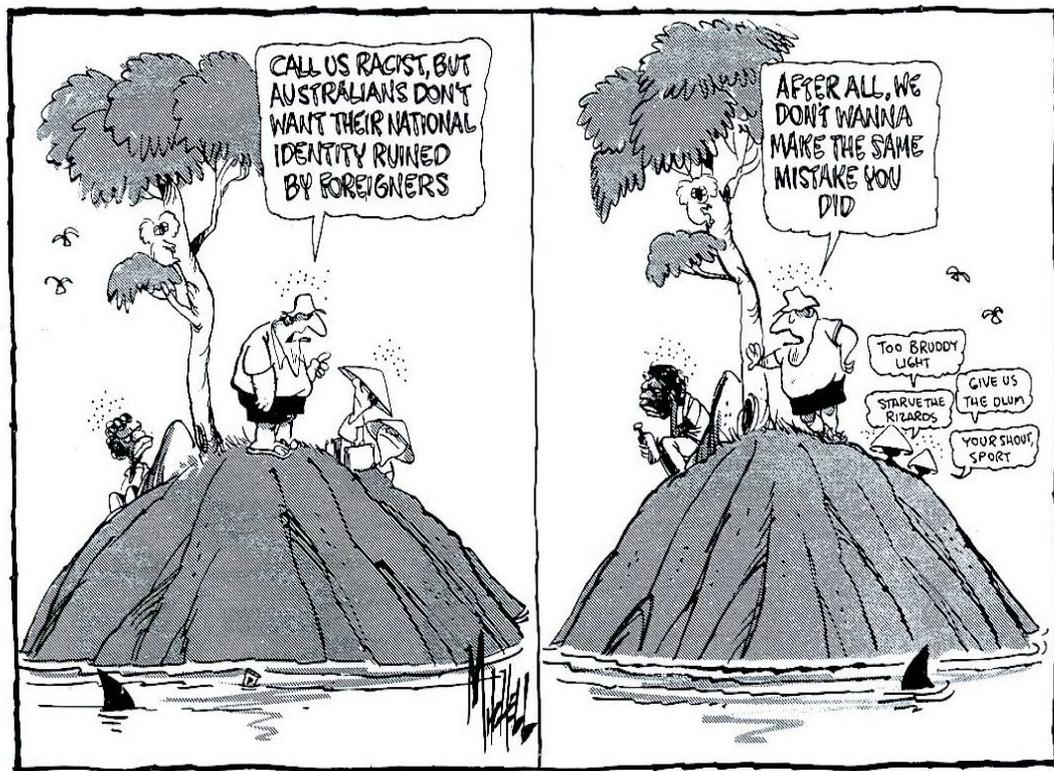
88 *Ibid*, pp. 179-181.

worlds as entities and in relation to yourself and each other.⁸⁹

“Australianness”

In the decades following the abolition of the *White Australian Policy*, the multi-generational Chinese Australians who were born and grew in Australia, and still are, sometimes perceived themselves as *foreign* in their own country. They needed to ‘negotiate their identities in response to encounters of “difference” and “otherness” within mainstream Australian society’.⁹⁰

Fig. 9¹ *The immigration problem*, 1984



The immigration problem

Australian 22 March 1984

89 Ibid, p. 186.

90 T. Khoo, 2008, *Locating Asian Australian Cultures*, Routledge, New York, p. 66.

91 E.M. Andrews, 1985, *Australia and China. The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, p. 245.

In the essay *“The Tyranny of Appearance”: Chinese Australian Identities and the Politics of Difference* (2008), Carole Tan through oral history interviews tried to indicate the mechanisms which continue to obstruct the complete acceptance of Chinese Australians among the population, despite ‘rights of birth and citizenship, generation longevity and strong national and cultural identities grounded in Australia’.⁹²

In her essay, Tan used the concept of “otherness” for illustrated how ‘the visible and ineradicably nature of racial “difference” creates a constant problem for the descendants of radicalised migrants; they become bound by the same race categories despite their acculturation and assimilation into the society.’⁹³ In a previous essay (2003) the same author suggested that ‘the differential process within which this “otherness” derived from the process of “Racialisation” that Chinese Australians were subjected.’⁹⁴ The concept of “Chineseness”⁹⁵ had often been used to discriminate and label the Chinese migrants as “something else from the Australian society”. On the contrary, Chinese migrants claim “Australianness”⁹⁶ as theirs.

Oral history interviews and personal narratives reveal that one of the most common ways informants have experienced the legitimacy of their “Australianness” being called into question has occurred in social encounters with Anglo Australians. They usually ask the ubiquitous question ‘Where are you from?’ This question may be well intended and appear harmless but it could also represent an “assumption of foreignness” by the inquirer who assumes that since informants look “Chinese”, they must be foreign to Australia.

An example is provided by Robyn On, a generation of Chinese Australians, who notes:

‘When someone says what nationally are you, I can only say Australian because I was born here. But they’ll go, ‘No, but where were you born?’ And I go ‘Darwin’. ‘Well, where were your parents born?’ And I go ‘Well, my dad was born in Katherine, my great-parents were born in Pine Creek’. They go “No, no, no. Where did they originally come from?’ I’m going, ‘Oh, you mean what’s my cultural background?’ And they go, ‘Yeah, okay’. They do it all the time.’⁹⁷

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid, p. 67.

94 C. Tan, 2003, *Living with ‘Difference’: Growing up ‘Chinese’ in White Australia*, see online on Google. Books (December 2012).

95 The state or quality of being Chinese.

96 The state or quality of being Australians.

97 T. Khoo, 2008, *Locating Asian Australian Cultures*, Routledge, New York, p. 69.

The girl in this brief passage explained the sense of frustration she experienced. Another woman, Lyn Fong, a doctor of the generation Australian-born Chinese encountered similar situations and even racist events:

For most Australians an Asian person or a Chinese person is unfamiliar, strange, people from a strange culture and something very alien to Australia. So when people would speak to me and say, you know, 'Where are you from?' that used to incense me. And I thought, 'What are you talking about?', you know, 'I'm as Australian as you'. So I felt quite hurt that even though I was born in Australia, people keep asking you where you are from. And they finally dawned on me what they were trying to say. Because I was thinking 'Where are you from? Where else could I be from – Mars?' And they dawned on me that they were really talking about being Chinese. So you must be Chinese or you are from China.

[...] I can remember walking across a street in Sydney, Elizabeth Street –and I was almost at a crossing and the light had changed so I was just stuck there. So there were people crossing the road and these boys just said something like, you know, 'Asian out!' and were shouting at me. It's really tragic. This was extremely hurtful and I also felt it was dangerous. You know, had this been in the evening or at night these people would have been quite capable of attacking a person they don't know...⁹⁸

Lyn Fong continued telling that no longer after her incident a person of Asian descent was beaten in Hyde Park in Sydney. According to Lyn, the problem of racism was aggravated by Pauline Hanson's comments on Asians in Australia.⁹⁹

On the one side, according to Lyn Fong, Chinese Australians assert continuously their rights to gain recognition as Australians and push away the boundaries of racism and exclusion. 'If they are to be successful, it is imperative that the boundaries of the Australian nation be extended and made more inclusive so that all national citizens can find unconditional acceptance as real Australian regardless of racial and cultural background or appearance. Only when this transformation will occur Australia should be justified in calling itself a multicultural nation'.¹⁰⁰

On the other side, Australia has a multicultural population with a majority who are tolerant and welcome the diversity among people as an important benefit to its modern society.¹⁰¹

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid, p. 78.

101 "Chinese Australian Forum-Building a Socially Harmonious and Cohesive Australia", see www.caf.org.au/

Australian Chinese of the twenty-first century do not need to apologise for their presence in Australia, anymore. They do not face racial discrimination arose before them in any analogous way –although sometimes discrepancy emerged and bring back “old scars”.¹⁰²

Cases like those of Lyn Fong are caused by racist discriminations, Asian stereotypes and controversies over immigration that sometimes occupy the front page in newspapers and ‘shimmered, on those occasions, the remains of White Australia’.¹⁰³ However, the Chinese are part and parcel of Australia now, providing that they do not complain about being improperly treated, being their place is in the Australian society.

The assimilation reached by the Chinese in Australia and the success given by the Australian acceptance of the Chinese “diversity” is an incentive for pushing everybody in the multicultural Australia to sustain a “Move On” to strengthen the immeasurable asset offered by culture integration.

102 See C. Ling , “Move on, Move on! What it is to be Chinese in Australia today”, *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, Vol.3, No.1, 2011.

103 Ibid.

Personal Conclusion

Australia is a country that has always needed to harmonize its culture and its history on the one hand and its geographical situation on the other.

If the primary intent of the present dissertation was the study of Australia's relations with China –through the analysis of Australia's foreign policy history, the primary and most evident outcome is the situation of contradiction experienced by Australians. Their British origins and their Asia-Pacific geography did not facilitate them neither to advance an independent foreign policy strategies nor to adopt autonomous behavior towards China.

Since 1949, in fact, dealing with the China question, Australian governments have been interested in exploiting the conservative, anti-Communist sentiments of the general public, particularly the strong preference for maintaining the Taiwan connection. To a large extent the governments' policy reflected public opinion but politicians made no attempt to lead public sentiments. Despite the progressive thinking of some sections of the community was slowly changing the old assumption about China, these remained embedded in the mind of many Australians for many years.¹

Australian delay in recognize the PRC could be also explained by saying that most of the countries that recognized it during the 1950s and 1960s were from Europe or other places more distant from China than Australia: they could afford to take a more detached view of the PRC. Canberra was correct in pointing out that the non-Communist nations of South-East Asia feared China and were uneasy about having a Communist giant next door. These fears increased after the outbreak of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which led to the leverage of the radicals in the conduct of Chinese foreign affairs. For the Australian Government, the most difficult task was to reach the point where China would fit into “good” international relations. The difficulties came from the factors often repeated: Australian prejudices and domestic politics and the dependence towards Washington. Probably, if Canberra's doctrine was not one of condemning China and aligning all policies with the United States, but one of helping to break down barriers, making friendly gestures, the process towards recognition could have been easier.

The study of the first decades of Sino-Australian relations has clearly revealed that

¹ S. FitzGerald, P. Hewitt, 1980, *China in the Seventies: Australian Perspectives*, Australian National University, Canberra, p. 19.

emerging problems of various nature did not preclude the consolidation of strong economic connections between the two countries. During the 1950s and the 1960s despite tendencies of isolating the PRC from the Australian Government policies, trade with China remained an high priority for Canberra. It became significant particularly from the end of the 1950s with a growth in exports of raw materials to the PRC. The bilateral economic relationship has continued to develop rapidly, developing in particular the agricultural and the manufacturing sectors. In 2007 China overtook Japan becoming Australia's largest trading partner and in 2009 it became Australia's largest export market– while Australia is China's seventh largest trading partner. Forty years ago, the bilateral trade was less than \$100 million, today it is more than \$100 billion. Furthermore, Australia and China share a strong and rapidly growing trade and economic relations. Further strengthening of this relationship is a major priority for both countries and both governments are committed in sustaining the impressive trade and investment performance achieved in the past decades.²

The present work has also revealed how Sino-Australian relations have always been characteristic by a major Australian involvement rather than Chinese. China has always been more important to Australia than the contrary but in recent times this move has started to change and Beijing is increasingly approaching its involvement towards Canberra. The historical Chinese perception of Australia have changed from negative to positive along with the major policy shifts in Sino-Australian relations and Chinese domestic affairs. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the Chinese saw Australia as a “puppet” of the American imperialism. With the establishment of diplomatic relations, the emphasis changed quite markedly and the Chinese admired Whitlam's more independent foreign policy.

Whitlam was the first Australian Prime Minister to come to term fully with the PRC out of the conviction that despite their differences in social and political systems, Australia and China could become good friends. He directed in this way the Prime Ministers who succeeded him, who have strengthened relations with the Chinese leaders. The dialogue between Canberra and Beijing, as emerged in chapter three, probably reached its major decline with the Howard Government. The Sino-Australian relationship has continuously needed to be strongly sustained because of some critical problems which were always present. After Tienanmen, Hawke and Keating made great efforts to sustain Australia's connections with China with continuous exchanges in all aspects of the relationship. These governments tried to connect the relationship with Canberra's new direction towards Asia –the same was made with Rudd and today with Gillard.

² “Australia-China Free Trade Agreement negotiations”, see www.dfat.gov.au (January 2013).

Howard, on the contrary, focused in particular on the economic aspects, damaging partially the past achievements.

Along the decades, the respective governments have learnt to manage each other's weakness at best, despite some problems still affect the relationship.

From the Australian perspective, Beijing's strictness and intolerance towards external interferences do not facilitate the dialogue with the Chinese. From the Chinese perspective, the American presence within the Asian Regionalism means "intrusion" and this does not ease Canberra's desire of constructing a dialogue between Washington and Beijing. Accordingly, Australian policy-makers know that also a contained exchange with the Chinese about some delicate issues, such as human right or environmental impact, is a positive achievement. Beijing has become aware that the United States is an historical friends and ally for Australia but it still arises critics for its presence in Asia. Probably, the American presence and its aspirations towards Asia, and the respective Australia's support –the Americans will contribute to the Asia-Pacific security deploying 2,500 troops in Darwin by 2016–, will remain one of the major obstacle for future relations between Beijing and Canberra along with the problem of finding a common dialogue for security matters.

As a matter of fact, China's military capabilities are a necessity for the development of a regional security but when the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper, called for a common structure for the regional security and affirmed that 'the pace, scope and structure of China's military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern if not carefully explained',³ the Chinese Government reacted negatively to this assessment, assuming that it was directed at countering Chinese military capabilities. If the Asian countries consider China's rising power dangerous, Beijing is neither well intentioned to be labeled in such terms nor to submit its policies to the ones of other governments.

Some sustain that China is the first non-democratic power who will soon rule the international community. If affirmation like this could be consider arguable, it is quite indisputable that China will soon become the greatest economic power. In circumstances like these it will be not easy for countries like Australia to find the right direction for dealing with China. If the public diplomacy shows the best images of the Sino-Australian economic outcomes and celebrated the forty anniversary of diplomatic relations, some Australian scholars, academics and journalists agree that the relationship needs new emphasis in promoting "cultural understanding". It is asserted that a lack of meaningful strate-

³ Department of Defence, 2009, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Defence White Paper, Australian Government, p. 34.

gic dialogue between governments of Canberra and Beijing causes a lack of understanding also between people of the two countries, who do not really know each other culture and lives. The two governments can continue to develop dialogue on social matters but as long as Canberra does not engage its policies in improving the Chinese culture in Australia and Beijing continues to consider human rights, civil society and other “Western” political institutions and ideologies like hostile, that dialogue will never be optimized. For Australia, coming to terms with a more complex Chinese world will mean overcoming barriers of language and political culture. The 2012 *Asian Century White Paper* affirms that a further engagement towards Asia is indispensable and Chinese culture and language must be improved in Australia’s educational system. However, additional actions would be request –in order to not counter Beijing’s displeasure: the Australian Government should adopt decisions which would not be considered hostile by Chinese –referring especially to the American presence in Asia, to some rises in mineral prices and to some condemnations of Chinese aggressive actions; Australian media should focus further on Chinese issues; Australian policies regarding China should take into account broad public opinion in the PRC and they must show they take China’s and its cultural policy seriously. However, until Beijing –who inaugurated in 2011 with General Secretary Hu Jintao’s declaration the Party’s intent to construct a ‘cultural great power’⁴–, underlining the special status of *whenua* (culture) in the Chinese policy continues to use it as ‘inescapably a channel of political control’,⁵ it will be not easy for Australians to construct a limpid dialogue with the Chinese.

From the people-to-people perspective, the major barrier is given by some cases of discrimination still existing in Australia towards the Chinese. The label of “Asians” is sometimes gives to Australian born Chinese and events of racial intolerance are still reported in newspapers. However, in general terms, the Australian multiculturalism has helped to make the Chinese more welcome, giving them the possibility to maintain their cultural heritage and at the same time working and sharing the country’s interests.⁶

Today, Chinese people in Australia are a stable presence and census of 2011 indicates that 319,000 people who were born in China have immigrated to Australia and that 4 per cent of Australian residents –over a population of 21,727,158– identifying themselves as having Chinese ancestry.⁷

4 Submission to the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper Taskforce, March 2011, *Understanding cultural dimensions in the Australia-China relationship*, see www.policy.cn.com (January 2013).

5 Ibid.

6 August 2012, “Chinese Australians are sick of being labeled foreigners because of the way they look”, *The Herald Sun*, www.heraldsun.com.au (January 2013).

7 The Treasury of the Australian Government, “Australia-China: Not just 40 years”, www.treasury.gov.au (January 2013).

Taking into account the Chinese presence in Australia, the expanding economic bilateral relations, the participation of both Canberra and Beijing in some Asian forum and associations and the rising dialogue between the two countries, it would be possible to speak of a growing and enduring Sino-Australian relationship. Therefore, Canberra should succeed in overcoming potential tensions between Washington and Beijing and it should be able to construct a valuable dialogue with both of them. Doing so, Australians could be successful in starting their projects for the new “Asian Century”. Recently, however, Julie Gillard has reaffirmed the Australian engagement with the Americans and the predominant role they constitute for the stability of Asia. The Prime Minister’s reassurance about the Chinese fundamental alliance for Australia and the Chinese leading role in the conduct of an Asian security agreement, started to be unsatisfactory for Beijing; as an instance, according to a prominent Chinese defense strategist ‘Australia cannot juggle its relationship with the United States and China indefinitely and must choose a “godfather” to protect it’.⁸ If Australian policy-makers will continue to maintain a weak position and avoid to make their voices heard stronger, they certainly will never contribute in the evolution of the “Asian Century”. Affirmations like those of Australian Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, do not help Australians’ positions: he has rejected the suggestion that its country should be “a mediator” between the United States and China. The Minister explained that ‘occasionally he has had the suggestion that somehow a country like Australia could be a bridge between the United States and China’.⁹

Since the beginning of the 1900s, Australia’s foreign policy evolution towards China has revealed substantial progresses, reaching a point in which the two countries stand together to achieve common interests. Of course, the Sino-Australian future is tied to Canberra’s ability to exploit at best both its dialogue with Beijing and the common interests Australians shared with the whole Chinese community.

⁸ May 2012, “Chinese official: it’s us or America”, *The Age*, see www.theage.com.au (January 2013).

⁹ August 2012, “Australia not bridge between US and China: Smith”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, see www.smh.com.au (January 2013).

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