



LIBERAL POLICY

**AUSTRALIA'S
ROLE
IN THE
PACIFIC**

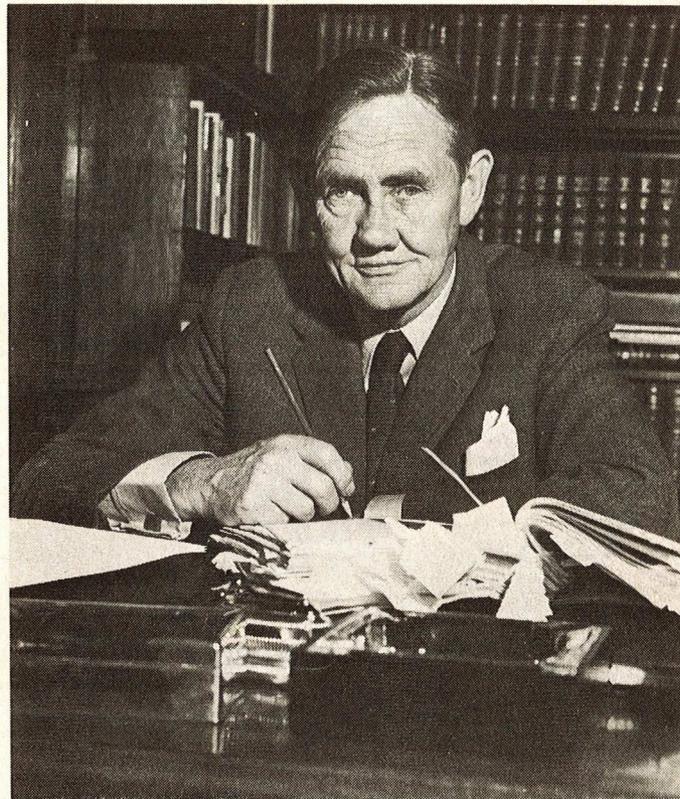
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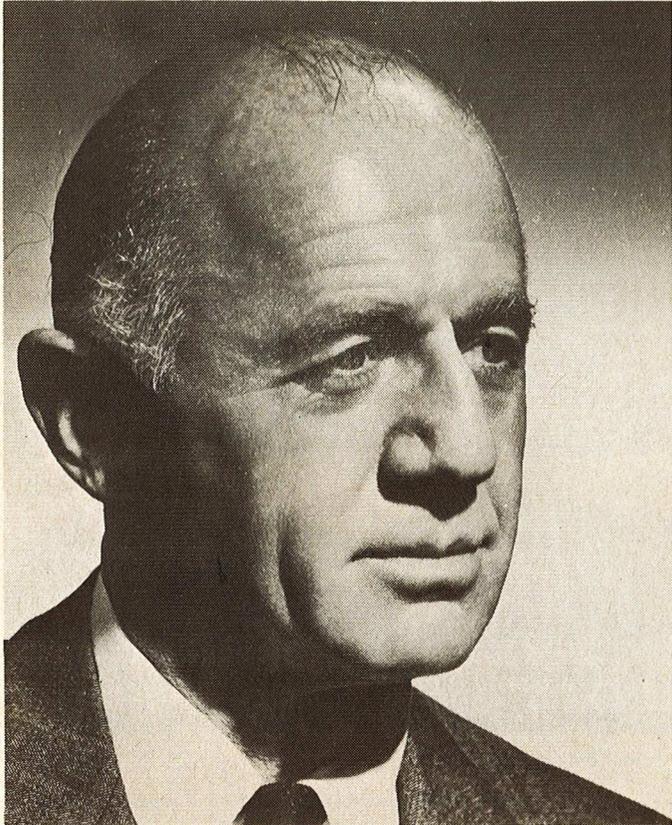


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Prime Minister John Gorton



External Affairs Minister William McMahon

"I believe that the people of Australia must be taken fully into the Government's confidence about the problems which it faces in our international relations," said the Minister for External Affairs (Mr. William McMahon) in his statement to Parliament on foreign affairs on March 19, 1970.

PROFOUND CHANGES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

In his first speech to Parliament as Minister for External Affairs Mr. McMahon pointed to "profound changes" taking place in the Asian and Pacific region.

He went on to take stock of what has been happening and to assess these events against "the background of the broad objectives of Australian foreign policy".

Defining the Nixon Doctrine on foreign affairs, Mr. McMahon said: "The third point of the Nixon Doctrine emphasises the idea that subversion and armed infiltration can ultimately only be defeated by the forces and people of the country under attack. They can be helped to do the job, but ultimate success must depend on their own efforts. **This is a view shared by the Australian Government.**"

On Vietnam, the Minister said: "Until we can persuade the Communists to negotiate seriously we must continue to help the people of South Vietnam to develop their capacity to defend themselves and to improve their economic and social conditions."

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

- Mr. McMahon's Statement to Parliament defines "the supreme objective" of Australian foreign policy.
- It sets out the major trends in world affairs.
- It discusses the important Nixon Doctrine on foreign policy.
- It states the Government's view on problems of subversion and Vietnam.
- It defines the broad principles of the Gorton Government's foreign policy.

particular the withdrawal of British forces from Malaysia and Singapore.

3. The dramatic growth of Japan with the promise this has for greatly increased influence in the world at large and in our own region in particular.
4. The comprehensive doctrine enunciated by President Nixon concerning the world role of the United States.

COMMUNIST POLICIES

The Minister said that a factor of critical importance for security and progress in the Asian and Pacific region was the continuing pressure on it from the Communist powers. "It is, therefore, appropriate that I should commence with a brief review of overall developments in such policies and in the relations between the Communist powers and the free world, particularly the United States.

The Search for a Detente: "Preliminary discussions are now taking place between the major Western countries and the U.S.S.R. and China — so far with very little effect.

"Some progress in regard to partial disarmament measures has been made as a result of co-operation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

"Outside of disarmament there are few real signs of detente between the major powers."

Russian Influence in Asia: "Closer to home another change of concern to us is the evidence of increased efforts by the Soviet Union to extend its activity in our own part of the world. No doubt this activity in part flows from the conflict with China. It is also part of the Soviet Union's overall desire to extend its influence as a world power.

"Other countries beside Australia are concerned to ensure that these new Soviet activities are not detrimental to their own security, nor to their political and commercial interests."

Communist China: "We would welcome evidence that the Communist Chinese are prepared to comply with the broad rules

THE SUPREME OBJECTIVE

"It cannot be repeated too often", said Mr. McMahon "that the supreme objective of our foreign policy is to protect and enhance our security and other vital interests — political, economic and social. We must do this with the knowledge that our own welfare and security are inextricably bound up with the welfare and security of others."

Mr. McMahon said he believed it was the responsibility of an Australian Foreign Minister to present the major trends in world affairs objectively and candidly to Parliament. "I also believe," he said, "that the people of Australia must be taken fully into the Government's confidence about the problems which it faces in our international relations.

"I do not think these problems can be dealt with successfully unless the Australian people understand them and support the solutions which we propose."

The Minister then discussed these matters:

1. Communist policies.
2. The reduction of British influence East of Suez and in

of international behaviour and forgo their largely self-inflicted isolation. Regrettably there are few genuine signs of this and consequently we still regard Communist China and other Communist regimes as a central obstacle to peace, stability and ordered progress throughout Asia.

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

Speaking candidly, Mr. McMahon said it would be a major misfortune if, at a time when the region was faced with such new and complex problems, British influence was progressively diminished and finally completely withdrawn.

“The withdrawal of their permanent military establishment from South East Asia, which has already commenced, will remove an important factor for stability and will throw an added strain on the remaining countries which are co-operating for the security of the region,” said the Minister. “We therefore strongly hope that such withdrawal may be delayed and will not mean the disappearance of Britain’s active interest and influence in the region.”

THE ROLE OF JAPAN

“The Australian Government has in recent years developed increasingly close contacts with Japan in the political field,” said the Minister. “Regular consultations have been held at the ministerial and official level between the Japanese Foreign Ministry and my department. These have covered such matters of mutual concern as disarmament, United Nations problems, China and regional affairs. These discussions have been valuable in promoting understanding between our two Governments and it is my intention that they should be maintained and developed.

“Japan can also play an important role in the political co-operation in the region. As a country of global stature her advice and counsel will be increasingly weighty in regional affairs. For Australia’s part we welcome and will do our best to encourage her participation in the consultations that are becoming increasingly important in the political life of the region.”

THE NIXON DOCTRINE

The Minister said that a further factor with major implications

for our region was the Nixon Doctrine, first announced by the President on his visit to Guam in July, 1969.

“The basic elements in the Nixon Doctrine are very much in line with our own thinking,” the Minister went on. “As stated by Mr. Nixon in his Report to Congress on February 18, 1970, they are:

1. The United States will keep all its treaty commitments.
2. It will provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with the United States, or of a nation whose survival was considered vital to the United States’ security and to the security of the region as a whole.
3. In cases involving other types of aggression the United States will furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But the United States will look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defence.”

PROBLEMS OF SUBVERSION

“The third point of the Nixon Doctrine emphasises the idea that subversion and armed infiltration can ultimately only be defeated by the forces and people of the country under attack. They can be helped to do the job, but ultimate success must depend on their own efforts,” the Minister said. “This is a view shared by the Australian Government.

“But effective resistance to subversion and insurgency on a region-wide basis calls for not only individual efforts by the countries concerned, but also meaningful co-operation between them in the economic, social and security fields.

“Australia has for long stressed the need for such co-operation. We have been and will continue to be active in supporting regional associations which help to stimulate and promote mutual help and co-operation. The basic objective is to build up in the region a climate of co-operation and mutual help which can be maintained notwithstanding the inevitable differences that exist between individual countries.”

VIETNAM

"We must not allow the complexity of the Vietnam situation to obscure two central facts," said Mr. McMahon.

"First, our basic aim has been and is to help the South Vietnamese people to defend themselves against external aggression and to determine their own future in their own way.

Second, South Vietnam's efforts, with the help of Australia and the other allies, have successfully prevented a Communist takeover and have enabled a significant improvement in South Vietnam's capacity to defend itself.

"Until we can persuade the Communists to negotiate seriously we must continue to help the people of South Vietnam to develop their capacity to defend themselves and to improve their economic and social conditions."

PRINCIPLES OF POLICY

The Minister stated the broad principles by which our policy will be guided in our efforts to contribute constructively to the progress and security of the region.

"I repeat, it is axiomatic that the supreme objective of our foreign policy is the protection and promotion of our security and our other vital interests," he said. "In particular our policies are based on the following criteria:

- (a) They are designed and developed in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations.
- (b) We are concerned with the general well-being of individual Asian countries and peoples — their stability and their capacity for balanced economic and social development as self-reliant and peaceful neighbour states with a firm basis of support from their peoples.
- (c) We are concerned with their security — their capacity to safeguard their independence against external

pressures in all its forms, ranging from subversion to open aggression or the threat of it.

"At the same time we recognise that it will be difficult if not impossible for the countries of the region to attain and maintain this solid standard of strength and stability if their territorial integrity is constantly threatened by hostile forces and if their every effort to develop internal harmony, prosperity and administrative efficiency is frustrated by subversion and insurgency inspired and directed from outside their borders.

"For this reason the Government, in addition to its sustained programme of economic aid and co-operation, has been ready to play a part, commensurate with its resources and the many demands upon them, in co-operative security arrangements in the area . . .

"We must recognise that Australia's future is inescapably bound up with the future of the Asian and Pacific region, and that it is this region and the Middle East in which crises affecting the peace and stability of the whole world are most likely to arise.

"We must, therefore, work in all ways open to us to reinforce those factors making for stability, and give all possible support to movements towards co-operation and mutual help in the region.

"We must recognise the critical importance of adequate living standards to the independence and progress of the countries in the region, and must continue to give aid within the limits of our capacity towards the economic and social development of these countries.

"We recognise that the region cannot hope to overcome its problems in the coming decade without outside support. This does not mean that we can be expected to take over the past responsibilities of the United States and Britain. Clearly, we have not the capacity and resources to do so.

"The Nixon Doctrine, which I have already discussed, reaffirms that the United States will honour its treaty commitments and will provide a shield against nuclear threat; in cases involving other types of aggression the United States will furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate.

“With these assurances and the mutual safeguards written into the ANZUS Treaty for the signatory countries, we can think in terms of greater responsibilities and wider interests not only in Asia but elsewhere in the world.

“As Australian Minister for External Affairs my objectives will be:

- 1 — To maintain and foster our alliance with the United States of America.
- 2 — To work closely with Britain and New Zealand.
- 3 — To develop and deepen our relationship with the countries of the Asian and Pacific region.
- 4 — To strengthen our co-operation with these countries through such organisations as ECAFE, the regional bodies of the United Nations Specialised Agencies, the Asian Development Bank and the Asian and Pacific Council.
- 5 — To ensure that Australia’s views are clearly heard on all occasions of importance to the welfare of the region, and to this end to seek to maintain the Australian diplomatic representation at an effective level both in the region and in the major capitals of the world.
- 6 — Finally, to ensure that the Australian people are fully informed of international events of direct concern to them so that they may understand, and I hope support, the policies pursued by the Government.”

