Proxy Warfare: The Missing Facet of Australian Defence Policy

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ABSTRACT

Australia is engaged in strategic competition with autocratic regimes, yet its defense policy remains disproportionately oriented toward conventional conflict. This paper argues that proxy warfare—state support to non-state actors as an instrument of competition—constitutes a missing facet of Australian strategic policy. Drawing on Australia's historical experience from World War II through the Cold War, it demonstrates that Canberra once possessed a sophisticated understanding of subversion, political warfare, and proxy dynamics, particularly in Southeast Asia. That understanding has since atrophied, leaving a policy gap evident in contemporary defense documents. As major powers increasingly employ gray zone tactics, frozen conflicts, and externally supported insurgencies, Australia risks strategic surprise by neglecting proxy competition as a central feature of modern statecraft. The paper concludes by outlining implications for deterrence, alliance coordination, and resistance strategy, arguing that renewed conceptual clarity on proxy warfare is essential to Australia's ability to compete below the threshold of armed conflict.

KEYWORDS

Proxy warfare; gray-zone competition; Australian defense policy; resistance strategy; special operations

Australia and its Western allies and partners are in a state of competition with several autocratic regimes, the most prominent being the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Despite recognition of this fact in national security documents, policy statements, and defense preparedness tasks, the conduct of strategic competition and experience from previous competitions receive little attention.

Thus, the dominant narrative of defense is to prepare for conflict. Despite the implicit recognition that all parties wish to avoid the costly environment of conflict by remaining in competition, guidance as to the necessary investment in competing to avoid conflict is unclear in Australian policy. A recurrent lesson drawn from previous strategic competitions in history is that states compete, in the gray zone and in peripheral "gray areas,"[1] to prevent adversarial *faits accomplis* and to avoid conflict. The gap is that focused attention is needed to understand how to compete, drawing upon the lessons of previous competitions.

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Australia has been in competition with the CCP before. This competition began with Australia's commitment to the Korean War, was sharpened through the experience of Communist "gray zone" activities in Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia, and intensified in response to Chinese proxy warfare in Laos, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and South Vietnam in the 1960s. As alliance partners, it is imperative for British and American audiences to understand how Australian policy lags in its understanding of competition and proxy warfare compared to the much richer history of covert action undertaken in competition by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), U.S. Special Forces, and other arms of the American and British governments.

The defense challenges faced by Australia today are similar to those of earlier competitions. Communist subversive methods seek to carve out a small sector of a country, from which there is a general weakening of the whole, as recognized in reporting from Australia's Moscow Embassy in 1975:

> One feature of their tactics in various countries will be what was done in Laos and also in another way in Cambodia and Vietnam, namely to bring under insurgent control a small part of a country which can then be used either to establish an alternative government or to provide a base from which to demand a coalition.[2]

Today's understanding of Russia's instigation of "frozen conflicts" in Transnistria (on the Moldova–Ukraine border), Abkhazia (western Georgia), South Ossetia (northern Georgia), and the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (eastern Ukraine), and the way in which such frozen conflicts have been leveraged by Russia (in 2008, 2014, and 2022–23), can benefit from this historical context. Renewed CCP competition similarly uses proxies in the form of state-owned enterprises, its maritime militia, and disgruntled ethnic populations in places like Myanmar, all with the aim of weakening target countries to advance national interests below the threshold of armed conflict. Akin to Russian statecraft, through the mechanism of Chinese support to the United Wa State Army (UWSA), a "proto-state" the size of Belgium has been carved out of Myanmar.[3]

This paper responds to this threat by illuminating Australia's gap in proxy warfare policy, recognition, and scholarly debate.[4] In Part 1, I illuminate the proxy warfare policy gap in Australia. Part 2 outlines the historical record of Australian policy relating to proxy warfare to demonstrate the context within which policy choices were made. Part 3 considers implications for today's security environment, both regarding Australia's dangerous conflict-centric national security dialogue and for allies seeking to coordinate collective security efforts with Australia.

Part 1: The Australian Proxy Warfare Literature Gap

There has been no recent open-source discussion regarding proxy warfare from an Australian Department of Defense and national security perspective prior to 2025. This is despite Australia's employment of proxies in times of conflict, such as the work of Special Operations Australia (SOA) in Timor throughout 1941–42 and Borneo during 1944–45, and the employment of Australian advisers to Montagnard tribesmen in South Vietnam during the 1960s.[5] Australia's experience, similar to that of other states, is that proxy warfare thrives in competition but continues in conflict.[6] These historical foundations, sharpened by the proximate experience of the Indonesian Confrontation, did, however, influence national

security thinking up until the 1970s under the terminology of "special operations." It must be noted that this term, in the thinking of the time, may include:

> (a) The raising, directing, and support, at least in the initial stages, of indigenous guerrilla movements.
> (b) The support of underground resistance movements in enemy-held territory.
> (c) Sabotage and small-party operations.
> (d) The covert dissemination of propaganda.
> (e) The clandestine aspects of escape and evasion, i.e., the organization of indigenous clandestine networks whereby Allied personnel, such as escaped prisoners of war or crashed aircrews, can be passed through enemy-held territory to a suitable point for exfiltration to a friendly base.
> (f) Assistance in the escape of political detainees. [7]

After 1975, there is little in Australian proxy war policy and literature to point to. This gap remains evident today.[8] This gap exists despite the proxy wars in Afghanistan, Iraq/Syria, Libya, Sudan, and the Donbas (among others) that have characterized the contemporary security environment of the past decade. More poignantly, this gap exists in the context of the recently revealed Iranian coordination of arson attacks against the Australian Jewish community in Melbourne and Sydney.[9] In other words, Australian defense policy lacks clarity on the nature of the threat presently faced in strategic competition.

A measure of the Australian policy gap is a review of the primary national security document—the Defence White Paper—over the past 45 years. A broader gap is patently evident in the absence of analysis of non-state actors, captured in the terminology of "irregular" or "unconventional."[10] Where such terminology exists, it is presented in a threat-centric sense, with no explanation of why adversaries might be pursuing a strategy that employs such means. This evidence is presented in Table 1, below.

Here, I use the term "proxy warfare" to denote external support from a state to enable a non-state actor to engage in violence. With the term "subversion," I mean a very similar phenomenon—external support from a state to enable a non-state actor that does not use violence.[11] The two terms are thus complementary, both involving efforts to weaken an adversary and being phenomena associated with strategic competition. The plausible deniability or covert nature of such support relationships is what makes them "gray zone" actions that occur beneath the threshold that might warrant a conventional military response.

Australia's policy gap regarding such terms, particularly proxy warfare, became especially telling in the context of Australia's Defence Strategic Review (DSR 2023), which framed Australia as facing increasing competition, "the intensity of which should be seen as the defining feature of our region and time."[12] Yet clarity as to how states are competing was oddly absent. The terms "gray zone," "subversion," "unconventional warfare," and "proxy warfare" were all absent from this analysis. The DSR 2023 was followed by the Australian National Defence Strategy (NDS 2024), which began to respond to the environment of competition and the threat posed by economic coercion as an element of statecraft. While the NDS began to close the gap highlighted by this paper, it nonetheless also emphasized the challenge of potential conflict, missing the point that competition will continue in conflict.

In 2025, the policy gap relating to proxy warfare was abruptly highlighted when the Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), Mike Burgess,

spoke to the threat of "state-sponsored or state-supported terrorism [proxy conflict] or criminal proxies being used to conduct sabotage."[13] While relatable to the Russian-orchestrated sabotage campaign across Europe from 2022 onward, Burgess' comments took concrete form on 26 August 2025, when the extraordinary step of expelling the Iranian ambassador was undertaken by the Australian government.[14] The Director-General of the Office of National Assessments, Andrew Shearer, amplified this present threat of proxies in comments made on 6 October 2025.[15] In short, Australia is ill-prepared with publicly available policy that recognizes the threat posed by proxies in strategic competition. This undermines unity of effort in an alliance sense and therefore matters to the United States and the United Kingdom in particular.

Defence Strategic Guidance	"Proxy"	"Irregular"	"Unconventional"
2024	One mention[16]	-	One mention[17]
2023[18]	-	-.	One mention[19]
2020[20]	-	One mention	-
2016	-	-	-
2013	-	-	-
2009	-	One mention[21]	Twice mentioned[22]
2000	-	One mention[23]	-
1994	-	-	-
1987	-	-	One mention

Table 1: Summary of keyword searches of Australian Defence White Papers / Defence Strategies.

The last recognized understanding of the use of proxies as a form of competitive statecraft in Australian policy was in 1976. The 1976 Defence White Paper addressed proxy warfare indirectly as follows:'

> Chinese support for insurgencies in South-East Asia appears now to be at a lower level than for many years. The various domestic insurgencies continue, but appear unlikely to be able to organise major challenge as in the past … It remains true that external powers have ample resources to directly support insurgent groups … and continuing political tensions in the region could provide them with opportunity.[24]

It must also be noted that the 1976 Defence White Paper articulates that "the threat of mutual destruction has led the two superpowers to seek ways of relaxing tension and avoiding military conflict … they show understanding of the need to avoid confrontations that could face them with a crucial choice between military conflict or strategic concession."[25] Such nuanced appreciation of the nature of strategic competition from the Cold War era has seemingly been lost to policymakers today.

Today's National Defence Strategy (NDS 2024) advocates for a strategy of deterrence by

denial, a strategy that aims to reduce "the perceived benefits an action is expected to provide an adversary … [it] deters through fear of failure."[26] A policy gap is thus evident when one appreciates how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is competing.

Ironically, Beijing is competing in ways similar to how it previously competed during earlier periods of strategic competition. At present, the CCP competes for increasing influence via "gray zone" activities of subversion, primarily through proxies. [27]Australia's response is not matched to this threat but is instead focused on deterring conflict or, in the event of a failure in deterrence, responding to conflict. There are thus limited policy aspects in the NDS that would lead PRC leadership to believe that a strategy of ongoing subversion—and thus winning without fighting—is likely to fail. In short, Australia's challenge is that its defense response does not actually compete with the present threat. Australia's policy gap lies first in understanding the nature of the threat and second in providing options to shape the international environment using methods short of direct conflict.

Australia once had a robust strategic and policy understanding of the CCP's subversive and proxy activities, due to its military commitments in Malaya and South Vietnam, and responded accordingly. This understanding was evidenced by the 1976 Defence White Paper and the broad literature on "Communist Revolutionary Warfare."[28]

This is a policy, military strategy, and operational planning challenge that is not unique to Australia. There is no mention of proxy warfare or its related terms as a threat or opportunity in recent partner strategy documents, such as the New Zealand Strategic Defence Policy Statement (2018), the Canadian Defence Policy (2021), or the American Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (2019).[29]

By contrast, an equivalent UK policy document, *Defence in a Competitive Age* (2021), specifically identifies adversarial employment of proxy warfare on multiple occasions.[30] The UK recognition of this threat was undoubtedly influenced by its exposure to Russian competitive statecraft in subverting Ukraine, NATO, and Western institutions more broadly. These policy gaps matter if the Five Eyes nations in particular, and Western nations in general, are to be capable of competing as a coalition. American and British partners are cognitively and doctrinally prepared to face a broad range of adversarial threats; other partners are not.

The next section examines Australian policy history pertaining to violent competition in the form of subversion, political warfare, and proxy warfare from World War II (WWII) to today. This history is organized into differing competitions prior to and during WWII, over the Cold War period, and in the post–Cold War period. In so doing, it elaborates upon Australia's understanding of the state of competition at particular times, its policy responses to such competition, and the logic that guided changes to policy.

Part 2: Proxy Warfare from an Australian Perspective

Pre-World War II Competition

The emergence of conflict with World War II (WWII) did not mean the cessation of nonviolent methods of competition.[31] Indeed, competitive institutions flourished. Australia's special operations capability, here simply termed Special Operations Australia (SOA) for simplicity, was raised as a counter-subversive organization in response to Japanese fifth-column activities leveraging nationalist movements. Thus, guerrilla campaigns were waged during WWII in Timor, Borneo, Malaya, and Burma, unilaterally and in concert with allies.

As early as 1937, Australia felt threatened by Japanese fishing vessels that encroached upon Australia's territorial waters while engaged in apparent intelligence collection activities.[32] Japanese enterprises invested in Portuguese Timor (oil, pearling, and coffee) and French New Caledonia (nickel).[33] Australian politicians expressed concern that economic dependence in these primary export categories might provide Japan political leverage for concessions—a concern that today might be termed "export market coercion" or "debt-trap diplomacy."[34]

The Japanese economic front invested in dual-use infrastructure of value to the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) in times of conflict. The South Seas Development Company (Nanyo Kohatsu Kabushiki Kaisha) built port facilities in the then-Japanese Palau in May 1939, including two oil tank installations with a capacity of 10,000 tons.[35] The Japanese government pursued oil, mining, shipping lines, and airfield concessions in Portuguese Timor. These activities triggered an alarm in Canberra and initiated Australian and British competition to secure these concessions at Japan's expense.[36] Eventually, Japan resorted to aggressive diplomacy in 1939: "in return for Japan's guaranteeing Macao, the Portuguese would adhere to the Anti-Comintern Pact, recognise [Japanese-controlled] Manchukuo, and grant Japan [an] air base in Timor."[37] In 1940, Japan bluntly warned that it would foment trouble in Macao unless Japanese concessions in Timor were satisfied—an attempt at coercion using proxy warfare.[38]

Japanese infrastructure and economic investment were understood as posing a threat, but the Portuguese prime minister did not see such engagement as dangerous, thus opening a schism with the Portuguese minister for colonies and creating political friction within Portugal.[39] The British consul-general in Batavia reported on these issues to the UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, in July 1937:

> If Japan puts into impecunious Portuguese Timor the capital suggested, harbour, godown and other improvements are likely to follow, and she might even, before long, obtain a permanent hold on that colony analogous to the position she has achieved at Davao, in Mindanao … It must, too, be borne in mind that Timor would make an admirable base for those Japanese fishery activities [including poaching in Australian waters] which have so greatly increased in the last year or two and have become so embarrassing to the Governments both of Australia and of the Netherlands East Indies.[40]

The Japanese thus leveraged commercial fronts for political and intelligence purposes and had been doing so since at least the Mukden Incident of 1931. The Japanese government used journalists as part-time intelligence agents[41] and, from at least 1937, equipped fishing fleets with wireless radios to report from the Persian Gulf to New Zealand to the Japanese Admiralty.[42]

Japanese military planning included the use of "fifth columnist" or subversive activities in Southeast Asia, termed *Kame* or "Tortoise," which was:

> [I]ntended to combine local organisations which had subversive aims or tendencies with a superior organisation whose task it would be to coordinate their activities throughout the whole area of operations… In their plan of expansion in G.E.A. [Greater East Asia], the Japanese fully realised the great tactical value of this doctrine "Asia for the Asiatics" and the whole forces of their propaganda was turned to the fullest exploitation of this doctrine among the peoples of this area.[43]

This subversive threat was recognized. Given the concurrence of conflict in Europe, new organizations and methods were required to counter this threat, manifesting in the raising of Special Operations Australia (SOA) and the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE).[44] SOA was raised as a "fourth fighting force" to "undertake subversive operations, intelligence gathering, and the training of underground native armies."[45] That policymakers used such terminology, including that of fomenting "fifth-column activity" behind expanding Japanese lines, is instructive. This was an organizational adaptation to the "gray zone" methods the Axis had so successfully employed in their offensive strategies.

The PWE coordinated propaganda within Southeast Asia, and SOA undertook a broad range of intelligence-gathering, direct action, and support to resistance activities throughout the war, their stories having been admirably told elsewhere.[46]

The Early Cold War Period

New competitions emerged from the rubble of WWII, primarily that between the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union. The emergence of the CCP as the dominant threat to Australian security interests replaced that of Japan upon the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. The rise of this state-based threat occurred in parallel with nationalist uprisings throughout Southeast Asia, several of which enjoyed ideological support from Moscow and, subsequently, Beijing.

During the first period of the Cold War, circa 1945 through 1954, the United States felt itself at a marked disadvantage to Soviet methods of subversion and coercive control over its newfound vassal states of Eastern Europe. This sense of sub-threshold competition, or 'gray zone' challenges, was articulated in policy documents that ultimately led to the expansion of U.S. covert capabilities, including the creation of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) in 1948 as the U.S. government's covert-action arm operating within the recently established Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). For example:

> We have been handicapped however by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war, by a tendency to view war as a sort of sporting context outside of all political context, by a national tendency to seek for a political cure-all, and by a reluctance to reorganise the realities of international relations – the perpetual rhythm of [struggle, in and out of war].[47]

Despite this concern about Soviet methods of competition, the Korean War dominated policy discussion and scholarly analysis of conflict. Stalin prudently limited Soviet support while the United States held a nuclear and national power advantage. The need for alliance frameworks to contain communism was realized to varying degrees.

Australian concern regarding growing nationalist movements was acute in 1947. This sense of threat was "accelerated by the war of 1939–45" and exacerbated by the presence of Chinese diasporas that "honeycomb" Southeast Asia as potential fifth columnists.[48] This perception of threat saw the United States' commitment to the Marshall Plan in 1948, the establishment of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) in 1948 as the CIA's covert action arm, and the deployment of Military Advisory and Assistance Groups (MAAGs) to counter Soviet subversion in Greece, Iran, Nationalist China (now Taiwan), Indochina, South Korea, and Japan.[49] This sense of threat and the resultant policy recommendations were well captured by George Kennan, who argued for "liberation committees," "underground activities behind the Iron

Curtain," "support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries," and "a Directorate of Political Warfare Operations."[50]

An Australian WWII leader, Field Marshal Blamey, argued in March 1949 that "Communist advance parties are already here, in Australia, and their tactics are the same as those of the fifth columnists in the last war."[51] Policy continuities thus existed between the experience of competition during WWII and that which was now experienced in the new competition of the Cold War. By 1950, Australian policy recognized that the USSR "will first try to gain her objectives by subversive methods," with clearly stated strategic aims of cost imposition on the West.[52] It was further recognized among Western nations that such subversive methods were often disproportionate to the strength of the proxy.[53] Despite this recognition, Australian appreciation of such subversive methods being employed in Korea was (and still is) strangely absent.[54]

Nonetheless, American policy influenced Australian thinking; the "loss of China" and fears of a surging Communist force gave rise to the Australia–New Zealand–United States (ANZUS) Treaty in 1951.[55] Alliance efforts also sought to better understand Communist methods and develop effective counter-guerrilla doctrine.[56]

American military strategic thinking was anchored in the policy of Massive Retaliation, a policy that envisaged nuclear strikes as the first response. Massive Retaliation soon faltered in the face of events that demonstrated the "stability–instability" paradox, as explained by Major General (ret.) John Singlaub:

> Almost as soon as the massive retaliation doctrine was accepted, however, its shortcomings became obvious. The Soviet Union was constrained from a conventional assault on Western Europe for fear of nuclear retaliation … But fear of American's nuclear arsenal did not stop either the Chinese or the Soviets from supporting (and in some cases actually sponsoring) the so-called wars of national liberation that became one of the major military aspects of the Cold War.[57]

Australian policymakers approached proxy warfare similarly to the British during the early Cold War period through a constrained "pinprick" strategy that eschewed overt proxy warfare. This pinprick strategy was developed by the Official Committee on Communism (Overseas), the AC(O), or Jebb Committee, which was charged with "stimulating, coordinating, and initiating the UK's anti-Communist activities overseas."[58] What was innovative about the pinprick approach was that it would seek to "chip away at Soviet control by exploiting political weaknesses, targeting economic vulnerabilities, promoting dissension and spreading distrust."[59] While this approach is better described as subversion, the intention to enable a proxy warfare strategy was a clear policy objective. This subversive intent is evident in an AC(O) recommendation to spread dissension in the Austrian Communist Party in 1950 through real or notional dissident groups.[60]

The British applied a cautious and incremental approach that sought to reduce the "risk of provocation, escalation, and retaliation"[61] and expressly aimed to minimize the risk of reprisals against the local population.[62] Australian adoption of language similar to that of the British, namely structures like the "Information Research Department," is telling. An Information Research Department (IRD) was proposed within the British Foreign Office in 1947 as a department to launch an "ideological offensive against Stalinism."[63] By 1953, the IRD was actively pushing back against the "enormous flood of hostile propaganda directed from

Moscow" and functioning as a "shadow department" for a renewed Political Warfare Executive "if war appears imminent."[64]

The language of "shadow department" evokes a specific lesson learned from the history of the Political Warfare Executive, namely that "Britain should therefore be prepared to carry out Political Warfare before or immediately on the outbreak of another war and not have to build up an organisation for it after war has begun … There should therefore be at least a shadow department of Political Warfare in existence which should deal with social, diplomatic and political trends."[65] Language similar to that of the British was later used in Australian policy documents.[66] A common theme in Western policy was to minimize the risk of vertical escalation while concurrently creating fractures in the Soviet–Chinese alliance and competing for the influence of local populations in Soviet "satellite countries."[67]

The Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) was established on 13 May 1952, following the establishment of the CIA in 1947 and occurring in parallel with a British revival of special forces capabilities in 1952. The British revival of special warfare capability was led by Fitzroy Maclean, who argued for the need for special forces capabilities—by which he meant a similar model to that of the WWII Special Operations Executive (SOE), i.e., support to resistance movements capable of waging guerrilla warfare in occupied areas behind Soviet lines in Europe.[68]

The policy guidance behind the Australian decision to raise ASIS was the intent to "contain" communism and Communist parties and/or agencies.[69] This guidance came in concert with a Cabinet position that the development of NATO had led the Soviet Union to "direct its main cold war efforts towards the Far East and South-East Asia" and was thus "fostering subversive activities throughout the world."[70] This Cabinet guidance likely informed a decision for ASIS to focus on subversion, thereby responding to the threat of communism advancing as "an international conspiracy" that needed to be met "on equal ground or to lose by default."[71] British influence over the raising of ASIS was demonstrated by terms like "Special Political Action" being used in Australian policy—emulating terminology used by the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also known as MI6).[72]

Following the British model, ASIS was raised with a mandate for "Special Operations" (what is described herein as proxy warfare) in the event of war. ASIS, like SIS, adopted a "Special Political Action" capability, presumably due to logic similar to that of British and American policy derived from the wartime experience of organizations such as the SOE and the OSS. The British evolved the idea of "Special Political Action," a less muscular or less violent form of special operations, as a result of the dawn of the nuclear age and the need for sub-threshold or "gray zone" options, which they termed the "pinprick approach."[73] Further logic in this approach was to "drive a wedge between communist parties and those most likely to support them."[74]

In 1956, the awkward term "Quasi-Overt Military Action" was introduced in Australian defense policy and was defined as: "Armed action, under conditions which do not permit it to be identified as overt aggression, by organised bands or groups responsive in varying degrees to foreign control or direction." This befuddling definition aligns with what is meant by the term proxy warfare, and in 1956 it was regarded as "the main threat to South-East Asia," alongside subversion.[75]

The concept can be understood in the context of the era, as Western policymakers faced Communist expansion across Asia, which was particularly acute for Canberra with regard to the increasing influence of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI)

in Indonesian politics. Political warfare efforts by the CIA in 1955 sought to check this march through support to the Muslim-oriented, anti-Communist Masyumi Party in the national elections, to the detriment of leftist parties. Instead, the PKI surged, winning 18 percent of the total vote.[76] On 23 September 1956, President Eisenhower authorized Project Haik, whose aim was to hold Sukarno's "feet to the fire" by encouraging separatist elements in the Indonesian archipelago, namely in Sumatra, Aceh, and Sulawesi.[77]

The dissidents formed the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia, or PRRI), who viewed Sukarno as being too tolerant of the Communist presence in the country. The United States made grossly over-optimistic assessments of PRRI capability, setting conditions for the debacle that followed.[78] Such assessments remained unchallenged as they coalesced around an ambitious policy articulated in 1957 by the Deputy Director of the Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs, Gordon Mein:

> U.S. objectives could be furthered most effectively by discouraging the dissipation of anti-communist strength in the outer islands in quixotic regional rebellions, by encouraging anti-communist elements in these areas to lend their support to their colleagues and co-religionist [sic] on Java within the framework of a single nation state, and by encouraging and assisting the central government to satisfy legitimate regional demands.[79]

The first contact between the CIA and the rebels occurred in early April 1957, aligned with the policy position quoted above.[80] Arms shipments from Taiwan, airdrops from CIA aircraft (via the front organization Civil Air Transport, CAT), and a Taiwanese advisory group were sent to the rebels following the formal emergence of the PRRI.[81]

The situation evolved into a crisis in Sumatra in January 1958, at which time American advisers deployed forward to remediate a badly deteriorating situation.[82] The problem was that local issues were overriding the ambitions and requirements of the PRRI, reflective of a somewhat parochial organizational structure.[83] Anti-Communist propaganda had not resonated with the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI—Indonesian Army) units on Java, and the movement faltered.[84]

On 7 April 1958, "domino theory" fears emerged in the language of the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Twining, who stated:

> Defeat of the dissidents would almost certainly lead to Communist domination of Indonesia. Such a turn of events would cause serious reaction in Malaya and Thailand, probably trouble in Laos and possible trouble in Cambodia … if Communist domination of Indonesia is to be prevented, action must be taken, including overt measures as required, to insure either the success of the dissidents or the suppression of the pro-Communist elements of the Sukarno government.[85]

As the rebellion petered out into guerrilla warfare in Sumatra, Jakarta was able to pivot resources against the Sulawesi rebels (Permesta).[86] There, in late 1958, the rebels reverted to guerrilla warfare because of TNI pressure.[87] The PRRI devolved into a "mafiosi" organization, using copra smuggling to fund its operations.[88] By April 1961, the PRRI was negotiating a ceasefire.[89]

During the Sumatran crisis, the Australian government purportedly made Christmas Island available as a forward base for American submarines engaged in supporting the rebels, positioned naval vessels off Sumatra to provide medical support if required, and attempted to mobilize SEATO on the rebels' behalf via the minister of external affairs.[90] Australian interests were displayed in the language of Foreign Minister Casey to Prime Minister Menzies on March 11, 1958: "it is essential in the interests of the UK Government and the West that the dissidents in Sumatra should at the worst be able to make a draw of it" and that "this means considerable support for the dissidents from the West."[91] While not directly engaged in proxy warfare, Australia was certainly attuned to and willing to support American efforts in this regard.

Australian policy accurately assessed that the primary targets of Communist subversion would be South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, due to their relative instability.[92] There was recognized nuance in this subversion: that the CCP would use pressure and inducement (including blackmail where necessary) to seek the loyalty of compatriots but would not prejudice the relationships it sought to cultivate with governments in the area.[93] In other words, the Chinese sought to avoid confrontation—an unsurprising outcome given the costs of the Korean War.

Australian defense policy evolved over this first decade of the Cold War through the experience of the Korean War, the Viet Minh defeat of the French in Indochina, the Malayan Emergency, and ongoing regional tensions regarding Communist influence in Japan, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This decade concluded with a relatively mature understanding of Communist revolutionary war theory, overlaid by the stark Soviet demonstration of power during the 1956 Hungarian insurrection. Australian and Western governments, in general, were aligning to the new era of "limited wars" dictated by fears of unrestricted nuclear warfare and the proliferation of "brushfire wars" of anti-colonialism.

The Mid-Cold War Period

The second period of Cold War competition, 1954 through 1968, was marked by President John F. Kennedy's assumption of office and an American pivot from "Massive Retaliation" to "Flexible Response" as a relative nuclear and power balance was established.[94] This period saw the emergence of the stability–instability paradox that manifested through Khrushchev's support to "National Liberation Movements," and Kennedy's support for the creation of military forces oriented to engage in proxy wars—the U.S. Special Forces[95]—and the use of these forces to contest Communist subversion and proxy warfare, primarily in Southeast Asia but also at a global scale.

Australian policy in the mid-1950s had recognized that "it is probable that China will encourage war by proxy," with a resultant requirement for "a blending of requirements to meet cold, limited, and global war situations and enable Australia to fulfill its strategic role in each."[96] Australian policy began to channel President Kennedy's drive for "flexible response" options nuanced to the nature of the challenge posed by the Communists.

SEATO had been established on 8 September 1954, following the French collapse in Indochina.[97] An acute sense of threat can be inferred from the recognition that weak Southeast Asian nations could offer little resistance to Vietnamese Communists—particularly South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—who were protected by SEATO's collective defense clauses. For Australia, Communist influence in Indonesia heightened this threat (at least until the violent purge of Indonesian Communists in September 1965). Thus, the mid–Cold War period began

for Australia with a polarized security environment that drove commitments to contain Communist expansion in Southeast Asia.

Australian strategic understanding of a proxy warfare threat further matured in 1959 with the terminology of "Communist Insurgency," which was defined at the time as: "Armed action against the established government of a country by organised bands or groups, responsive in varying degrees to covert foreign control, direction or support, under conditions which do not permit such action to be identified as external aggression."[98] This definition points toward an emphasis on the manner in which external parties exploit insurrections. This view is amplified by the 1962 policy articulation of Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese influence being exerted across Southeast Asia and Indonesia.[99] Policy written in 1964 expressly called out the threat posed by Chinese proxy support:

> Despite some significant weaknesses, the armed forces of North Vietnam backed by Communist China pose a serious direct threat to South Vietnam and Laos and a potential one to Cambodia and Thailand.[100]

Australia's understanding was matched by that of SEATO, which understood that a three-phase, Maoist approach was the most likely way in which Communist aggression would develop. This would begin with subversion and fermenting internal disorder, the gradual development of infiltration to the point which requires assistance from SEATO, and either an overt intervention of Chinese forces or a SEATO action that risked prompting an overt Chinese intervention. [101] From this simplified pattern, a more detailed understanding was that Communist techniques would include:

> (i)"legal" political activity;
> (ii) intensified activity in the international economic field (trade, aid, etc.);
> (iii) penetration and subversion of non-Communist organizations;
> (iv) the exploitation of dissident elements and overseas Chinese;
> (v) pro-Communist propaganda;
> (vi) cultural exchanges;
> (vii) the increased use of international "front" organizations.[102]

Australian and SEATO partners demonstrated a sound military understanding of Communist-inspired revolution, which offered a doctrinal means to orchestrate tactical through to strategic defense actions.[103] Indeed, a particularly insightful understanding was attained by U.S. military analysts at Fort Bragg, NC:

> The communists have been averse to becoming embroiled in war unless actually attacked. They preferred to rely upon indirect political methods of achieving their foreign policy objectives … They carry on conflict by proxy, for they realise that the West can become very excited about overt aggression. They work through national communist parties, satellite governments, front organisations, 'volunteers', disaffected ethnic minorities and indigenous guerrilla movements within the territory controlled by the West. In this way, they can subvert the status quo, outflank the Western nations, weaken their position and drain their resources without ever presenting the clear-cut *casus belli* for which the West is psychologically braced.[104]

In response to this threat, Australian policy documents recognized the need to counter Communist insurgency in Laos, to develop defense against Viet Minh aggression, and to prepare the SEATO area for defense against both Viet Minh and Chinese aggression.[105] The greatest threat in 1961 was seen to be Thailand, where SEATO counter-subversion efforts were accordingly prioritized.[106] Yet wider responses were also recognized as needed to what the Australian Joint Intelligence Committee identified as the threat in Vietnam:

> Communist North Vietnam aims at achieving "national" reunification by bringing South Vietnam under its control. The other Communist powers, especially Communist China, have the general objectives of eliminating Western influence in mainland South-East Asia … At the same time, they apparently *do not wish to risk a direct military confrontation with the United States* in South-East Asia because of the consequent risk of escalation of hostilities, and because they believe that communism can make gains without open military intervention.[107]

SEATO thus recognized that there was a need to "improve their capacity to identify, prevent and resist Communist subversion and insurgency."[108] Within Australian policy deliberations, in 1962, it was resoundingly accepted that Australia needed to participate in countering such Communist activity in Southeast Asia.[109]

These policies were tested by Konfrontasi (the Malaysia–Indonesia confrontation) from 1963 to 1966, and Indonesian support for the Brunei Revolt (December 1962). Tellingly, one British assessment identified that Sukarno was not likely to risk open war, but instead that he would undertake "a 'war of nerves' to weaken Malaysian morale and the will to resist," channeling British experience from WWII.[110]

Konfrontasi

Malaysia's declaration of independence in September 1963 was a natural progression from British colonial rule. The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) had, by this time, been defeated by adroit counterinsurgency from 1948–1960. Following the 1954 Geneva Conference, Chinese and Soviet officials directed the CPM to cease its guerrilla operations, likely to reduce the likelihood of American intervention in Southeast Asia.[111]

Beginning in July 1961, however, Beijing sought to reinvigorate the CPM, in the context of spurning the Soviet line of "peaceful coexistence" and choosing to compete in Indochina more broadly.[112] Cadres were duly dispatched from CPM sanctuaries in Thailand, and "The Voice of the Malayan Revolution" began broadcasting from southern China.[113] This reinvigoration lacked popular support, as grievances had largely been addressed by successful counterinsurgency practices undertaken the decade before, and the CPM remained in a latent or incipient stage on the Malayan–Thai border.

Malaysia's declaration of independence included the British colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo, which sparked outrage from Indonesian President Sukarno, who had hoped to unite all the Borneo territories within Indonesia.[114] Indonesia prosecuted Konfrontasi in resistance to the Federation of Malaysia. Indonesia initiated this policy through support to the Brunei Revolt (December 1962), using "economic actions, international diplomacy, terrorism, subversion, propaganda, and low-level military operations."[115] British policy was nuanced over the period, seeking to reconcile the need to defeat Indonesian attempts to disrupt the new state of Malaysia while concurrently seeking to draw Indonesia into an anti-Communist bloc.[116]

The Brunei Revolt of 1962 was Sukarno's first gambit during the Indonesian confrontation.[117] The revolt was launched by the leftist Brunei People's Party (BPP), which opposed the Bruneian monarchy and its intention to join the emergent Federation of Malaysia.

British secret reporting identified early Indonesian commitments to train and equip a 1,200-man army, the Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara (TNKU), or the North Kalimantan National Army, which was the armed wing of the BPP. Indonesia supported its leader, Sheikh Azahari bin Sheikh Mahmud, despite public statements of non-involvement from Jakarta.[118] Indeed, Sukarno is reported to have stated that "anyone who does not support the Brunei rebels is a traitor to Indonesia."[119] It appears, however, that Indonesian control over Bruneian rebels was incomplete and that the revolt occurred prior to Indonesian readiness.[120] The British expected that Brunei could serve as a wedge from which subversive efforts into Sabah and Sarawak could be more effectively orchestrated.[121]

Ethnic Chinese communities in Sabah and Sarawak were leveraged by the Indonesians. Approximately 30 percent of Sarawak's then-818,000 population and 23 percent of Sabah's then-507,000 population were ethnically Chinese. [122] Following the Brunei revolt, approximately 800 ethnic Chinese fled Brunei to Indonesia.[123] From this refugee community, an initial cadre was trained by the Indonesian Central Intelligence Agency (Badan Pusat Intelijen, BPI) to become the nucleus of the Sarawak People's Guerrilla Force (Pasukan Gerilya Rakyat Sarawak, PGRS).[124]

In Sarawak, the underground Communist organization decided to side with the Indonesians, and over time some 1,000 Sarawakian Chinese received training in guerrilla warfare at camps in Indonesian Borneo.[125] Armed incursions were conducted sporadically into the westernmost part of Sarawak from approximately June 1963 to early 1966.[126] The British and Malaysians reciprocated in kind, covertly aiding rebels in Indonesian Borneo, coming to this decision in September 1963 (after eight months of confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia).[127] The aim of such operations was expressly to "pin down the maximum number of Indonesian soldiers."[128]

British strategy recognized that support to separatist movements within Indonesian territory would be unlikely to challenge the Sukarno regime but nonetheless worked with Malaysia to encourage such dissidents.[129] The timing of this policy is notable, as it did not align with CIA support to Indonesian dissidents; rather, Permesta had reverted to a latent or incipient movement at this time. British policy was therefore attempting to resurrect a seemingly defunct rebel movement in broader Indonesia, in addition to supporting Borneo-based rebels, while seeking to prevent "escalation to outright war." [130] Deniable cross-border operations (termed CLARET) were also briefed at this time, with the importance of discretion and deniability expressly noted by Australian Prime Minister Menzies[131] It was believed that risk in covert action had to be borne, lest Sukarno erode the Commonwealth position and a situation arise in which overt military action would be required.[132] In other words, Commonwealth decision-makers sought to impose costs while minimizing the risk of escalation and were willing to accept risk in doing so—risks that Australian military units also bore.[133]

With risk also comes reward in the form of intelligence that can inform policy options. Participant-observer Lieutenant Colonel Brian Avery offers tangible evidence of Indonesian intentions and support mechanisms via captured prisoners and documents that showed:

> Indonesian [advisers] were from a party of 16 soldiers of the RPKAD who, with two Chinese guides, formed a 'volunteer' group called Manjar 2 [which crossed the border 4 June 1965]. Their task was to penetrate into the Chinese area and link up with the

> Clandestine Communist Organisation, probably to continue a campaign of subversion once Confrontation was officially ended. A special force of 'volunteers', comprising Indonesian regulars, mainly RPKAD, members of the TNKU and Sarawak Chinese, had been raised in Indonesia in June. Called Pasandha ('Secret War Team'), the force was to train local cells to carry on operations against the Sarawak government during the peace talks and after a peace treaty was signed.[134]

A low-level proxy war on Borneo thus existed in parallel with direct Commonwealth intervention (January 1963 – August 1966) and, from the Soviet perspective, as a peripheral case of proxy warfare given its support to the nascent and contested state of Indonesia.[135] Sub-competitions were also present; the nascent state of Malaysia gave aid to rebel groups in Sumatra and Sulawesi, highlighting that even minor powers engage in proxy warfare upon achieving statehood.[136] Further, the PKI benefited from confrontation with Malaysia by providing an opportunity to foment anti-Western sentiment, with military expenses likely exacerbating the domestic economic crisis and thereby affecting its strength on Java.[137]

The irony of long-term American efforts to subvert Communist influence is that covert action validated the Communist narrative, and that when such external subversion abated, Indonesian politics rejected the PKI of its own accord.[138] Massive, overt American military aid to the TNI, beginning in August 1958, began to win over influential military leadership.[139]

On 30 September 1965, the PKI attempted a coup in which several TNI generals were murdered. The backlash led to a PKI purge, with between 500,000 and one million people murdered by right-wing militias, and Sukarno being replaced by Suharto. On the island of Bali alone, some 80,000 people were murdered (approximately 5 percent of the population). The purge of 1965 was seemingly coordinated. For example, violence on Bali markedly began in December 1965, with the landing of units from the East Java–based Brawijaya Division. Nationwide, a vigorous anti-Communist propaganda effort encouraged violence against PKI members through vigilante means—a form of state-sponsored internal proxy war.[140]

A second-order effect of the purge of Indonesian Communists and Jakarta's decisive shift to the right was that its erstwhile Sarawak Communist proxies in training camps in West Kalimantan became a liability. In the late 1960s, the TNI began a concerted operation to clear out its former clients from Indonesian territory.[141]

Despite these regional concerns and evolving operational practices, Australian defense policy continued to follow the British example of the 1950s and drifted away from understanding proxy warfare capabilities developed during its WWII experience, due to concerns about the risk of inadvertent escalation and the recent failures of proxy warfare efforts in the Baltics, Albania, Ukraine, and Korea.

Vietnam

It was in the context of a matured competition with Communist states that ASIS demurred from involvement in the Vietnam War. Australia's involvement in Vietnam was based upon a fear of China, a fear articulated "most passionately and forcefully by Paul Hasluck," as minister for external affairs.[142] Intervention was triggered by recognition that Southeast Asian Communist insurgency movements operated as proxies of an expansionist Chinese policy.[143]

The result of the military commitment to Vietnam was the opening of a mandate gap, within which Australian Army personnel, through the Australian Army Training Team–Vietnam (AATTV), undertook secondments into CIA-sponsored proxy warfare programs.[144] From this

time onward, Australian abstention from proxy warfare capability seemingly emerges due to the departmental, legal, and funding divisions between intelligence agencies and military operations.[145]

By 1968, Australian policy exhibited an understanding of the operational challenges being experienced in South Vietnam. While threat descriptions retained a focus on Communist subversion and support to insurgencies, policy began to recognize the operational challenges faced where "governments are politically weak, administratively incompetent and unable to attract loyalties" from the population.[146]

Policy further sharpened in 1968 with the Strategic Basis Paper. This identified "Communist China as the greatest threat to Australia's long-term strategic interests," a threat that included "insurrection abroad supported by Beijing and Hanoi."[147] Australia was embroiled in the tactical challenges of this externally supported insurgency on the ground in Phuoc Tuy province and thus well understood the challenges posed by Communist revolutionary warfare. Australia, like the United States, found it extremely difficult to break the links between the guerrillas and the local population.[148] Contrary to the popular narrative, pacification failed to defeat the NLF in Phuoc Tuy. It was, as historian Thomas Richardson recognizes, "as if we were never there."[149] This was a cautionary note as to the implications of failing to truly grapple with irregular threats in the form of subversive shadow governance. As late as February 1971, Australian military contingents still attempted to hunt Communist main force units, emulating the flaws in American conventional military culture.

Notably, the AATTV also provided training support to the Cambodian Army, an intervention that similarly failed against Communist methods.[150] Australian military culture proved resistant to change and averse to responding appropriately to subversive tactics.[151] This was despite Australia possessing sound doctrine for the prosecution of counterinsurgency, itself based upon a robust understanding of Maoism and Communist revolutionary warfare doctrine. Richardson continues that it was striking how "Australian commanders continued to have substantially different ideas on how best to prosecute the war in Phuoc Tuy."[152]

Australia's 1968 policy demonstrated the culmination of Australia's strategic understanding of proxy warfare dynamics. This was despite concurrent American National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) recognition that "terrorism, guerrilla warfare, banditry and counterinsurgency, often supported from without, will be more common than open military confrontations between national forces."[153] From 1968 onward, Australian policy took the opposite line to that of the NIE quoted above. Atrophy in policy guidance was evident in 1971 as the adverse Australian public reaction to counterinsurgency in South Vietnam began to influence the political context for defense strategy.[154] In other words, from the policy level through to the tactical level, Australia made tentative steps in responding to competition, but defense did not culturally adjust to the realities and requirements of externally sponsored insurgencies that formed the primary means of competing.

The result was a tension between the recognized primary threat posed by Communist regimes employing subversion and proxy warfare and Australian public opinion. This tension has thereafter been captured by describing Vietnam (and others) as "wars of choice." This tension ultimately led to the creation of an Australian policy gap relating to proxy war.

Late Cold War Era

The third period of Cold War competition, from 1968 through 1989, saw the Soviet Union

enjoying a favorable balance of power and an unsettled United States, bruised by the stigma of Vietnam. The Soviets channeled their confidence into support to proxies from Angola to Afghanistan. "The world was going our way," as KGB historian Vasili Mitrokhin described.[155]

This period, while marked by the avoidance of direct conflict between superpowers, saw numerous conventional conflicts between middle powers, including China–Vietnam, Pakistan–India, Iran–Iraq, and the Arab states–Israel. Geographically, competitions "pushed" to the periphery and into the seams, as the superpowers sought advantage in southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, Central America, and Central Asia. This period can also be characterized by the calcification of zero-sum perspectives in international affairs, where one superpower's gain meant the other superpower's loss.

From the American perspective, Vietnam cast a shadow over Western defense bureaucracies, including Australia's, that impacted covert action capabilities writ large and proxy and political warfare in particular. The Watergate and Church inquiries in the United States further exacerbated this angst within the defense establishment. This caution in foreign affairs was overcome by the coincident challenges of "the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran, the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan."[156] Late 1979 was, for American foreign policy, certainly 40 days that shook the world.[157]

Despite being rattled into action, the CIA had nonetheless learned from the tortured experience of the mid–Cold War period. Its approach going forward was to ensure that its proposals would be more tightly focused than activities conducted in the 1950s and '60s, "designed to support clearly defined policy objectives, and not [be] employed as a substitute for policy."[158]

In 1971–72, an Information Research Department (IRD) to combat globalized Communist subversion was established within Australia's then–Department of Foreign Affairs (today, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT), with the aim of developing an "all-purpose unattributable information arm."[159] The use of such terminology by Australia emulates British policy language for a "shadow department" to conduct political warfare in times of crisis. Australian records are, however, yet to be declassified to confirm the intentions of such policy.

By 1973, Australian policy continued to distance itself from the counterinsurgency conflict in South Vietnam, having now seen the resolution of Indonesia's Konfrontasi.[160] While policy documents from 1973–76 recognized proxy activities on a global scale beyond Southeast Asia, broader atrophy in proxy warfare understanding is evident as Australia began to view itself as "one of the more secure countries in the world."[161]

The 1973 Whitlam Government imposed restrictions upon ASIS covert action capabilities that would eventually be formalized by 1985.[162] They would also be codified in the Intelligence Services Act 2001, which precludes ASIS from undertaking paramilitary activities.[163] This curtailment within the Australian intelligence community seemingly resulted in the expansion of the Australian policy gap pertaining to proxy warfare. As ASIS authorities were curtailed, little adaptation occurred within the Department of Defense to fill the resultant gap.

Australia faced another policy challenge following the collapse of the Portuguese government in the Carnation Revolution of 1974. An Indonesian plan to exploit Portuguese turmoil and secure Timorese accession through proxies was evidently understood by Australian Ambassador Woolcott: "The OPSUS plan is now being implemented … They will replace some of the refugees forced across the border … with well-armed 'volunteers' who will provide the backbone for UDT and other anti-Fretilin groups."[164] Australian embassy reporting recognized the fiction of "partisan" mobilization, quoting an Australian embassy official who visited the

border area in April 1975: "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion … that Indonesia is not involved in any way, or wished to become involved, in the military training of Portuguese Timorese."[165] In June 1975, it was recognized that "there is a distinct possibility that Indonesia will adopt the course of inspiring an insurrection."[166]

The explicit recommendation to overlook the tension between what was believed to be Communist influence and the Timorese right to self-determination was made by Ambassador Woolcott by at least 3 September 1975.[167] This recommendation demonstrates the depth to which fear of Communist influence manifested in Canberra. The narrative of Communist influence over Timorese nationalism is attributable to the Indonesian media, but it is unclear whether such narratives were deliberate disinformation, misinformation, or borne of ignorance.[168] A key lesson is that risk is associated with a failure to accurately understand the existence or extent of patron-client influence in the context of competition.

Australia, and the West writ large, had pivoted from a state of confronting Indonesia during Konfrontasi to one of cooperation during the 1970s. Jakarta and Canberra feared Communist extension of support to a fledgling East Timor in the wake of the collapse in South Vietnam. This fear caused Australian diplomats to overlook the thorny issue of self-determination, perhaps much to Australia's regret following the Timorese referendum of 1999.[169]

The march of Soviet subversion reached a critical point in 1979, when the Soviet Union's failing relationship with the Hafizullah Amin government of Afghanistan resulted in the decision to invade Afghanistan. The Soviet military thereby threatened continued expansion to establish a warm-water port on the Indian Ocean and therefore posed a threat to Australian interests. When briefed by the British prime minister on British proxy strategy in Afghanistan, Australian Prime Minister Fraser observed:

> Whether the immediate challenge was subversive or military … the West's failure to respond would lead the states in the Middle East to regard the West as a spent force.[170]

A "war of choice" versus "war of necessity" was thus, to Fraser's mind, a somewhat false dichotomy. British policy at this time, February 1980, was to "impose certain penalties" on the Soviet Union to create "a situation in which the Soviet Union concludes that it has much to lose from further adventures."[171] Proxy warfare was thus communicative and contributed to the deterrence calculus. The British therefore supported "patriots inside Afghanistan through the covert supply of arms and training" and encouraged "the Islamic countries to support a united 'Afghan Liberation Organisation.'"[172]

In the late 1970s, the Australian open-source policy trail begins to go cold, as a paucity of declassified reports introduces an element of ambiguity into the analysis. From 1976 onward, Australian policy instead followed the United States' lead in avoiding the "lessons of Vietnam." The Western military proclivity toward "the allure of battle"[173] led to a focus on "AirLand Battle" concepts of conventional warfare, to the exclusion of alternate means of political violence across the spectrum of escalation. In Australian policy, this cultural orientation most tangibly manifested in the isolationist "Defense of Australia" doctrine of 1987.[174]

Nonetheless, the second-order effects of proxy conflict continued to engage Australian interests. During the late 1970s into the 1980s, a gradual expansion in the Soviet use of proxy warfare was undertaken to advance its strategic interests, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. The Vietnamese overthrow of Pol Pot's regime led to a break in Sino-Vietnamese relations stemming from the Third Indochina War of 1979, which resulted in Chinese arms,

ammunition, and other supplies being transported via Thailand—along the "Deng Xiaoping Trail," no less—to arm three Khmer resistance groups (including the Khmer Rouge).[175] Similarly, the CCP "poured" resources into the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) during the period 1968–1978.[176] An apparent torpedo to Beijing's policy struck with a mutiny in the BCP in 1989, yet Beijing adroitly maintained a client in the new form of the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Today, the UWSA controls the largest area in Southeast Asia governed by a non-state actor. These mechanisms of generating influence within strategic competition were seemingly advanced in the margins of 1980s Australian foreign policy.

Part 3: Today's Challenges?

Australia's recent contributions to the Combined Maritime Task Force securing the Red Sea once again engage a threat posed by a proxy support relationship, this time in the form of Iranian patronage of Ansar Allah (the Houthis). The threat posed by this non-state actor to international shipping lanes, critical to Australian economic prosperity, shows that despite rhetoric describing military commitments to the Middle East as a "distraction," the threat of irregular or non-state actors persists against Australia's global interests. Indeed, the Western world came exceedingly close to a major regional conflict in the Middle East in April 2024 and again in August 2024, as Iranian-sponsored proxies operated in concert with the Iranian regime to punish Israel. The absence of even the term "proxy war" in Australia's defense policy documents looks naïve at best in the face of such consequential events and their attendant economic, humanitarian, and political ramifications.

In Australia's region, non-state actors may similarly be externally supported as a form of competition between major powers to achieve geostrategic advantage. Given the history of CCP proxy warfare during the Cold War, it is entirely conceivable that secessionist influences in Bougainville, Aceh, New Caledonia, or the New People's Army in the Philippines might be covertly supported by Beijing. Such support would pose a significant policy challenge if Beijing were to effect "elite capture" in the Solomon Islands and thus provide a secure training and logistics sanctuary that could be exploited by Bougainvillean secessionists.

There are similar risks that the chaos of the civil war in Myanmar might be leveraged to advance Beijing's interests, particularly if the junta becomes desperate for external military assistance against the democratic resistance (the National Unity Government). Indeed, the aforementioned Chinese support to the United Wa State Army has created a de facto government, or "proto-state," in eastern Myanmar adjacent to the Golden Triangle. Beijing thus maintains a "spoiler" option in any potential resolution to the civil war in Myanmar.

Contemporary Australian Strategic Policy[177]

A geographic reality for Australian sovereignty is that almost all physical threats would first need to compromise the sovereignty of one or more of our northern neighbors. The sovereignty of our northern neighbors—and indeed Australia's sovereignty—is daily subjected to "gray zone" subversive activities, yet the instigators of such actions presently do not seek to provoke confrontation, crisis, and then conflict. Thus, a key theme of this paper is emphasized: states compete in ways that deliberately seek to avoid escalation into conflict. Australia's commitment to a global rules-based order and its need to use "asymmetry" to "deter by denial" align with the strategic logic of defensive proxy war—support to resistance—as NATO and the United States implemented from 2015–2022 in Ukraine. What distinguishes a resistance

strategy is an "outsourcing" of functions of national security to citizens (i.e., irregular warfare waged physically and/or in cyberspace). This strategy was proven to be a viable component of national security strategy when Russia failed to achieve its desired *coup de main* in Kyiv in February 2022.

The strategic option of support to resistance counters subversion, proxy warfare, and conventional invasion. If communicated effectively, it might deter by denying an aggressor the quick fait accompli seizure it desires of a targeted region or country. An aggressor would know that a resistance movement has been established, capable of waging a prolonged insurgency; that the armed forces of a targeted country will receive training and materiel assistance to sustain the fight for their homeland; and that targeted political leadership will be aided in maintaining a government-in-exile that denies a quisling government legitimacy internationally and domestically. If communicated effectively, the potential aggressor will know that the invaded country will receive support from Australia and other like-minded nations to fight back and endure.

Proxy warfare has carried a pejorative meaning for Western audiences. When instead framed as support for the legitimate resistance of a democratic government against an autocratic aggressor's seizure of territory through armed force, this pejorative meaning no longer holds. A commitment to support resistance is instead a positive pronouncement, as it reinforces the global rules-based order and the United Nations Charter by dissuading acts of military aggression. If enacted, Australia might then benefit from cumulative strategic depth in defense. An irony is, of course, that Australia has already unconsciously adopted such a "support to resistance" strategy through its military support to Ukraine. Australia signaled that it will not abide by the aggressive actions of nations that erode the rules-based order.

An Australian support-to-regional-resistance strategy might learn from the recent exercise of Western "superpower" coordination in Ukraine—a "democratic internationale" that could deter autocratic regimes elsewhere. This idea relies upon irregular forces such as mobilized citizens in an occupied country, volunteers, cyber militias, and the support of companies for logistics, information systems, and boycotts. As Australia evolves its National Security Strategy, such lessons from proxy warfare activities in periods of competition, as charted throughout this paper, are prescient considerations for policymakers, military practitioners, and security scholars today.

Conclusion

Australia has shown an enduring strategic concern that the neighborhood might succumb to the influence of an inimical foreign power.[178] This is a psychological concern that wields a disproportionate effect on policy. Surprisingly, then, today's limited awareness of proxy threats and appropriate policy guidance should be of concern to the Australian national security community, yet the term is absent from our discourse. Proxy warfare is also a policy challenge relevant to a broader range of Western nations; Australia's position is applicable to several countries that have similarly suffered from strategic amnesia regarding the nature of autocratic regimes and the tools they wield.

It has seemingly been forgotten that the primary threat faced by Australia in the region is the Chinese Communist Party, an organization with which Australia has competed before. Certain subversive, proxy, and autocratic methods remain part of the DNA of the Chinese ruling elite. Australia once had a sound understanding of this threat and the methods it employed. The

modeling of such methods using Maoist protracted warfare theory, with its three phases of contestation for power, remains useful today. There are thus lessons that might be drawn from continuities in Australia's foreign policy history from earlier competitions that inform today's competition.

Within the Australian national security community, the need for close attention to this question is underscored by this paper, particularly in the fields of political warfare, proxy warfare, information warfare, and resistance warfare concepts. Gaps across these thematic areas emerge from the Australian strategic policy analysis detailed above. An example of such a gap is that, unlike the United States, the Australian Department of Defense does not include senior public servants and staff oriented to organizationally support special operations/low-intensity conflict.[179] This is despite recognition of this need in times of previous competition:

> Australia has a direct and critical interest in insurgency. First, indirect aggression by the promotion of instability and insurgency is a matter of concern to every nation state that depends largely on international stability for its development and security. Second, indirect aggression by insurgency places pressure on the balance of power and could jeopardise Australia's strategic interests… Third, to protect its interests in the security and stability of the states of South-East Asia, Australia and its allies could be … directly involved in difficult and protracted counter-insurgency operations.[180]

The Western historical record in general, and the Australian record in particular, contain lamentable examples of ignorance of irregular warfare and the proxy support relationships that entwine these non-state actors in a broader strategic context. We seemingly forget that such relationships were created with an eye toward subverting a competitor or empowering a third party in a competition. Such policy options exist to constrain and avoid conflict. Indeed, few Australian policymakers today would be familiar with the recognized importance of insurgency to Australian strategic policy, articulated in 1968 as per the quotation above. In today's competition between democracies and autocracies, the future is fraught with the potential for mistakes to be remade due to such ignorance of past competitions.

Endnotes

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[2] Outlook for South-East Asia', Cable from Australian Embassy, Moscow (16 June 1975), in *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy (DAFP), 1968-1975*, (J.R. Walsh and G.J. Munster publishers, 1980), p. 153.
[3] Tom Kramer, *The United Wa State Party: Narco-Army or Ethnic Nationalist Party?,* Policy Studies 38 (Southeast Asia), Washington: East-West Center, 2007, p. xv; Bertil Lintner, *The United Wa State Army and Burma's Peace Process*, Report No. 147, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace (April 2019), p. 2; Dominique Dillabough-Lefebvre, 'The Wa Art of No Being Governed: The Wa Are Keen to Shed Their Image as Myanmar's Drug Lords or China's Proxies', *The Diplomat* (28 May 2019), available at: https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/the-wa-art-of-not-being-governed/.
[4] This paper leverages my recently published book *Riding Tigers: The Strategic Logic of Proxy Warfare* (London: Hurst Publishers, June 2026), which examines the broad security studies history of proxy warfare in competition and conflict.
[5] Paul Cleary, *The Men Who Came Out of the Ground* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2010); Bob Long, '*Z' Special Unit's Secret War: Operation Semut I* (Hornsby: Transpareon Press, 1989); Ian McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1984).
[6] This is a major finding and theme across case studies in Andrew Maher, *Riding Tigers: The Strategic Logic of Proxy Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2026).
[7] Brian Toohey and William Pinwill, *Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), quoting the 1974 definition for 'special operations' proposed by Rear Admiral Anthony Synnot and Brigadier Alan Stretton, that today would be analogous with the concept of proxy warfare.
[8] An indicator of the paucity of proxy warfare awareness in the contemporary Australian military debate, education, and policy, can be identified with a review of the past ten years of the *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies* (previously the *ADF Journal).* Of 265 papers, twelve papers engaged the topic of irregular warfare, of which the majority engaged tangentially (and hence, unhelpfully) through the terminology of 'hybrid warfare', 'grey zone', or 'terrorism'; none engaged with proxy warfare directly. At: https://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/AJDSS/ and https://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/ADFJ/.
[9] Andrew Maher, 'Iranian Subversion: A systemic Strategy that has Extended to Australia', *Small Wars Journal* (30 Sep 2025), available at: https:/smallwarsjournal.com/2025/09/30/iranian-subversion-australia/
[10] One notable exception is Army Headquarters, *The Phantom Army* (Provisional), Canberra, (1961) that presents a compound doctrine of Communist Asian forces, blending 'revolutionary, insurgent or guerrilla forces and formal, conventional military forces'. (p. viii).
[11] From a formal policy position, subversion is defined by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) as: '(a) activities that involve, will involve or lead to, or are intended or likely ultimately to involve or lead to, the use of force or violence or other unlawful acts for the purpose of overthrowing or destroying the constitutional governments of the Commonwealth, states or territories. (b) activities directed to obstructing, hindering or interfering with the performance by the Defence Force of its functions or the carrying out of other activities by or for the Commonwealth for the purposes of security or the defence of the Commonwealth, or (c) activities directed to promoting violence or hostility between different groups of people in the Australian community so as to endanger the peace, order or good government of the Commonwealth'. David Horner, *The Official History of ASIO: Volume 1: The Spy Catchers, 1949-1963* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015), p. xxiii.
[12] Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Review*, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), available at: https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review. [accessed 24 April 2023], p. 17.

[13] Mike Burgess, *Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment 2025*, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (19 February 2025), available at: https://www.asio.gov.au/director-generals-annual-threat-assessment-2025.
[14] Tom Crowley, 'ASIO says Iran behind Australian antisemitic attacks, diplomatic ties cut', ABC News (26 August 2025), available at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-08-26/iran-behind-antisemitic-attacks-asio-says/105697762.
[15] 'Remarks by the Director-General of National Intelligence, Andrew Shearer, at the 62nd Annual Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference', (6 October 2025), available at: https://www.oni.gov.au/news/australia-japan-business-co-operation-committee.
[16] Identifies Iran's support to Hamas and 'other proxies' as a component to its strategy. Department of Defence, *National Defence Strategy*, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia (2024), p. 6.
[17] Only mentioned in a descriptive sense. Ibid., p. 64.
[18] Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Review*, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), available at: https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review, [accessed 24 April 2023].
[19] The term 'unconventional' was used only once as a synonym for 'asymmetric warfare'.
[20] Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Update 2020*, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia (2020), available at: https://www.defence.gov.au/strategicupdate-2020/, accessed 7 Nov 2020.
[21] The term 'Irregular' was used in the context of 'the ability of irregular opponents such as insurgents and terrorists to exploit new technologies means that, in relatively low-risk and effective ways.' Department of Defence, *Defending Australia In the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, Para. 2.25.
[22] Used in a literal sense. Ibid.., Para 4.16.
[23] 'The boundary between a benign situation and open conflict, either against local irregulars or more capable armed forces, can become blurred.' Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000, Para 2.10.
[24] Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976, chapter 2, paras 29-31.
[25] Ibid., Chapter 2, para 2.
[26] Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Review*, (2023) p. 49; Alex Wilner and Andreas Wenger, 'Introduction: Deterrence by Denial', in *Deterrence by Denial: Theory and Practice,* Alex S. Wilner and Andreas Wegner (eds) (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2021), p. 7.
[27] Clive Hamilton, *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2018).
[28] For example: Geoffrey Fairbairn, *Revolutionary Warfare and Communist Strategy: The Threat to South-East Asia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968); Lt. Col. John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counter-insurgency* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966); Australian Military Forces, *The Division in Battle, Pamphlet No 11: Counter Revolutionary Warfare* (Canberra: Army Headquarters, 1966); Army Headquarters, *The Phantom Army (Provisional),* (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence, 1961).
[29] Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018*, New Zealand Government (July 2018). Interestingly, this document does recognise that 'the pursuit of spheres of influence' is a force pressuring the international order. It does not, however, examine the ways in which influence is pursued in any meaningful manner. Canadian Government, *Canada's Defence Policy: Strong, Secure, Engaged*, Canadian Armed Forces, (last updated 10 Jun 2021), available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html, accessed 7 Jul 2021. Canadian policy, like Australia's, engages with the topic of 'hybrid warfare' and 'grey zone,' but offers little clarification as to what is meant with this terminology. United

States Government, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, (1 June 2019).

[30] Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a competitive age*, CP411 (March 2021).

[31] This section on Japanese proxy warfare in WWII draws upon Andrew Maher, *Riding Tigers: The Strategic Logic of Proxy Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2025) and Andrew Maher, 'Special Operations Developments in the Pacific: Back to the Future?', *Into the Void: Special Operations Forces after the War on Terror* (London: Hurst, 2024).

[32] 'Cabinet Minute: Yampi Sound Iron Deposits', Minute 1368, (9 March 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy (DAFP), 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 40.

[33] The following documents chart consideration of 'economic warfare' to counter Japanese influence in the Australian economy: 'Cabinet Minute: Yampi Sound Iron Deposits', Minute 1368, (9 March 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 40; 'Mr F.G. Shedden, Secretary of Department of Defence, to Lt Col W.R. Hodgson, Secretary of Department of External Affairs', Melbourne (6 December 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 239; 'Memorandum by Lt Col W.R. Hodgson, Secretary of Department of External affairs, for Mr R.G. Casey, Minister in Charge of Development', (13 December 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 240; 'Mr J.A. Lyons, Prime Minister, to Mr Torao Wakamatsu, Japanese Consul-General in Sydney,' (17 May 1938), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 342; 'Mr H. Fitzmaurice, UK Consul-General in Batavia, to Mr A. Eden, UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', (received in Canberra 21 July 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), pp. 175-7. 'Mr A.T. Stirling, External Affairs Officer in London, to Department of External Affairs', London, (20 March 1939), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume II: 1939*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 74. 'Commonwealth Government to Lord Caldecote, U.K. Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs', (12 July 1940), in W.J. Hudson & H.J.W. Stokes (eds.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume IV: July 1940 – June 1941* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980), p. 36.

[34] David Lee, 'Australia's Embargo of the Export of Iron Ore: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Australasian Mining History,* Vol. 18 (October 2020) argues convincingly that it was not a vested interest from a mining company nor was it direct national security interests per se, that was behind this decision. Indeed, it is interesting to note the recognition at the time that the sale of iron ore to Japan would increase Australia's (and the Commonwealth's) leverage over Japan should hostilities commence (p. 105); The primary concern regarding Timor was that the Australian government had recognised by this time (1937) that Japanese 'colonialism' was being affected through companies pursuing ostensibly 'unpromising concessions' that were serving to 'extend their sphere of activities'. 'Cabinet Submission by Mr H.V.C. Thorby, Minister for Civil Aviation,' (14 March 1939) in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume II: 1939* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), pp. 61-3.

[35] Japanese Security Services', 30 Jun 1945, AWM Barcode 8729774, p. 21. Of note, Palau was sovereign Japanese territory following seizure from Germany in 1914.

[36] 'Cabinet Submission by Mr H.V.C. Thorby, Minister for Civil Aviation', (14 March 1939), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume II: 1939*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), pp. 61-4; 'Mr. R.G. Casey, Minister to the United States, to Department of External Affairs', Washington, (received 2 April 1940), in H. Kenway, H.J. Stokes & P.G. Edwards (eds.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume III: January-June 1940* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979), p. 173.

[37] 'Mr A.T. Stirling, External Affairs Officer in London, to Department of External Affairs', London, (20 March 1939), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume II: 1939* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 74.
[38] 'Mr S. M. Bruce, High Commissioner in London, to Mr. R.G. Menzies, Prime Minister', London (received 6 April 1940), in H. Kenway, H.J. Stokes & P.G. Edwards (eds.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume III: January-June 1940*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979), p. 178.
[39] 'Memorandum by Mr. T. Elink Schuurman, Netherlands Consul-General in Australia,' (2 April 1940), in H. Kenway, H.J. Stokes & P.G. Edwards (eds.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume III: January-June 1940* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979), p. 174.
[40] 'Mr H. Fitzmaurice, UK Consul-General in Batavia, to Mr A. Eden, UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,' (received in Canberra 21 July 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 176.
[41] Brian Martin, 'Shield of Collaboration: The Wang Jingwei regime's security service, 1939-1945', *Intelligence and National Security*, 16:4 (2001), p. 91; To provide a sense of the level of Japanese intelligence effort, Michael Burleigh, *Small Wars, Faraway Places: Global insurrection and the making of the modern world, 1945-1965* (New York, NY: Viking, 2013), notes that 'even the official photographer inside Singapore's Naval Base was a covert Japanese intelligence officer' (p. 13).
[42] 'Minutes of Fourth Meeting of Principal Delegates to Imperial Conference', London, (22 May 1937), in R.G. Neale (ed.), *DAFP, 1937-49: Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), p. 82.
[43] Japanese Security Services', 30 Jun 1945, AWM Barcode 8729774, p. 25.
[44] A broad range of terminology was applied to these organisations, which also changed over time with the progress of the war. For simplicity's sake, terminology of "Special Operations Australia" and "Political Warfare Executive" is used due the nature of tasks such organisations undertook.
[45] Will Davies, *Secret & Special: The untold story of Z Special Unit in the Second World War* (Australia: Vintage Books, 2021), p. 5.
[46] Exemplar sources include: Davies, *Secret & Special*; Christine Helliwell, *Semut: The untold story of a secret Australian Operations in WWII Borneo* (Penguin Random House Australia, 2021); and Bernard Callinan, *Independent Company: The Australian Army in Portuguese Timor 1941-43* (Richmond, VIC: William Heinemann Australia, 1953).
[47] 'The Inauguration of Organised Political Warfare', Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment, Document 269, *FRUS*, (4 May 1948).
[48] *An Appreciation of the Strategical Position of Australia (September 1947)*, endorsed by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 28 October 1947, reproduced in *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, Stephan Frühling (ed.), Commonwealth of Australia (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence, 2009).
[49] The Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), a predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency, was directed to undertake 'covert activities related to: propaganda; economic warfare, preventative direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world'. Stephen J.K. Long, 'Strategic Disorder, the Office of Policy Coordination and the Inauguration of US Political Warfare against the Soviet Bloc, 1948-50', *Intelligence and National Security,* 27:4 (2012), pp. 459-60; Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission*, p. 141; Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 18; The scale of military assistance was directed by NSC 68, which was 'designed to foster cooperative efforts' within the framework of the policy of 'containment.' NSC 68, 'A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68', President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers (12 April 1950), p. 57.
[50] George F. Kennan, 'The Inauguration of Organised Political Warfare [Redacted Version]', April 30, 1948, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archives.

[51] Quoted in David Horner, *The Official History of ASIO: Volume 1: The Spy Catchers, 1949-1963* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015), p. 52.
[52] *A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, February 1953*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 8 January 1953, reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*.
[53] 'Political Propaganda', TNA CAB21/2750, AC(O) 636/14/4/51 (13 April 1950), p. 1.
[54] Robert O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950-53: Volume I Strategy and Diplomacy* (Canberra: The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981) and Robert J. O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950-53: Volume II Combat Operations* (Canberra: The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1985), contain almost no mention of Communist subversion pre-war and then the employment of proxies by both parties on the periphery of conflict. A recent Australian account of the Korean War, John Blaxland, Michael Kelly and Liam Brewin Higgins (eds.), *In From the Cold: Reflections on Australia's Korean War* (Australian National University, Canberra: ANU Press, 2020), likewise overlooks these facets of the conflict.
[55] Office of the Historian, 'The Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS Treaty), 1951', Department of State, available at: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/anzus [accessed 19 Nov 2023].
[56] 'Memorandum for the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay)', NSC 90, *FRUS* (23 May 1951). This memorandum called for collaboration with friendly government to respond to the recognised threat – That 'Communist-controlled guerrilla warfare represents one of the most potent instrumentalities in the arsenal of communist aggression on a world-wide basis' (p. 84).
[57] Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, p. 228.
[58] Rory Cormac, 'The Pinprick Approach: Whitehall's Top-Secret Anti-Communist Committee and the Evolution of British Covert Action Strategy', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16:3 (Summer 2014), p. 11.
[59] Cormac, 'The Pinprick Approach', quoting: AC(O) Minutes, 15 February 1950, in TNA, CAB 134/4, AC(O) (50) 4th Meeting; "The Work of the Official Committee on Communism (Overseas)", 23 June 1951, in TNA, CAB 134/2, AC(M) (51)4.
[60] 'Proposed Activities behind the Iron Curtain' (Third Revise), AC(O) (50)52, CAB21/2750, (November 1950), p. 4.
[61] Cormac, 'The Pinprick Approach', p. 13, quoting AC(O) Minutes, 9 March 1950, in TNA CAB 134/4. AC(O) (50) 7th Meeting.
[62] Ibid., p. 14, quoting 'Proposed Activities behind the Iron Curtain' (Third Revise), (November 1950), and AC(O) Minutes, 1 March 1950, TNA CAB 134/4, AC(O) (50) 6th Meeting.
[63] Brian Crozier, *Free Agent: The Unseen War 1941-1991* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), p. 6.
[64] Crozier, *Free Agent*, p. 6; D.D. Brown, 'Regarding David Garnett's History of PWE', TNA FO 1110/533, PR 102/17G (9 April 1953).
[65] David Garnett, 'The Political Warfare Executive', Secret, TNA CAB 102/610, (London: Cabinet Office. February 1947), p. ii; The IRD was ultimately closed by Labour Foreign Secretary, David Owen in 1977 due to right-wing contacts that were attacking the Labour Party. In other words, the IRD became, or was perceived to have become, politicised. Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-67* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2005), p. 136.
[66] 'Mr Wilson: Dept of Foreign Affairs to visit IRO', TNA FCO 168/4481 'Information Research Department', 1971; J.G. McMinnies, 'Australian IRD Visit', OH 3611/2/71, (19 November 1971), in TNA FCO 168/4481 'Information Research Department,' 1971; K.C. Crook, 'Michael Wilson's Visit to IRD', OH 3611/2/71, (25 February 1971), in TNA FCO 168/4481 'Information Research Department', 1971.

[67] Cabinet Official Committee on Communism Overseas (AC(O): 'Proposed Activities behind the Iron Curtain' (Third Revise), TNA CAB21/2750, AC(O) (50)52 (November 1950), pp. 2-3; NSC 48/5, 'United States Objectives, Policies, and Courses of action in Asia', *FRUS*, Vol VI, Part I (17 May 1951).
[68] Fitzroy Maclean to Secretary War Office (copied Minister of Defence), 'RE: Irregular Warfare', TNA PREM 11/47 (25 Aug 1952); Fitzroy Maclean to Prime Minister W.L.S. Churchill, 'Irregular Warfare', TNA PREM 11/47 (5 August 1952).
[69] 'The "Cold War" in the Far East', TNA CAB21/2750, AC(O) (50)31 (19 July 1950); NSC 48/5, 'United States Objectives, Policies, and Courses of action in Asia', *FRUS*, Vol VI, Part I (17 May 1951); NSC 68 'A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68', President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers (12 April 1950) advocated for an 'intensification of affirmative and timely measures and operations by covert means in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare with a view to fomenting and supporting unrest and revolt in selected strategic satellite countries' (p. 57).
[70] David Horner, *The Official History of ASIO: Volume 1: The Spy Catchers, 1949-1963* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015), p. 183.
[71] Brian Toohey and William Pinwill, *Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), pp. 8-9, quoting a report by then Director Alfred Brooke dated 14 March 1955. The charter of 13 May 1952 issued by Prime Minister Menzies focused upon two key themes: 'subversion' and 'a special relationship with the British' (p. 30). This language is emulated in Department of Defence reports during this era as discussed subsequently in this chapter.
[72] Toohey and Pinwill, *Oyster*. This term, 'Special Political Action' meant 'organising coups, secret radio stations and propaganda campaigns, wrecking international conferences and influencing elections'. SPA was essentially 'a less muscular form of Special Operations (SO)' (p. 60).
[73] Rory Cormac, 'The Pinprick Approach: Whitehall's Top-Secret Anti-Communist Committee and the Evolution of British Covert Action Strategy', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16:3 (Summer 2014), pp. 5-28.
[74] J. H. Peck, 'Draft Brief on Political Warfare for the discussion with Mr Dulles and Mr Stassen', (28 January 1953), TNA FO 1110/533, PR102/8, p. 1.
[75] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, October 1956*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 11 October 1956, reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, pp. 203-6; In the SEATO area, subversion was seen to be the greatest threat. Joint Intelligence Staff (Melbourne), 'The Overall Overt Communist Threat to the Treaty Area', (May 1956), SEATO Sub-Committees - Ad-hoc Staff Planners and Intelligence (Threat Evaluation) Sub-Committee', NAA: A1838/269, TS688/18 Pt 3, p. 2.
[76] Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *Feet to the Fire: CIA Covert Operations in Indonesia, 1957-1958*, Naval Institute Special Warfare Series, (Annapolis, MY: Naval institute Press, 1999), p. 12.
[77] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 1999, p. 17 & 32. This policy had been intimated by President Eisenhower in 1953 when he suggested "geographic units" of Indonesia could be used as a "fulcrum" to help eliminate communism from the island chain (p. 16); A common sentiment toward regional segregation was revealed by the saying: "Gone is Dutch colonialism, coming is Javanese colonialism". Quoted in Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995, 1997), p. 47.
[78] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 1999, pp. 36-38; John Kenneth Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 1999), p. 139.
[79] Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 1997), p. 89.
[80] Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 102.
[81] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, pp. 44, 56, & 61. Commanding the Taiwanese group was Col. Loh Tsu-sin, an ROC army officer; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 120.

[82] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 1999, pp. 79-80.
[83] Ibid., p. 82.
[84] Ibid., p. 144.
[85] Quoted in Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 161.
[86] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, p. 112; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 166.
[87] Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, p. 156.
[88] Ibid., pp. 159-60.
[89] Ibid., p. 160.
[90] Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 1997, p. 134.
[91] Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 1997, pp. 155-6.
[92] Joint Intelligence Staff (Melbourne), 'The Overall Overt Communist Threat to the Treaty Area', (May 1956), SEATO Sub-Committees - Ad-hoc Staff Planners and Intelligence (Threat Evaluation) Sub-Committee', NAA: A1838/269, TS688/18 Pt 3, p. 5.
[93] 'Recent Chinese Communist Activities Among Overseas Chinese in South-East Asia', Counter Subversion Activities Overseas, (15 Nov 1957), NAA: A1838, 2470/7, pp. 1-3.
[94] General Maxwell D. Taylor (Ret), *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York, NY, Harper & Brothers, 1959).
[95] Alfred H. Paddock Jr., *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (National Defense University, NDU Press: Fort Lesley McNair, Washington D.C., 1982); and National Security Action Memoranda (NSAM) 2, "Development of Counter-Guerrilla Forces", to the Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library – JFKNSF-328-003, (23 February 1961, declassified 30 August 1977), directed the addition of 3,000 men and $19 million budget augmentation to develop 'counter-guerrilla capability'.
[96] *Strategic Review, Annex to Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, October 1956*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 11 October 1956, reproduced in Stephan Frühling (ed), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945* (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence, 2009), p. 223.
[97] Office of Joint History, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The First Indochina War 1947-1954* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), p. 215.
[98] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, January 1959*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 12 January 1959, reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, p. 251.
[99] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, January 1962*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 25 January 1962, reproduced in reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*.
[100] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, October 1964*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 15 October 1964, reproduced in reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, p. 315; Army Headquarters, *The Phantom Army (Provisional)* (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence 1961).
[101] 'Study of Requirements for Logistic Support of Chinese Communist Force envisaged in SEATO Intelligence Estimates for an attack against Indo-China and Thailand, and their capability to move and support this force in the face of SEATO air attack', Australian Joint Intelligence Committee, 2/58 (Final), NAA: A1838/269, 654/8/14/16/5, p. 1.
[102] 'Appreciation No 20/1956,' Australian Joint Intelligence Committee, (April 1956), NAA: A1838/269, TS688/18 Part 2, p. 6.
[103] Army Headquarters, *The Phantom Army (Provisional)* (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence 1961).
[104] 'Communist Ideology, Strategy and Tactics', Counterinsurgency Department, Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Warfare School (February 1962), AWM 7787, p. 44.

[105] 'Priorities for the development of SEATO Plans,' minute, Australian Defence Committee, (14 September 1961), NAA: A1209/134, 61/1097, p. 3.
[106] 'Counter Subversion Study Group commences 3rd October', Cablegram (5 October 1961), NAA: A1209, 1961/1299.
[107] Joint Intelligence Committee (Australia), 'The Outlook for Mainland South-East Asia', JIC(AUST) (63) 70, AWM 122, 3/5 Part 13 (February 1963), p. 1, emphasis added.
[108] 'Improvement of the Capacity of Member Governments to Identify and to deal with Communist Insurgency and Subversion,' SEATO Council Representatives, SCR/61/D-134, (1961), NAA: A1838/2, 189/9/5 Part 1, pp. 1-2.
[109] 'Australian Participation in Counter-Communist Activity in South-East Asia,' Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 188, (30 April 1962), NAA: A5819/2, C4642, p. 1; 'SEATO Military Plan 7 – To Counter Communist Insurgency in South Vietnam,' Athol Townley, Australian Minister of Defence, to Cabinet, 26 April 1962, NAA: A5819/2, Volume 5/Agendum 170. This so-called "planning" was wafer-thin on detail about the nature and requirements of the threat to instead focus upon the potential impacts of identified force commitment options for deployment.
[110] 'Prime Minister Personal Telegram: High Commissioner for Australia', No. 1610, PRO DEFE 13/632, (31 July 1964), p. 1.
[111] Yang Kuisong, *Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973*, Oiang Zhai (trans.), Working Paper No. 34, Cold War International History Project: Washington D.C. (February 2002), p. 14.
[112] Chin Peng was summoned to Beijing and promised Chinese support if he came out of revolutionary retirement. Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2020), pp. 104-5.
[113] National Intelligence Estimate 54-1-76, *FRUS* (1 April 1976), pp. 8-9.
[114] Christopher Tuck, ''Shaping hearts and minds: claret operations in Borneo, 1965-1966', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, (2023), p. 2; David Easter, ''Keep the Indonesian Pot Boiling', (2005), p. 55; Gregg A. Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 203.
[115] Tuck, ''Shaping hearts and minds: claret operations in Borneo, 1965-1966', (2023), p. 3; Early Indonesian operations included interference with Malayan fishing and a seemingly blind-eye to piracy and kidnapping in the Malacca Straits. Joint Intelligence Committee, 'Possible Indonesian Activities Against Malaya and Singapore During the Next Three Months', 23 Aug 1963, JIC(63)71, CAB158/50, p. 2.
[116] Tuck, ''Shaping hearts and minds: claret operations in Borneo, 1965-1966', (2023), p. 3.
[117] Brian Avery, *Our Secret War: Defending Malaysia Against Indonesian Confrontation, 1965-1967* (McRae, Australia: Slouch Hat Publications, 2001), p. 13. Lieutenant Colonel Avery was a participant in Confrontation, having served with 4RAR.
[118] 'From Singapore to Foreign Office', No. 375, DEFE 11/391 (20 Dec 1962); Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 'Brunei Revolt – Indonesia', No. 723, 48/C/29, DEFE 11/391 (21 December 1962). Evidence held by the British at that time suggested that the Bruneian rebels had received training in Indonesian Borneo prior to the revolt.
[119] 'From Singapore to Foreign Office', No. 375, DEFE 11/391, (20 Dec 1962).
[120] Ibid..
[121] Ministry of Defence Situation Report No 11., 'Situation as at 1200 hours 27th December 1962, 48/C/29, DEFE 11/391, reports that despite an initial estimate of 2,250 rebels under arms on 8 Dec 1962, that the rebels in Brunei and North Sarawak were suffering from low morale and therefore would be unlikely to 'resort to a guerrilla campaign'. 'From Djakarta (Sir. L Fry) to Foreign Office', 'Brunei', 48/C/29, DEFE 11/391 (25 December 1962).

[122] Ken Conboy, *Intel: Inside Indonesia's Intelligence Service* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing (Asia), 2004), p. 36.
[123] Ibid., p. 36.
[124] Ibid., p. 36.
[125] Douglas Hyde, *The Roots of Guerrilla Warfare* (London: The Bodley Head, 1968), p. 81; The British estimated that the Indonesians had approximately 3,500 Sarawak communists mobilised. Joint Intelligence Committee, 'The Military Threat from Indonesia to the Malaysia Area up to March 1964', 16 Oct 1963, JIC(63)82, CAB158/50, p. 1; Interestingly, the ethnic Chinese in Sarawak were lent little fraternal support from the PRC (as was the case with other conflicts at the time – 1965), including Somaliland, Kenya, Kashmir, and Burma. Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1970), p. 95.
[126] Conboy, *Intel*, p. 36.
[127] Rory Cormac*, Disrupt and Deny: Spies, Special Forces, and the Secret Pursuit of British Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 159-60; David Easter, 'British and Malaysian Covert Support for Rebel Movements in Indonesia during the 'Confrontation', 1963-66', in *The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945-65: Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations,* Richard J. Aldrich, Gary D. Rawnsley & Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley (eds.), (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 197.
[128] David Easter, 'British and Malaysian Covert Support for Rebel Movements in Indonesia during the 'Confrontation', 2000, p. 197.
[129] 'Brief for discussions with Sir Robert Menzies', PRO DEFE 13/632 (6 July 1964)
[130] Ibid.., p. 2; David Easter, 'British and Malaysian Covert Support for Rebel Movements in Indonesia during the 'Confrontation', (2000), p. 200; 'Indonesian Confrontation of Malaysia', Extract of Note of a Meeting held on 14th July at 9am, PRO DEFE 25/158 (22 July 1964).
[131] 'Indonesian Confrontation of Malaysia', Extract of Note of a Meeting held on 14th July at 9am, PRO DEFE 25/158 (22 July 1964), p. 2.
[132] 'Operations Across the Indonesian Border', Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting, DP 87/64 (Final), PRO DEFE 25/158, (1 Sep 1964), p. 1.
[133] Brian Avery, *Our Secret War: Defending Malaysia Against Indonesian Confrontation, 1965-1967* (McRae, Australia: Slouch Hat Publications, 2001).
[134] Avery, *Our Secret War*, p. 154.
[135] By 1965, possession of modern Soviet weapons made Indonesian 'one of the best-equipped military forces in South-East Asia', thereby empowering Jakarta to confront Malaysia. National Foreign Assessment Centre, *Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries 1979 and 1954-79: A Research Paper*, CIA Special Collections: ER 80-10318U, declassified in 2000, (October 1980), p. 44; Wynfred Joshua and Stephen P. Gibert, *Arms for the Third World: Soviet Military Aid Diplomacy* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 1, note that $US 1 billion (1969 dollars, approximately $US 8 billion in 2023) in Soviet weapons were provided to strengthen Indonesia's armed forces in confrontations with the Netherlands (1949) and Malaysia.
[136] David Easter, ''Keep the Indonesian Pot Boiling': Western Covert Intervention in Indonesia, October 1965-March 1966', *Cold War History*, 5:1 (2005), p. 57.
[137] Joshua and Gibert, *Arms for the Third World*, p. 65.
[138] The issue of American intervention supporting the PKI narrative was identified by Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 194.
[139] Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, p. 207. The Americans outspent the Soviet bloc by mid-1959.

[140] Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 1, 181, 273, 281, & 295.
[141] Ken Conboy, *Divine Spears: Operations of Indonesia's Special Forces in East Timor, 1975-77* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing (Asia) Pty. Ltd., 2018), p. 46.
[142] Alan Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions: A Search for Identity*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 82, Canberra: Australian National University (1991), p. 58.
[143] Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions,* pp 59-60.
[144] Ian McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam, 1962-1972* (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial, 1984). An example was Captain Ian Teague (1 Cdo Regt) who in early 1965, raised People's Action Teams (PATs), *Biet-Chinh Nhan-Dan;* A second example of Captain Barry Petersen is pertinent in this context. Petersen was seconded to the CIA to supervise and develop *Montagnard* paramilitary groups in the central highlands, who was able to raise, train and lead a force of over 1000 *Montagnards*. Frank Walker, *The Tiger Man of Vietnam* (Hachette Publishing Australia, 2010).
[145] Brian Toohey and William Pinwill, *Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), p. 87.
[146] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, August 1968,* endorsed by the Defence Committee on 19 August 1968, reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, p. 345.
[147] Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions,* p. 64.
[148] Thomas Richardson, *As if we were never there? Pacification in Phuoc Tuy province, Republic of Vietnam, 1966-1972*, PhD Thesis, UNSW Canberra (July 2014), p. 296; Interestingly, Australian commitment to this province was in an effort to ensure a strong American military presence in South-East Asia and that it 'show a readiness to assist the United States to achieve her aims in South Vietnam'. Government of Australia, 'Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam', Tabled in the House of Representatives (13 May 1975), p. 16.
[149] Richardson, *As if we were never there?* (July 2014), p. 293. This was despite Australia possessing sound doctrine for the prosecution of counter-insurgency, based itself upon a robust understanding of Maoism or Communist Revolutionary Warfare doctrine. Richardson continues that it was striking how 'Australian commanders continued to have substantially different ideas on how best to prosecute the war in Phuoc Tuy' (p. 246).
[150] Terry Smith, *Training the Bodes: Australian Army advisers training Cambodian infantry battalions – A postscript to the Vietnam War* (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2011).
[151] Richardson provides the example of Brigadier Pearson's handover in September 1969 to Brigadier Weir who abandoned pacification. Weir's successor, Brigadier Henderson, pivoted back to pacification and demonstrated unprecedented success. When Brigadier McDonald succeeded Henderson, the focus again shifted to hunting main force units. Richardson, *As if we were never there?*, p. 213; Sir Robert Thompson succinctly points to the problem – an understanding of 'pacification': 'Pacification is, therefore, *an offensive campaign* designed to restore the government's authority by a sustained advance in accordance with national priority areas and, at the same time, to protect the individual against a selective reprisal attack so that he can safely play his part within the community, in co-operation with the government, against the Vietcong'. Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, p. 151 (emphasis added).
[152] Ibid., p. 245-6.
[153] 'National Intelligence Estimate, 1-68: World Trends and Contingencies Affecting U.S. Interests', Director of Central Intelligence (6 June 1968), p. 20. This particularly telling passage continues: 'Advice, training, and logistical support by foreign military or clandestine services will be more common than the open operations of foreign military units'. This intelligence report came to this conclusion as a result of recognising that 'conflicts or rebellions in one area encourage dissidents in others' (p. 1).

[154] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, March 1971*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 5 March 1971, reproduced in Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*.
[155] Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005).
[156] Central Intelligence Agency, 'CIA Long-Range Planning for 1985-1990', CIA-RDP89-0111R000300040021-7 (5 May 1982), declassified 15 Aug 2005, p. 2.
[157] This forty-day period involved the collapse of the 'twin-pillars' U.S. strategy in the Middle East due to the Iranian Revolution, the Siege of Mecca, the overrunning and burning of the US Embassy in Islamabad, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
[158] CIA, 'CIA Long-Range Planning for 1985-1990', CIA-RDP89-0111R000300040021-7 (5 May 1982), declassified 15 Aug 2005, p. 3.
[159] 'Mr Wilson: Dept of Foreign Affairs to visit IRO', FCO 168/4481, 'Information Research Department, 1971; and J.G. McMinnies, 'Australian IRD Visit', OH 3611/2/71, (19 November 1971), in FCO 168/4481 'Information Research Department', 1971. These files suggest that despite a secretive approach to British engagement in establishing an Australian IRD, that the initiative had bi-partisan support. K.C. Crook, 'Michael Wilson's Visit to IRD', OH 3611/2/71 (25 February 1971), in FCO 168/4481, 'Information Research Department', 1971. This engagement was amicable as British retrenchment with the 'East of Suez' policy held potential for East and South-East Asian British IRD personnel to transfer into the new Australian department. K.C. Crook, 'Michael Wilson's Visit to IRD', OH 3611/2/71 (25 February 1971), in FCO 168/4481 'Information Research Department', 1971.
[160] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, June 1973*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 1 June 1973, reproduced in Stephan Frühling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, Commonwealth of Australia (Canberra, ACT: Department of Defence, 2009).
[161] *The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, June 1973*, endorsed by the Defence Committee on 1 June 1973, reproduced in in Ibid.., p. 439.
[162] Brian Toohey and William Pinwill, *Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), p. 147. This timeframe aligns with Department of Defence efforts to assume a policy lead for proxy warfare capabilities (p. 148).
[163] Subsection 6(4), *Intelligence Services Act 2001*, No. 152, (2001), available at: https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00928, accessed [20 January 2024].
[164] Cablegram to Canberra, 6 September 1975, Document 217 in Wendy Way (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy (DAFP): Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2000), p. 392.
[165] Cablegram to Canberra, 15 April 1975, Document 126, in *DAFP: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, p. 252.
[166] Dispatch to Wilesee, 2 June 1975, Document 137, in *DAFP: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, p. 267; Efforts were made to mask Indonesian mobilisation using 'volunteers'. Cablegram to Jakarta, 15 October 1975, Document 265 in *DAFP: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, p. 473.
[167] Quoting Woolcott: 'We should not lose sight of the fact that there is now very little likelihood of a proper act of self-determination taking place in Portuguese Timor and that Australia's best long-term interests … are likely to be served by the incorporation of Portuguese Timor into Indonesia'. Cablegram to Canberra, 3 September 1975, Document 210 in *DAFP: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, p. 379.
[168] Conboy, *Divine Spears*, p. 19.
[169] The emphasis upon fear is due to the recognition that FRETILIN was not a Communist party. Discussed in Documents 137, p. 266, Document 149, p. 282 and Document 217, p. 393, in *DAFP:*

Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976; Conboy, *Divine Spears*, p. 19.

[170] 'Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, at No. 10 Downing Street on 4 February, 1980, at 12 noon', TNA PREM 19-136 (4 Feb 1980), p. 3. In the context of the Soviet threat in Afghanistan, Mr Fraser viewed America's defence assurances to the Persian Gulf as untenable. He thus sought to expand Australia's training for members of ASEAN and to 'breathe life into the Five Power Defence Arrangements', indicating a certain understanding of the global nature of Soviet expansive interests (p. 5).

[171] These 'penalties' would be imposed via widespread condemnation and to 'support the countries of South West Asia and the Middle East against further Soviet attempts to secure advantage by subversion, if not by force'. 'Prime Minister, Afghanistan: The Next Steps', TNA PREM 19-136, PM/80/8 (1 Feb 1980), p. 1.

[172] Ibid.., p. 2.

[173] Cathal J. Nolan, *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[174] Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia* (Canberra: Commonwealth Government, 1987).

[175] Melissa Lee, *Crippling Leviathan: How Foreign Subversion Weakens the State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), p. 159.

[176] Bertil Lintner, *The Golden Land Ablaze: Coups, Insurgents and the State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst, 2024), p. 60.

[177] This section draws upon and expands work published elsewhere as Andrew Maher, 'A 'Plan B' for the ADF: Supporting Resistance as a Strategy', *The Strategist*, ASPI (21 July 2023), available at: https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/a-plan-b-for-the-adf-supporting-resistance-as-a-strategy/.

[178] Bob Breen, *The Good Neighbour: Australian peace support operations in the Pacific Islands, 1980-2006*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 3.

[179] Vide https://policy.defense.gov/OUSDP-Offices/ASD-for-Special-Operations-Low-Intensity-Conflict/, [accessed 25 October 2023].

[180] Department of Defence, 'The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy', (1968), in *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1968-1975*, (J.R. Walsh and G.J. Munster publishers, 1980), p. 13.