PEOPLE AND PLACE

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WHO CARES ABOUT DEFENCE? ATTITUDES OF AUSTRALIAN VOTERS AND OF CANDIDATES IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

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Terrorism and global insecurity present Australia with a number of defence challenges: are Australian voters and election candidates concerned? Survey data, drawn mainly from the 2004 Australian Election Study, show that around half the electorate want to boost defence, ten per cent believe we are secure and any increase is unnecessary, while around one third take a nonchalant attitude. They are unsure whether Australia can be defended (or are certain that it cannot be) but are not inclined to take further action. Candidates standing for election to the federal parliament are even less likely to want to boost defence, and more likely to display a nonchalant attitude. A surprisingly high proportion of Australians, and their potential leaders, take this attitude. In 2004, 36 per cent of voters and 48 per cent of candidates were not sure that Australia could defend itself but, despite this, did not want to spend more on defence.

INTRODUCTION

In 1979 Alan Renouf wrote *The Frightened Country*,[1] pointing not so much to angst among his fellow citizens, but to how Australia's foreign policy was conducted. He argued that politicians were afraid but that, rather than taking steps to upgrade defence, relied excessively on foreign protectors. But the book's title earned him an important place among some intellectuals who deprecate what they see as Australians' irrational fear of the wider world. These writers seldom offer sober appraisals of the real dangers Australia might face and how we should best prepare for them. Rather, they deplore the fear and the way in which politicians can manipulate it. In their view, Australia is divided between fearless imperturbable people, such as themselves, and the frightened and malleable masses.

But expert assessments of Australia's current security environment show that concern about defence is rational. While the cold war was the dominate menace in the late 1970s when Renouf was writing, the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union has not ushered in a new age of peace and security for countries such as Australia. On the contrary, a number of neighbouring countries have become increasingly unstable and Islamist terrorism presents a new array of threats. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is now engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in peace-keeping roles in volatile situations in East Timor, the Solomons, Israel/Lebanon, Sinai and the Sudan.[2] The need for more recruits for the armed forces, more money for their support, and for more equipment have all increased; indeed the ADF is facing a recruitment crisis.[3] While the 2007–2008 budget has increased its resources, and lifted targets for recruitment, there are still experts who believe the money inadequate and the recruits unlikely to be forthcoming in the required numbers.[4]

Terrorism is a real threat to Australians in Australia and one that is new. On the face of it, conventional defence does not seem able to do much to protect the population. The need is for high-level intelligence, border security, law enforcement, identity security and so on.[5] The armed forces on active duty are engaged in operations overseas, rather than in repelling invasions (or terrorists) at home. Nevertheless, strengthening our capacity to resist terrorism and supporting the ADF are linked. The 2005 Defence Update writes:

> Threats to national and international security are increasingly interrelated. Failure to deal with a particular threat,

> such as terrorism or WMD proliferation, can create a cascade of adverse effects.[6]

Countering terrorism is not just a matter of intelligence work and domestic security. It involves working with regional neighbours such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, as well as with the United States, New Zealand and other allies. Effective liaison with neighbours and allies depends on Australia maintaining a strategic focus and 'robust and sustainable capabilities'.[7] Conventional state-to-state warfare and invasion are still unlikely,[8] but the question of how Australians feel about defence is assuming a new urgency. If people do not care about it, funds will not be allocated for defence and recruits will not apply. But the situation Australia faces, while serious, is manageable.[9]

THE THREAT SCHEMA AND ITS EXPONENTS

Despite this, the theme that Australians are prey to irrational fears about defence is now well established in public commentary. Those who write about it are not professing their own fears; they are commenting on fears they believe others to hold. In a recent *Quarterly Essay* Peter Hartcher writes of what is, in his view, Australia's long history of fear:

> Sometimes it was supposed to be China that threatened Australia, at other times Indonesia, and often it was just an unarticulated and undefined suspicion that shadowy forces somewhere to our north were plotting against us. ... Indonesia has often been pressed into the role of enemy when no more feasible threat existed.[10]

Hartcher agrees that there is some substance to these fears; after all the Japanese did threaten invasion in the 1940s and Indonesia has behaved aggressively on a number of occasions in the past. But, he says, is Indonesia really a threat? 'Or is it just a convenient bogeyman for an obsolete yet persistent Australian fear?'[11]

Other writers are less measured. They often link the threat schema they describe with racism (many diagnose Australians' racism as its cause) and are particularly concerned about the opportunities that it offers to unscrupulous right-wing politicians. John Pilger, for example, believes that Australia, once a leading social democracy blessed with 'astonishing ethnic diversity', has regressed 'into a state of fabricated fear and xenophobia' marked by '[f]lag-waving and an unctuous hand-on-heart jingoism'.[12] Pilger is generous to say that Australia was once a leading social democracy. Another critic claims that 'Australia's pathological fear of the yellow peril—the teeming hordes of Asia—is embedded in this nation's psyche'[13] and David Day says that a 'deep vein of anxiety about invasion has been part of our collective psyche for more than a century'.[14] Others worry that the Coalition will use the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, together with fear of terrorism, to fuel an election-winning hostility to Muslim immigrants.[15] Indeed many judge that John Howard's Coalition Government won the November 2001 election by appealing to the electorate's irrational fears about defence.

The standoff over asylum seekers and the *Tampa* in August 2001, together with the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, provided the Coalition with an electoral opportunity. But in the opinion of these critics, Australians' defence neurosis, and their racism, made that opportunity easy to grasp.[16] Chris Sidoti, a former Human Rights Commissioner, argues that this neurosis provides the bedrock for Australia's tough policies on asylum seekers arriving by boat.

> It's a question of control ... I think there's an ancient and continuing fear of uncontrolled migration into Australia, particularly from Asia. And that's why we take such an uncompromising—to the point of cruel—view of those who come here uninvited.[17]

Michael Kirby says that 'the spectre of hordes of people arriving from Asia remains deep in the Australian psyche, long after the White Australia policy had been abandoned'.[18] This is also the theme of Don McMaster's 2001 book on asylum seekers,[19] and indeed of others who write on this topic.[20] Often such writers simply treat such fear extrinsically, as a symptom of the masses' psychological disorder rather than as a point of view to be disproved. Marcus Einfeld is an exception, albeit that his refutation relies on intuition and opinion:

> … I have seen no evidence, despite research, that Australia is endangered by any realistic prospect of an influx or inundation by unauthorised arrivals from Asia or anywhere else. It is my intuitive assessment, borne of years of experience in the field, that such suggestions are completely unfounded. … the concept is in my opinion racist nonsense reminiscent of the old discredited 'Yellow Peril' theory.[21]

In pointing to Australians' 'ancient' fears writers such as these are taking their place in a long tradition of progressive intellectuals who have written about, and deplored, their compatriots' fearfulness. In 2001 Sidoti wrote that since 1788 Australians have had two obsessions:

> The first obsession is with locking people up ...
>
> The second obsession is with the hordes from Asia, the yellow peril ...[22]

In Sidoti's view racism and an obsession with punishment are turning his country into 'a nation of thugs'.[23] But what do Australians actually think about defence?

ATTITUDES TO DEFENCE

Up until the mid 1990s the data were patchy. There has been a long succession of surveys asking respondents whether particular countries are a threat to Australia's security,[24] as well as others on aspects of the American alliance, but few that specifically ask about the priority that Australians would like to give to defence.

One example is a 1978 Irving Saulwick poll. This asked people to nominate national goals from a pre-determined list and found that 23 per cent put 'strong defence forces' either first or second (compared with 33 per cent who nominated a 'stable economy' and 30 per cent who opted for 'a high rate of economic growth').[25] But health care and education, the contemporary staples of polls of this kind, were not on the list, and concern about defence varied markedly with education. Only 11 per cent of university graduates put it first or second, compared with 23 per cent of people who had completed secondary education (and 33 per cent of those with primary education only).

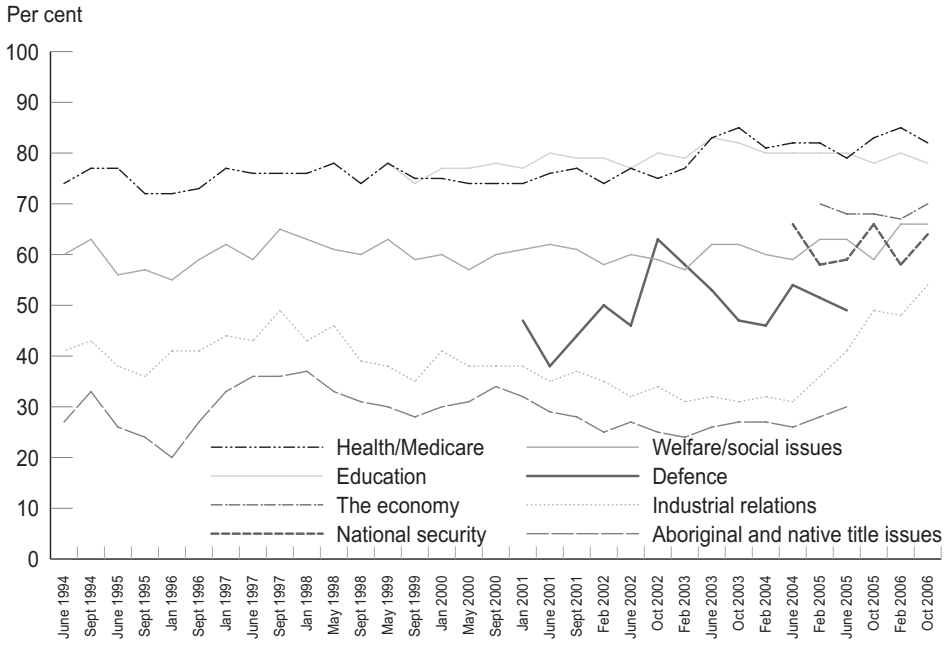
Respondents were also invited to say which goals they would put last. The two economic goals were uncontroversial. Few put them last. But defence was different. Ten per cent of the sample nominated it as the goal they would put last. However, this figure rose to 22 per cent among graduates but was only eight per cent among respondents with just secondary education. These data may have been picking up a spilt between the opinion of educated and articulate public commentators and the average Australian, a split suggested by the remarks of men like Pilger, Day, Sidoti and Einfeld. Nevertheless, governments consider defence of Australia and its interests to be their first duty.[26] Thus the finding that 23 per cent of Australians in 1978 named defence as either their first or second priority does not, on the face of it, seem surprising. Possibly the fact that the number was not higher reflects the relatively peaceful security environment of the time. Nonetheless at least one observer found the overall level of concern about defence in 1978 to be 'quite remarkable'.[27]

From mid 1989 Newspoll has conducted a series of polls in which a range

of issues are presented. Respondents are asked whether each issue would be very important, fairly important, or not important in affecting how they would vote in a federal election. This format differs from polls that ask respondents to nominate their most important election issue, an approach which can smother middle ranking concerns. The topics Newspoll has offered have varied over the years. Defence was only added in January 2001, with national security added in June 2004 (for a brief period, both were on the list together). Figure 1 shows the proportions saying defence and national security would be very important in affecting their vote. For comparative purposes it shows a number of other issues, from the most salient, health and Medicare, and education, to the least, Aboriginal and native title issues. Welfare/social security is included as a topic of moderate salience and 'the economy' as a recently added, fairly salient issue. Figure 1 also shows industrial relations, a topic that has been on the list throughout the series and which shows a rise in importance since 2005.

Figure 1 suggests that defence and national security are middle ranking to fairly high ranking political questions for most Australians. (It also shows that the phrase 'national security' generates more concern than 'defence', possibly because the former can more readily be understood

Figure 1: Percentage of those polled nominating various issues as 'very important' in affecting their vote in a federal election, June 1994 to October 2006



Source: <newspoll.com.au>, accessed 9 May 2007

Note: Education was first added to the list in May 1999. Industrial relations, defence, and Aboriginal and native title issues were not offered in February 2005. Values have been inferred. Overall, 15 issues have been offered from time to time. Figure 1 shows the two issues most often nominated as 'very important', and the one least often nominated, together with two that are intermediate (welfare/social issues and industrial relations), as well as the economy.

to include protection against domestic terrorism.) Another series of Newspolls conducted from 1986 to 2000 shows that only a minority (ranging from 20 per cent in 1986 to 33 per cent in 2000) believe that 'Australia has adequate defence forces to defend its national interests'.[28]

Together these two sets of data suggest that a majority of Australians see defence as inadequate and that they are concerned about it. But in most of the polls in Figure 1 respondents are more likely to rate welfare and social security as very important than defence and, in all the polls, health care and education are much more likely to be rated very important. Defence is important to many Australians, but other questions preoccupy a greater proportion of the people. Some take the defence question seriously; others have other priorities.

But this series does not show us those who say defence (or other issues) are not important. So we cannot use it to judge whether the controversy about defence as a national goal shown in the 1978 Saulwick poll persists.

In contrast, data collected by the Australian Election Studies (AES) after each federal election from 1987, together with the more recent Australian Surveys of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) (2003 and 2005) can shed light on this, as well as providing greater detail on attitudes to national security. They can be used for clearer answers to the questions of how substantial is support for defence, and is lack of interest in defence objectives widespread.

Both series use large mail-out questionnaires, and the AES surveys a random sample of all voters after each federal election, as well as the complete list of all candidates. From 1996 the AES has asked an interesting pair of questions. One of them reads as follows:

> Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.
> [A list of statements follows, and a middle category 'neither agree nor disagree' is also provided. The list includes:]
> Australia would be able to defend itself if it were ever attacked.

Table 1: 'Australia would be able to defend itself if it were ever attacked', 1996 to 2005 (per cent)

	Voters					Candidates		
	1996	1998	2001	2004	2005	1996	2001	2004
Strongly agree	3	5	4	3	3	1	2	2
Agree	11	14	11	16	17	20	19	23
Neither agree nor disagree	19	20	21	24	22	22	23	23
Disagree	38	39	41	41	41	36	35	35
Strongly disagree	24	19	19	14	9	18	17	14
Missing	5	3	3	3	*7	3	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	1797	1897	2010	1769	1914	439	477	535

Source: For sources to this table and subsequent tables see appendix 1.
Note: * The 2005 AuSSA question included the option 'can't choose'; 92 responded 'can't choose' and have been grouped with the 46 missing for that survey.

The second asks:

Do you think the Government should spend more or spend less on defence?
[Five response categories are provided.]
Spend much more on defence
Spend some more on defence
About right at present
Spend less on defence
Spend a lot less on defence

The two questions were asked in the AES voters' surveys in 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2004. They were also asked in the AES candidates' surveys in 1996, 2001 and 2004 (there was no candidates' survey in 1998). In addition the questions were asked in the 2005 AuSSA survey (this is also based on a random sample of voters). Tables 1 and 2 set out the responses to them.

Table 1 shows that Australian voters who believe their country could defend itself if were ever attacked are in the minority; they range from 14 per cent in 1996 to 20 per cent in 2005, while half or more (62 per cent in 1996 and 50 per cent in 2005) believe that it could not do so. These findings show smaller proportions who believe defence to be adequate than were found in the 1986 to 2000 Newspolls, a difference that could be explained by the stronger wording of the question. On the face of it, these data give some credibility to the belief that Australians are deeply concerned about national security. Moreover, the proportions of candidates who think their country could be defended are only slightly higher than are those of voters. Table 2, however, presents a rather different picture of the level of defence anxiety.

Between 2001 and 2005 the proportion of voters who did not want to increase defence spending (those who said spending was about right, plus those who said spend less or a lot less) ranged from 39 per cent to 47 per cent. The percentage of candidates who did not want to spend more in 2001 and 2004 ranged from 61 to 68 per cent. Indeed, in 2004, 35 per cent of candidates wanted to spend less. Despite the lack of confidence in Australia's defence shown in Table 1, only just over half of voters wanted to spend more on defence and only 30 per cent of candidates.

Table 2: 'Do you think the Government should spend more or less on defence?' 1996 to 2005 (per cent)

	Voters					Candidates		
	1996	1998	2001	2004	2005	1996	2001	2004
Spend much more on defence	10	18	20	15	18	6	12	9
Spend some more on defence	28	33	39	36	37	21	26	21
About right at present	45	37	33	37	31	32	30	33
Spend less on defence	11	7	5	8	6	20	19	22
Spend a lot less on defence	4	2	2	2	2	20	12	13
Missing	2	2	2	2	*6	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	1797	1897	2010	1769	1914	439	477	535

Note: * The 2005 AuSSA question included the option 'can't choose'; 89 responded 'can't choose' and have been grouped with the 29 missing for that survey.

The two questions can be combined to create new variable, attitudes to defence. Its categories range from those who agree that Australia could defend itself against attack but still want to spend more on defence, to those who think Australia could not be defended but who nonetheless do not want to spend more on defence. Table 3 shows how the categories have been constructed, with the first group labeled *very security conscious* and the last group labeled *very blasé*. In between there are those who believe Australia could not be defended and want to spend more (the *concerned*), those who think it could be defended and do not want to spend more (the *confident*) and those who are unsure about whether it can be defended but do not want to spend more (the *blasé*).

Table 1 seemed to show the high levels of voter insecurity about defence claimed by critics of the threat schema, but when we combine this with data on who among them is sufficiently concerned about the situation to want to put more resources into defence a different picture emerges. (See Table 4.) While some voters who think Australia could not be defended also want to try to improve the situation by spending more on defence (the group labeled *concerned*), a large proportion do not. Many people are doubtful about whether we can defend ourselves, or are convinced we cannot, but they do not want to put more resources into defence. Over the period 1996 to 2005 between 47 and 29 per cent of voters have been either *blasé* or *very blasé* (a group which can be described as

Table 3: Composition of the variable 'attitudes to defence'

Government should spend more, or spend less, on defence	Australia would be able to defend itself if it were ever attacked:		
	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree and strongly disagree
Spend much more, or some more	*Very security conscious*	*Concerned*	*Concerned*
Spending is about right, or spend less, or a lot less	*Confident*	*Blasé*	*Very blasé*

Table 4: Attitudes to defence, voters, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005 (per cent)

	1996	1998	2001	2004	2005
Very security conscious	4	8	8	8	11
Concerned	32	43	50	42	42
Confident	10	11	7	10	9
Blasé	15	13	12	15	11
Very blasé	32	22	19	21	18
Missing	6	4	4	4	*11
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	1797	1897	2010	1769	1914

Note: * Both of the 2005 AuSSA questions included the option 'can't choose'. Respondents who selected this on one or both of the constituent questions shown in Table 4 are grouped with missing data.

taking a relaxed attitude).

Overall, since 1998 around half of the electorate could be described as taking an engaged attitude towards defence (these are the *very security conscious* plus the *concerned*). Eight years of Howard's Government from 1996 to 2004 have seen a diminution in the proportions of the *very blasé* and a strengthening in the ranks of people who are *concerned*, which is not be surprising given the deterioration in the security environment during the period.

But neither Figure 1 nor Table 4 support the critics' theory of widespread, or even majority, concern with defence. On the contrary, Table 4 suggests that there is a puzzling and quite substantial minority who look as if they do not care at all. From 2001 to 2005 this group includes a subset of around 20 per cent (the *very blasé*) who think that we should not spend more on defence even though they are sure that we are defenceless.

If this is the pattern among the electorate, what of the candidates who offer themselves for election to the federal parliament?

Table 5 shows that, in 2004, only 30 per cent of candidates took an engaged attitude to defence (*very security conscious* or *concerned*) compared to 50 per cent of voters. It also shows that the candidates have their share of people who do not seem to take defence seriously. Indeed, among candidates the proportion in 2004 taking a relaxed attitude (*blasé* or *very blasé*) was much larger than among voters, 48 per cent as opposed to 36 per cent. However, these predispositions among candidates are not uniform. Table 6 sets out their attitudes to defence in 2004 by party.

Table 6 shows that Coalition candidates were much more likely to take an engaged approach than were candidates from other parties: 52 per cent were either *very security conscious* or *concerned* while 15 per cent were *very blasé*. Amongst the total number of respondents to the candidates' survey the responses of Coalition candidates are quite atypical.

The proportions of Coalition candidates who were either engaged or relaxed were close to those of voters and quite distant from those of Labor candidates. Labor candidates were less than half as likely to be concerned than Coalition candidates, and twice as likely to *very blasé*. Candidates for the Democrats and Greens were even less likely to show concern about defence; more than two-thirds of Greens candidates were either *blasé* or *very blasé*. Among the minority in the major parties who won in 2004 there is no clear pattern of difference between winners and losers. It would not, for example, be possible to argue that those who held extreme views on defence were any more or less likely to stand in winnable seats than those who did not.

Table 5: Attitudes to defence, candidates, 1996, 2001, 2004 (per cent)

	1996	2001	2004
Very security conscious	3	6	6
Concerned	24	31	24
Confident	18	15	19
Blasé	19	17	19
Very blasé	33	27	29
Missing	4	4	3
Total	100	100	100
Total N	439	477	535

EXPLAINING THE RELAXED ATTITUDE

On the face of it the high proportions of voters and the very high proportions of candidates who believe Australia would not, or would probably not, be able to defend itself and who do not want to try to improve the situation is surprising. Nonetheless, it is consistent with 1978 data which showed that, while some were actively concerned with defence as a national goal, others were actively opposed to such a goal.

There are a number of possible explanations for the prevalence of the relaxed attitude. Perhaps some feel that there is no need for Australia to make more than a token effort because the Americans will defend us. Some may think that, even though Australia could not defend itself against a well-resourced attacker, such an attack is unlikely; hence there is little need to worry about defence. It is also possible that some have simply not thought their position through; people can hold a number of inconsistent attitudes if there is little in their social environment to encourage them to develop a considered approach.[29] Others may think that, with its vast land area and lengthy coastline, the country cannot be defended. Submissions to a parliamentary inquiry on defence in 1980 suggest that this view is widespread.[30] If a person shared it they could well think: why squander money on a hopeless task? Better to spend it on something else and rely on hope that aggressors will stay away.

Others again may believe that the defence of Australia is best served, not by armed force, but by the nation being an international good citizen. For example, after the increase in defence spending announced in the May 2007 budget, Gary Fredrickson wrote a letter to *The Australian*:

> While there were some positive steps in the 2007–08 budget, an opportunity has been missed to make real changes in the lives of those living in poverty. If we really want a more secure Australia, instead of spending $6.6 billion on 24 Super Hornets for the Defence Force, our

Table 6: Attitudes to defence by party, candidates, 2004 (per cent)

	All candidates					Candidates who won*		Total
	Coalition	Labor	Democrats	Greens	Other	Coalition	Labor	
Very security conscious	15	9	1	2	5	20	13	6
Concerned	37	14	13	3	46	20	7	24
Confident	16	29	22	26	7	24	33	19
Blasé	14	15	28	31	10	22	13	19
Very blasé	15	30	35	36	27	12	30	29
Missing	4	3	1	3	5	2	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	81	87	92	122	151	41	30	533

Notes: Table 6 excludes two candidates who are missing on party.
'Other' consists of One Nation, Family First and the Citizens Electoral Council.
* Under candidates who won, Table 5 omits one Greens candidate (coded *blasé*); overall there were 72 candidates who won who responded to the survey.

> aid budget could have been used to tackle poverty and thereby reduce instability in our region.[31]

People like Fredrickson might see foreign aid as a good security investment but nonetheless be prepared to turn to armed force if the investment fails. Others, however, might see such a resort to armed force as wrong. In 1979, in the context of the arrival of asylum seekers from Vietnam, George Zubrzycki wrote:

> A civilian invasion of Australia has already begun. This is what the peaceful incoming of the Vietnamese 'boat people' really is.[32]

Perhaps Australians should not treat a 'peaceful incoming' as an invasion, but rather should welcome the incomers and make them feel at home? In doing this they could be following Peter Singer's advice to 'accept the diminishing significance of national boundaries and take a pragmatic, step-by-step approach to greater global governance'.[33] Indeed an idealistic focus on international social justice may animate some of the *very blasé*. This is the mindset reflected in the Beatles' song *Give peace a chance* or John Lennon's *Imagine*:

> Imagine there's no countries
> It isn't hard to do
> Nothing to kill or die for
> And no religion too
> Imagine all the people
> Living life in peace[34]

It is even possible to imagine that good behaviour in supporting international social justice and an open-door approach to immigration will make aggressors pause.[35] If this is so, why annoy them with an attempt at defence? In any event, pressures to accommodate more people, what ever their means of arrival, may be irresistible.[36] Peaceful surrender could be morally preferable to defence, as well as safer. Bryan Turner writes that in a postmodern world: 'The traditional language of nation-state citizenship is confronted by the alternative discourse of human rights and humanity as the normatively superior paradigm of political loyalty'.[37] Armed defence of the nation state may be morally wrong, or as McMaster sees it, just passé:

> In contemporary times it is more feasible to promote policies of social harmony and [social] mobility among ethnic groups in Australia than to rely on a strategy of control against a formidable trend of worldwide population movement.[38]

McMasters deplores the effects of the threat schema on the Australian psyche but in acknowledging a 'formidable trend of worldwide population movement' seems to share its basic premise. So it may be not that the idea of a threat is mistaken but rather that the whole notion of Australia as a sovereign nation with the right to self-defence is unprincipled. The tone of some of those who deplore the threat schema and the fear of the 'yellow peril' on which it is allegedly based implies that this is so.

Some of the *very blasé* may be so disengaged from Australia as to feel it does not deserve to be defended. Or as mockery of people concerned about defence implies, an affectation of indifference could be just an easy status symbol. Some may see themselves as part of an inner circle of elegant pessimists, far removed from the lesser souls who have given way to ethnocentric panic.

For the most part the AES and AuSSA survey data can shed only indirect light on the reasons people may have for adopting either the engaged or the relaxed attitude. But testing the idea that people who are relaxed feel this way because they are counting on the Americans is straightforward. Table 7 cross-tabulates attitudes to defence by trust in the American alliance and shows that voters and candidates who trust the alliance are more likely to take an engaged attitude, while those who do not trust it favour the relaxed approach.

Sixty eight per cent of voters who trust the alliance take an engaged attitude, compared to 34 per cent of those who do not trust it, and 49 per cent of candidates who trust the alliance have an engaged attitude, compared to 18 per cent of those who do not. Conversely, the *very blasé* are more numerous among respondents (voters and candidates) who distrust the alliance. Many Australians who take a relaxed attitude to defence do not seem to be expecting the Americans to protect them. Their attitudes are more consistent with a pose of conspicuous sangfroid than with a strategy of free-loading. Anti-Americanism is a key component of some left-liberals' ideology and thus may be an important part of the relaxed position. These data give indirect support to the hypothesis that some of the people taking the *very blasé* position are making a personal statement about their values, their sense of self and their claims to social honour vis-à-vis other Australians who are both more concerned about defence and more committed to the alliance.

Hartcher writes:

> Australia's exaggerated fear gave it an outsized need for reassurance, and it responded with a hungry embrace of a 'great and powerful friend'. It clung to Britain until the fiction of London's defence assurances to Australia was exposed by the Second World War, and then turned to the US.[39]

He also claims that the Coalition has tried to plant the idea in the voter's psyche that it was 'the rightful owner of the US alliance, custodian of the national reassurance and father of our national security'.[40] This latter claim is possible, but the idea that Australians cling to the US alliance needs qualification. Table 7 suggest that only 33 per cent of voters have 'a great

Table 7: Attitudes to defence by trust in the American alliance, voters and candidates 2004 (per cent)

If Australia's security were threatened by some other country, how much trust do you feel Australia can have in the United States to come to Australia's defence? ...

	Voters				Candidates			
Attitudes to defence:	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much or none at all	All voters	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much or none at all	All candidates
Very security conscious	11	9	4	8	9	8	3	6
Concerned	**57	39	**30	42	40	21	15	24
Confident	8	10	13	10	18	16	23	19
Blasé	6	17	21	15	15	19	23	19
Very blasé	*14	22	*30	21	17	33	35	29
Missing	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	579	691	463	1769	141	160	224	535

* Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.05 level

** Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.01 level

Note: Tests of significance on the candidates data are inappropriate as these are population rather than random-sample data.

Voters and candidates missing on the American alliance question (n=36 and n=10) not shown.

deal of trust' that the United States would come to Australia's defence (579 out of 1769), and that only 26 per cent of candidates feel this way (141 out of 535). The official view is that 'Australia's enduring alliance with the United States is a key pillar of Australia's security'.[41] But most voters and candidates harbour doubts about its reliability.

The hypothesis that many relaxed Australians are happy to leave the work of national defence to the Americans can be excluded, but the other hypotheses offered above can only be explored indirectly.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ATTITUDINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH DIFFERING VIEWS ON DEFENCE

An analysis of attitudes to defence by social location shows that graduates and social professionals are more likely to hold a relaxed attitude than others. Table 8 shows that this relaxed position is also held by younger people and by those who favour a more open-borders position on immigration, who are pro-multiculturalism, and who support further land rights for Aborigines. (In many cases, of course, these groups overlap.) In contrast being overseas-born rather than Australia-born does not make a statistically significant difference. Table 8 shows the variables most strongly associated with the relaxed attitude and Table 9 those most strongly associated with the engaged attitude.

The demographic variable, sex, did not produce a statistically significant difference and place of residence was only associated with statistically significant differences for people living in Canberra and in inner Melbourne (who were more relaxed), or in outer Melbourne (who more engaged). People living in inner Sydney were not significantly different from the sample as a whole.

Key findings in Tables 8 and 9 are the high proportions of graduates and social professionals who are *blasé* or *very blasé* about defence—more than 50 per cent in both cases. But while these demographic variables produce a strong effect, attitudinal variables associated with immigration, border control and minority rights produced even stronger ones: for example 60 per cent of the voters who wanted to accept boat people were *blasé* or *very blasé* about defence compared to only 20 per cent of those who did want to accept them. This offers indirect support for the hypothesis that a commitment to international social justice and open borders may help explain the relaxed attitude. Similar differences are revealed by the questions on Aboriginal land rights and the assimilation-versus-multiculturalism question ('people who come here should try to be more like Australians').

The pattern of responses to these questions suggests that voters who value a cohesive community which shows limited support for ethnic separatism, together with a careful approach to adding new migrants, are more likely to have an engaged attitude to defence than are those who support group rights, multiculturalism, and an open-borders approach.

The over-representation of social professionals among respondents with a relaxed attitude to defence is interesting. Social professionals make up a relatively small part of the population but, as teachers, journalists, ministers of religion, and artists, they play a disproportionate role in the transmission of culture and thus have a disproportionate capacity to influence others, including young people. This may help explain the finding in Table 8 that young people are significantly less likely to take a *concerned* approach. Other research confirms the relative disengagement of many young people from the question of defence. Surveys commissioned

Table 8: Relaxed attitudes to defence by social location, attitudes to immigration and minority rights, voters 2004 (per cent)

Attitudes to defence:	University educated	Social professionals (a)	Region: Canberra and inner Melbourne	Age 18 to 39	Strongly disagree that asylum seekers arriving by boat be turned back	Aboriginal land rights have not gone nearly far enough	People who come here should try to be more like Australians: disagree & strongly disagree	Not 'very proud' to be Australian (b)	Does not 'Strongly agree' would rather be Australian ... (c)	Number of migrants should be increased a little or a lot	Total
Very security conscious	5	6	7	9	4	5	7	4	6	5	8
Concerned	**30	*31	**27	**30	**16	**20	**27	**29	**31	*32	42
Confident	13	10	8	14	19	16	14	13	12	11	10
Blasé	21	19	21	19	**28	*27	*20	*22	**23	*22	15
Very blasé	*30	*34	**36	25	*32	31	*30	*29	26	27	21
Missing	1	0	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	395	162	149	320	177	126	427	512	525	412	1769

* Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.05 level
** Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.01 level
Note: (a) Social professionals include school teachers, university lecturers, social workers, ministers of religion, artists, writers and journalists; they are grouped here according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics occupational codes.
(b) The alternatives chosen were either 'quite proud', or 'not very proud', or 'not at all proud'.
(c) The question was 'I would rather be a citizen of Australia than of any other country in the world': 68 per cent strongly agreed. The minority shown in Table 8 (27 per cent) either agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

by the Australian Defence Force in 1997 and 1998 asked young Australians to say 'yes' or 'no' to the following statement: 'If I was called on to go to war to defend Australia, I would do so'. Only 39 per cent said 'yes', 34 per cent said 'no' and 30 per cent were neutral.[42] These findings show a strangely disengaged attitude among many young Australians towards their country of citizenship.

Tables 10 and 11 explore the effects of these social and cultural variables on candidates' attitudes to defence. These replicate the patterns found for voters, but in some instances in a more extreme form. For example, candidates who thought that the number of immigrants should be 'increased a lot' were much more likely to take a *very blasé* attitude to defence than voters who held this opinion. And voters who thought that all boat people should be turned back were only 1.3 times more likely than the sample as a whole to be *concerned*, but candidates who took this view were 2.6 times more likely to be *concerned* than candidates as a whole. (See Table 11.) This suggests that candidates are more likely to have internally consistent sets of attitudes than voters. After all, they are more often in situations that encourage them to develop internal consistency. But in both cases a nonchalant attitude to defence can also serve as a marker of personal identity, of internationalist concern and of cosmopolitan sophistication. (These tables do not show levels of significance for the findings as the data are based on a population survey of all candidates, not a

Table 9: Engaged attitudes to defence by social location, attitudes to immigration and minority rights, voters 2004 (per cent)

Attitudes to defence:	Region: outer Melbourne	Age 40 plus	Aboriginal land rights have gone much too far	Strongly agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat be turned back	Number of immigrants should be reduced a lot	People who come here should try to be more like Australians: strongly agree	Total
Very security conscious	8	8	9	12	13	11	8
Concerned	**51	*47	**53	**56	**55	**57	42
Confident	6	9	8	8	8	6	10
Blasé	11	13	**7	**7	**6	**7	15
Very blasé	20	20	20	**13	*15	*16	21
Missing	4	3	2	4	3	4	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	173	1179	331	492	286	347	1769

* Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.05 level
** Difference between subgroup and total sample significant at the 0.01 level

random sample.)

Table 11 shows that the minority of candidates who want to reduce immigration 'a lot', turn back boat people, limit land rights and support assimilation are very much more likely to take an engaged attitude to defence than are candidates as whole. Indeed, Tables 10 and 11 on candidates' attitudes to defence by different variables tapping approaches to social cohesion show an even stronger association between feelings about defence and respondents' positions on these variables that do Tables 8 and 9 on voters.

CONCLUSION

The answer to the question: who cares about defence? is that people who are committed to a cohesive, bounded Australian community appear to care, or at least to care more than those who do not share this commitment to the same extent. Graduates and social professionals are prominent among those who do not seem to care very much, as are candidates for the Democrats and the Greens. The survey data cannot tell us why they feel this way. Are they trying to imagine a more internationalist and peaceful world? Do they agree with Sidoti and others and believe that their compatriots are gripped by ridiculous, shameful and racist fears? Have they picked up the notion that concern about defence is nothing more than a low-brow preoccupation with the 'yellow peril'? Do they treat attitudes to defence extrinsically as a status marker, or do they hold more considered views? These questions are hard to answer with the avail-

Table 10: Relaxed attitudes to defence and security by attitudes to Australia, border control and minority rights, candidates, 2004 (per cent)

Attitudes to defence:	Strongly disagree that asylum seekers arriving by boat be turned back	Aboriginal land rights have not gone nearly far enough	Number of immigrants should be increased a lot	*More important for migrants to learn … to be Australian ...: disagree and strongly disagree	Not 'very proud' to be Australian	Total
Very security conscious	2	1	4	2	3	6
Concerned	12	8	13	8	9	24
Confident	23	30	24	30	23	19
Blasé	24	32	15	21	26	19
Very blasé	37	29	40	38	37	29
Missing	2	1	3	1	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	242	155	89	128	235	535

Note: (*) This question read 'It is more important for new migrants to learn what it is to be Australia than to cling to their old ways: agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly'. The question on whether new migrants should try to be more like Australians shown in Tables 8 and 9 was not asked of candidates.

able data. Poorly integrated personal values, idealistic enthusiasm for internationalism, and a keen pursuit of social status may all be involved.

In a peaceful world such attitudes would be benign. For example, McMaster writes that human rights and humanity itself should be the focus of citizenship and political loyalty in a universal global society. He goes on to say: 'However, without the demise of the nation-state this cannot be a reality'.[43] John Lennon would have approved of his sentiment. But the world is not peaceful. The defence planners who write that that nation states 'remain the fundamental basis of the international community'[44] would have little faith in a universal global society in the near future.

Table 11: Engaged attitudes to defence and security by attitudes to border control, minority rights, immigration, and Australia, candidates, 2004 (per cent)

Attitudes to defence	Strongly agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat be turned back	Aboriginal land rights have gone much too far	Number of immigrants should be reduced a lot	More important for migrants to learn ... to be Australian ...: strongly agree	Very proud to be Australian	Total
Very security conscious	7	6	8	7	8	6
Concerned	62	63	62	55	37	24
Confident	9	5	8	6	16	19
Blasé	9	3	5	9	14	19
Very blasé	7	19	13	18	23	29
Missing	5	5	5	4	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	55	64	39	141	284	535

Appendix 1

All of the data files were obtained from the Australian Social Science Data Archives at the Australian National University: <http://assda.anu.edu.au>. The authors of these files are not responsible for my interpretation of their work.

Voters' studies

1996: Australian Election Study, 1996 [computer file] / Principal investigators Roger Jones, Ian McAllister, David Gow. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University [distributor], 1996.	N = 1795, response rate 61.8% (based on 2905 mailouts that were in scope)
1998: Bean, Clive et al. Australian Election Study, 1998 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 1998.	N = 1897, response rate 57.7% (based on 3289 mailouts that were in scope)
2001: Australian Election Study, 2001 [computer file] / Principal Investigators Clive Bean, David Gow and Ian McAllister. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University [distributor], 2002.	N = 2010, response rate 55.4% (based on 3631 mailouts that were in scope)
2004: Bean, C. et al., Australian Election Study, 2004, [computer file]. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2005.	N = 1769, response rate 44.5% (based on 3975 mailouts that were in scope)

2005 AuSSA study

2005: Wilson, S. et. al., Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, 2005, [computer file]. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2006 This questionnaire had two versions which, in some instances, contained different questions. The one drawn on here is version B.	N = 1914, response rate of 41.5% (sub-sample B) (based on 4608 mailouts that were in scope)

Candidates' studies

1996: Candidates' study, Jones, R., I. McAllister and D.G. Gow. Australian Candidate Study, 1996 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 1996. Voters: Jones, Roger et al. Australian Election Study, 1996 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 1996.	N = 439, response rate of 66.5% (based on 660 mailouts that were in scope)
2001: Candidates' study, Rachel Gibson et al., Australian Candidates Study 2001. [Computer file] Canberra: Social Science Data Archives: Australian National University, 2002. Voters: Bean, Clive et al. Australian Election Study, 2001 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 2002.	N = 477, response rate of 57.8% (based on 825 mailouts that were in scope)
2004: Candidates' study, Gibson, R. et al., Australian Election Study 2004 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2005	N = 535, response rate of 53.6% (based on 998 mailouts that were in scope)

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4 See Australian Strategic Policy Institute quoted in P. Walters, '$22bn defence budget "not enough"', *The Australian*, 2007, May 25, p. 6.

5 See *Protecting Australia Against Terrorism: Australia's National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Arrangements*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2006, p. 32.

6 See *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2005*, Australian Government: Department of Defence, Canberra, 2005, p. 12.

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11 ibid., p. 48

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24 See for example those analysed in A. Huck, 'The idea of "China" in Australian politics', *Australian Outlook*, vol. 24, 1970, pp. 309–19 and 'A note on the volatility of threats', *Australian Outlook*, vol. 35, 1981, pp. 88–9. Huck concludes that Australians are less worried about defence than has been generally assumed and that the presumed fear of China has been overemphasised. See also Albinski, who comes to similar conclusions. H. S. Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia: The Impact of Vietnam and Conscription*, Duke University Press, Durham, N. C, 1970, pp. 191–209.

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[41] *Protecting Australia Against Terrorism*, op. cit., p. 21

[42] Data supplied by the Australian Defence Forces. Two surveys were involved, one a self-report, anonymous questionnaire administered to adolescent students at secondary school in 1997, the second a random sample of young adults interviewed by telephone in 1998. Thirty five per cent of the 2,856 students aged 13 to 18 agreed to the statement: 'If I was called on to go to war to defend Australia I would do so'. And 46 per cent of the random sample of 1,944 young adults aged 17 to 35 agreed in 1998. Twenty two per cent of the 13 to 18-year-olds agreed to the statement: 'If I was called on to go to war to defend another country in Australia's interests I would do so' and 23 per cent of the 17 to 35-year-olds.

[43] McMaster (drawing on P. Donati and B.S. Turner), 2001, op. cit., p. 174

[44] *Australia's National Security*, op. cit., p. 3