

Australia-U.S. Relations

Mr. Howard Goes to Washington: The U.S. and Australia in the Age of Terror

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As the planes struck on Sept. 11, 2001, Australian Prime Minister John Howard was in Washington for an official visit scheduled to mark the 50th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty that formalizes the security alliance between Australia and the United States. He had met the president Sept. 10, and the two men had signed a statement affirming the vitality and strength of the bilateral strategic partnership between the two countries.

The poignancy of Howard's presence in Washington that day, and the symbolic significance of the anniversary that he was there to celebrate, have lent weight to the view that the events of Sept. 11 mark a fundamental turning point in the dynamics of the U.S.-Australia relationship, with a much strengthened trend to an even deeper and closer alliance than before. This view in turn is often adduced to support a wider hypothesis: that Australia under John Howard is undertaking a fundamental realignment of its international relationships away from Asia and toward the U.S.

There is evidence, some of it quite compelling, to support these views. Certainly over the intervening 22 months since that tragic day, Australia has been second only to the UK in the warmth of its support for the Bush administration's approach to the war on terror. The Howard government has put less rhetorical weight on Australia's relationships in Asia than did its predecessor, Paul Keating. Even so, one must be careful. Relationships as old, deep, and complex as that between the U.S. and Australia have a tempo and a trajectory that are not easily transformed by individual events – even events as resonant as the terrorist attacks of Sept 11. It may be that the current phase of evolution of the U.S.-Australia alliance, while obviously affected by the dramatic contemporary context, is also, and to a greater degree, reflecting the influence of longer-term, slower-acting, but in the end, more powerful forces.

Back Before...

John Howard's policy credentials, when he came to the prime ministership in the election of March 1996, were in economic issues. He had little engagement with the debates on

* The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.

Australia's foreign or defense policies. He had an instinctive respect for Australia's alliance with Washington, and a concern to do what was necessary to ensure that the alliance flourished. But Howard did not have the intense emotional empathy with U.S. political culture shared by many of his most influential political opponents in the Labor Party. His approach to the relationship with Washington, as to much else, was inherently conservative: he did not come to office with an agenda to transform the alliance or its place in Australia's overall international posture.

The most remarked-upon feature of Howard's early foreign policy was not a tilt toward America, but a perceived tilt away from Asia. There was an element of political artifice in this: Keating had driven Australia's engagement with Asia to such a high rhetorical pitch, and had identified himself so closely with it, that Howard had no political option but to adopt a more detached tone. But this intentional change of nuance was unintentionally amplified by international attention to the views of a high-profile independent member of Parliament, Pauline Hanson. Her extreme views on immigration and foreign policy were not John Howard's, but his reluctance, in the name of freedom of speech, to criticize her expression of them lent weight to the view that Howard was in some sense "anti-Asian."

In fact, in the late 1990s, the pace of Australia's engagement with Asia was slowing for reasons that had little to do with Howard or Hanson. Australia's inability to find a seat among Asian countries at the Asian-European Summit meetings was at one level a diplomatic pinprick, but it served as a discouraging reminder that after a decade of creative and energetic diplomacy in helping to build Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Australia was still not accepted on its own terms as part of the region. The financial and economic crises of 1997 and 1998, and Japan's decade of stagnation, dented Australians' long-held view that the economic miracle of Asia was the key to their future prosperity, especially as their own economy continued to perform strongly despite the downturn in Asia. The collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, followed by the tumult in East Timor in 1999, killed off many Australians' faith in the ability to work constructively with their closest Asian neighbor. By the end of the 1990s, the slogans of the Hawke and Keating eras – that Australia's future security and prosperity would be found in and with Asia – started to sound dated.

But this did not produce any identifiable shift in policy toward a closer relationship with the U.S. During the Howard government's first term in office, some offers were made to Washington to expand U.S. military exercises in Australia, and a warm affirmation of the alliance was issued to mark the first annual meeting after the change of government between U.S. and Australian foreign and defense ministers in Sydney. But the Howard government's first Foreign Policy White Paper mentioned the U.S. only as the first among four equally important key relationships for Australia, alongside China, Indonesia, and Japan. The administration's proudest diplomatic achievement in its first term was the rehabilitation of the relationship with China, which had been badly damaged by Chinese anger at Australia's strong support of the U.S. over the Taiwan crisis in March 1996.

Indeed, there was a slight coolness between the U.S. and Australian governments as the first American Century drew to a close. This was partly, perhaps mainly, a matter of leadership personality dynamics. Howard and Bill Clinton did not warm to one another. Their political and personal styles were diametrically opposed. Clinton treated Howard poorly during Howard's first visit to Washington as prime minister in 1996, announcing politically damaging quotas on lamb imports while Howard was en route to Washington, and then keeping him waiting in the rain before a scant 20-minute meeting. The resulting chill never quite thawed, and was in some ways deepened in 1999 when Clinton's support for Australian-led action in East Timor, though welcome and appropriate, was less than Howard apparently wanted and expected.

It is therefore somewhat ironic that it was in the midst of the East Timor crisis that Howard gave the interview in which the view was attributed to him that Australia should adopt the role of America's "deputy sheriff" in our neighborhood. In fact Howard never said any such thing. To the extent that he concurred with the idea when it was put to him by the interviewer – one of Australia's most respected journalists, Fred Brenchley – Howard most likely had in mind the idea that Australia would continue – as it was doing in East Timor – to take the lead in handling problems in its immediate neighborhood, rather than expressly doing so on behalf or at the behest of the U.S. The phrase, with its connotations of subordination, has taken on a life of its own, and Howard must take some responsibility for that. But it remains an inadequate expression of Howard's approach to the alliance – at least at the time it was uttered.

Howard and Bush

Howard's agenda for the relationship with the U.S. moved from conservative to ambitious with the election of George W. Bush as president in late 2000. Bush brought to the White House two things that changed the dynamics of the relationship. The first was Bush's own political and personal style, which Howard found very congenial after Clinton. In Bush, Howard found a president that he felt he could do serious business with. The second was a group of senior officials who knew Australia and were well known to Australian counterparts from their service in the Reagan and first Bush administrations, and from extensive contacts while they were out of office during the Clinton years – people like Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and USTR Robert Zoellick. With counterparts like these, Howard and his team were encouraged to think more broadly about the opportunities available to develop the U.S. relationship in new directions, and more fully exploit the potential of an intimate relationship with the world's hyperpower at its zenith. For Howard, the chance to remodel the U.S. relationship probably had both national and political attractions. There was no doubt that the maximum exploitation of our relationship with the U.S. was in the national interest, but in addition Howard probably welcomed the chance to put his own stamp on a relationship which until then had still retained the imprint of Labor's custodianship over the Hawke and Keating years.

The search for a new dynamic in the relationship was manifest in particular in the push for a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) between Australia and the U.S., which moved

to the top of the government's foreign policy agenda early in 2001. It was a telling choice as the focus of the push to reshape the relationship. The security relationship was already as close and warm as anyone could imagine. It seemed to offer little opportunity for new developments and initiatives. The economic relationship, on the other hand, was relatively underdeveloped, at least on the political level. Trade issues had traditionally been a source of tension on the Washington-Canberra circuit, with differences over U.S. agricultural trade policies – like the ill-timed lamb quotas – a particular irritant. The FTA was seen as a way to inject into the economic relationship some of the glamour and intimacy that has hitherto been the monopoly of the security alliance.

The FTA was always conceived in broad terms. It was not promoted by its proponents as a route to traditional trade benefits like better market access in particular sectors. It was promoted in more general terms as a way of establishing a closer overall enmeshment of Australia's economy with the U.S. behemoth, of drawing the two countries closer together, and even as a way to enhance still further the security relationship. Opponents argued that it would blunt Australia's commitment to push for multilateral trade liberalization under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and signal a turn away from Asia as the prime locus of our economic aspirations. Some of those concerns may have been overdrawn, but it is probably fair to say that a FTA with the U.S. would have had little appeal before 1997, when Asia's economies seemed set to be the powerhouse of global prosperity in the new century.

Of course, there remained significant doubts about the achievability of an FTA. These doubts included whether the Bush administration was really committed to it, especially when the U.S. was already embarked on an ambitious program of FTAs with other countries, and whether our negotiators could reach an agreement with the U.S. on an FTA which would provide sufficient concrete benefits to the Australian economy to offset the sacrifices we would no doubt be called upon to make to U.S. demands.

That is how things stood on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001.

Sept. 11 – the First Shock

It is perhaps hard now to quite capture in the imagination the simplicity, strength and spontaneity of our first reactions to the attacks of Sept. 11. *Le Monde*, no less, led with the now famous headline, "We are all Americans now." How much more strongly did Australians, with their much less ambivalent affection for America, identify with America, empathize with – and share – its shock and suffering, and support its spontaneous declaration of a "war on terror?" Despite the symbolic potency of Howard's own presence in Washington on the day, it is doubtful that his presence did much if anything to amplify Australians' responses to the images on their screens.

For Australians, that impact was amplified by the fact that over the preceding weeks the country had been fixated by the drama of attempted illegal immigrants rescued from their sinking boat in the waters to Australia's north by a Norwegian container ship, the *Tampa*. The government in Canberra took an unorthodox and controversial, but ultimately very

popular stand. They refused to allow the *Tampa* to land the castaways in Australia, and arranged for them to be sent to neighboring Pacific Island countries for processing. Substantively the issue had nothing to do with terrorism, but the fact that many of the would be immigrants apparently originated in Afghanistan made it easy to link what was happening in America to a sense of the porousness of our own borders at home.

Like many other countries, Australia responded quickly to U.S. requests for military and other forms of support in the war on terror. After NATO invoked Article Five of the Treaty, Australia followed by formally invoking the equivalent article of the ANZUS Treaty as the basis for Australian support for the war on terror. This had no practical significance, but it did convey potent symbolism – that the attack on the U.S. endangered Australia’s “peace and safety,” and that it would act with the U.S. to “meet the common danger.” A large majority of Australians strongly supported the government’s commitment of forces to military action in Afghanistan. The scale of the military commitment was relatively small, the key element being a company-group sized contingent of Special Forces, and after they were withdrawn Australia declined to contribute to the multinational peacekeeping effort. Australia’s military contribution to the first phase of the war on terror was substantial and significant, but hardly exceptional compared to those of many other countries.

Redefining the Alliance

Nonetheless the overall impact of Sept. 11, the war on terror, and Australia’s engagement in Afghanistan did change the public mood in Australia, and created a whole new context for thinking about the future of the U.S. relationship. Howard won his third general election in October 2001 following a campaign inevitably dominated by defense and security issues – a policy area once considered his weak suit and the natural strength of his Labor opponent, Kim Beazley. The sense that the security environment had been transformed post-Sept. 11, the speed of the coalition victory in Afghanistan, and the depth of Australian public support for America’s war on terror, all pointed to the conclusion that security rather than economics would determine the future of the U.S. alliance. Howard sensed the opportunity, indeed perhaps the inevitability, of reconceptualizing the relationship with the U.S. in terms of this new security environment.

In the meantime, the war on terror was metamorphosing in important ways. After the swift fall of the Taliban, the focus of war against al-Qaeda moved from high-profile military actions to slow and secret intelligence and police work. But in Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union address, a whole new front was opened up against the “Axis of Evil,” and especially against Iraq. At first, the Australian government was somewhat cautious about this new direction. Australian ministers gently observed that while they could sympathize with American concerns about the countries identified as being on the axis, they would express those concerns in different ways. But these nuances became marginalized as the Bush administration’s campaign to build support for possible military action against Iraq accelerated. Without making an irrevocable military commitment, Australian ministers expressed early support for the Bush approach to Iraq, and endorsed

the radical evolution of U.S. strategic policy as spelled out in President Bush's June 1, 2003 West Point Academy address. Howard visited the U.S. in June, and expressed unequivocal support for U.S. policies and approaches. He addressed a joint session of Congress in the warmest terms. "America has no firmer friend anywhere in the world than Australia," he said. The U.S. alliance was to be redefined, reinforced, and reinvigorated to meet the new challenges of the war on terror. The FTA, though still a key priority, was seen more as a component of this wider security-driven agenda.

Over the same period, however, the war on terror was metamorphosing in other ways as well. In January 2002, evidence emerged from Afghanistan of plans for al-Qaeda affiliates in Southeast Asia to attack Western targets (including Australian) in Singapore. This was not a complete surprise. Australian agencies had been tracking the rise of globally networked Islamic extremist organizations with terrorist leanings in Southeast Asia for some years, and Osama bin Laden in his first taped message after the Sept. 11 2001 attack had explicitly mentioned Australia as a target of al-Qaeda. Concerns grew that Australia's own region – especially Indonesia – would become part of the front line of the war on terror. These concerns reinforced longstanding Australian anxieties about the security of its immediate neighborhood, often described as an "arc of instability" stretching from Indonesia to the weak and failing states of the Southwest Pacific.

Terrorism Comes Home to Australians

These concerns about the dangers that Australia might face closer to home started to complicate the government's support for the U.S.-led campaign against Iraq. Howard recognized the global nature of the terrorist threat and the problem of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but he was also conscious of the primacy that Australians would expect him to give to the regional manifestations of these global problems. At the same time, the government appeared to recognize that international support for the U.S. position on Iraq was weaker than they had hoped and expected, and that many Australians were uncomfortable with aspects of new U.S. strategic doctrines that seemed to focus on unilateral preemption. It was no surprise when Howard gave an address marking the first anniversary of the New York and Washington attacks on Sept. 11, 2002, he expressed both strong support for the U.S. approach to the war on terror, and also affirmed that Australia's highest security priorities remained close to home in his own region. It was also not surprising that reports – authoritatively sourced, but never conclusively confirmed – started to suggest that the U.S. had pressed the Howard government to offer a somewhat larger contribution to a possible military coalition in Iraq than Canberra was prepared to provide. In fact, it is clear that around August and September 2002, the Howard government was working hard alongside the UK government – and against influential members of the U.S. administration – to urge the U.S. down the UN route to seek broader international support for any action against Iraq.

On Oct. 12, 2002 the war on terror came home to Australians, when the terrorist bombing in Bali killed 88 Australians as well as many more Indonesians and a large number of other nationals. This tragedy both reaffirmed Australia's commitment to the war on terror and reinforced the tendency to keep Australia's efforts focused close to home. But,

nonetheless, the Howard government sustained its support for U.S. policy on Iraq. This generated significant anxiety in Australia and a fair amount of outright opposition. Early in 2003, a series of antiwar rallies brought several hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets in what were by Australian standards very large demonstrations. The failure of the U.S. administration to attract wider international support, and the debacle in the Security Council in February and March 2003, added to the discomfort. The government managed these tensions by sustaining support for U.S. policy, while keeping the Australian military contribution relatively small and making clear that it did not intend to contribute forces to the post-occupation reconstruction and peacekeeping operations.

The Labor opposition, led by Simon Crean since the 2001 election, opposed military action in Iraq that did not have UN support, and therefore found itself opposing the war Australian forces were being deployed to fight and apparently distancing itself from the U.S. alliance that Labor governments in the 1980s had worked so hard to cultivate. This marked the most significant departure from bipartisanship in the Australian Parliament on a key strategic issue since the debates in the 1960s over Australian contributions to Vietnam.

But the war came. Australia's small contribution – Special Forces, F-18s, maritime patrol and tanker aircraft, naval ships, and divers – performed creditably and took no casualties. True to Howard's word, they were mostly quickly withdrawn after the fall of Baghdad, and Australia has not contributed units to peacekeeping operations. The swiftness of initial victory, pride in the Australian forces' achievements, and Australia's relative detachment from the perils and frustrations of Iraq's rehabilitation, have all deflected much of the dissent expressed before the war, and limited the costs to Australia's relationships with its Islamic neighbors.

After Iraq

With the fall of Baghdad, American strategic policy has lost much of its post-Sept. 11 simplicity. The future trajectory of the war on terror has become more complex and less straightforward. For the foreseeable future, Washington will be preoccupied with the pacification and democratization of Iraq. Australia will have little part to play in that. The other key priorities over the coming months will be North Korea and Iran – both urgent and important security issues, but neither looking amenable to the kind of swift and muscular action that has characterized the Bush administration over the past 22 months. Australia has key interests, especially in the North Korean situation, but short of a disastrous war, it is hard to see Australia taking a high-profile role. Nonetheless, Canberra joined the 11-nation “coalition of the willing,” that in Madrid agreed to more aggressively impede the spread of weapons of mass destruction primarily through greater maritime law enforcement efforts. Australia hosts the second coalition meeting in Brisbane in early July.

Meanwhile, Australia's own attention has refocused swiftly back on its own immediate region, where the government has announced in recent weeks a significant change in policy approaches to the Southwest Pacific. Weak and failing states in this close

neighborhood have been calling for a more engaged and activist Australian response, and Canberra has now announced that it is going to abandon a traditional hands-off approach and do more to help. Initially, Australia is set to lead a coalition of local states to restore law and order in the strife-torn Solomon Islands; later it may look at more active aid and other policy approaches to other Southwest Pacific neighbors in trouble. Attempts to portray this policy shift as an application of the Bush doctrines of the war on terror on a local scale are far-fetched; the problems that need fixing, and the pressure on Australia to do more to help, would be there even if Sept. 11 had never happened.

At least on the operational level it seems that the pace and profile of U.S.-Australian military cooperation in the war on terror may be slowing down for the first time since Sept. 11. But that does not mean the underlying questions posed by the war on terror have been answered, nor that the opportunities offered by it to reconfigure the U.S.-Australia alliance have all been exhausted. On the contrary, some of the biggest issues are still on the table. Australian policymakers are still wrestling with the implications of Sept. 11 for Australia's long-term strategic policy.

One key question is how to strike the balance in shaping Australia's forces between capabilities to defend Australia against conventional attack, capabilities to undertake the kind of low-level operations now being launched in the Solomons (and still being maintained in East Timor), and capabilities to slot into U.S.-led coalitions in high-intensity conflicts far from home. At stake in this question is the principle of self-reliance. Australia took to heart the U.S. Guam Doctrine of 1969, which said that U.S. allies should be able to look after themselves, and has for the past 30 years designed its forces to do just that. Does that still make sense? Also at stake is the issue of the degree to which Australian capabilities should be shaped to fit in with U.S. forces. After his trip to Washington in June last year, Howard decided that Australia would abandon a competitive tender to select a new combat aircraft, and plan instead to buy the U.S. Joint Strike Fighter. Should that be the pattern of the future?

Finally, these issues will impinge upon the question of Australia's attitude to the possibility that the U.S. might seek to use Australia as a base for mounting or sustaining combat forces. Despite the closeness of the alliance, no U.S. combat forces have been permanently based in Australia since World War II. No proposition has been put to Canberra at this stage, but as the U.S. reconfigures its forward posture in the Western Pacific over the coming years, the question may well arise.

The answers to these questions will shape the long-term development of the U.S.-Australia alliance. All of them will be influenced by the events of Sept. 11 and the subsequent war on terror. But equally they will be influenced by a range of other potentially longer-term issues: how U.S. strategic objectives and postures in the Western Pacific evolve, how Australia's closer neighborhood develops, how Australians come to see themselves and their place in the world. It is far from clear what the answers to any of these questions will be and it is likewise not clear, even post-Sept. 11, that Australia is indeed committed to ever-closer strategic integration with the U.S.

Chronology of U.S.-Australia Relations* **January 1996-December 2000**

March 11, 1996: John Howard elected prime minister, defeating Labor incumbent Paul Keating.

March 25, 1996: Taiwan Strait Crisis; PM Howard condemns China's intimidation of Taiwan's first democratic elections and supports dispatch of U.S. aircraft carriers to the region.

July 27, 1996: Joint Security Declaration is released at the annual Australian-United States Ministerial talks (AUSMIN). The "Sydney Statement" declares that, "[t]he Australia-United States security relationship, having proved its value for five decades, will remain a cornerstone of Asia Pacific security into the 21st century."

Aug. 28, 1997: Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade releases "In the National Interest," which states that "[t]here is no strategic relationship closer than that which Australia shares with the United States, whose strategic engagement and commitment underwrites the stability of East Asia."

July 1997-1998: The Asian financial crisis cripples financial markets in the region. Australia contributes to IMF rescue packages for countries most effected, including Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand.

May 21, 1998: Indonesia's President Suharto is forced to resign as an estimated 2,500 people are killed in riots across Jakarta.

Sept. 29, 1999: Following an interview between Prime Minister Howard and journalist Fred Brenchley in *The Bulletin*, it is subsequently misreported that Australia is to adopt the role of America's "deputy sheriff" in its regional foreign policy.

Oct. 25, 1999: Australia leads a UN sanctioned International Force in East Timor and plays a key role in East Timor's movement toward independence in 2002.

Dec. 6, 2000: Australia's Department of Defence releases "Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force," which affirms that "Australia's undertakings in the ANZUS Treaty to support the United States are as important as the U.S. undertakings to support Australia."

January-December 2001

Sept. 10, 2001: PM Howard meets with President Bush in Washington as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the ANZUS Treaty signed Sept. 1, 1951. The two leaders sign a joint statement reaffirming the strength and vitality of the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

* My thanks to Dougal McInnes of ASPI for preparing the chronology.

Sept. 11, 2001: Terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania kill more than 3,500 people, including 10 Australians.

Sept. 14, 2001: PM Howard returns from Washington and invokes Article IV of the ANZUS treaty for the first time. Howard declares the terrorist strikes an attack on Australia, and that the invocation of the treaty “demonstrates Australia’s steadfast commitment to work with the United States.”

Oct. 7, 2001: U.S. commences “Operation Enduring Freedom” against Taliban forces in Afghanistan, the first conflict in the “war against terror.”

Oct. 17, 2001: After a request from President Bush, PM Howard officially commits 1,550 military personnel to “Operation Enduring Freedom.” The deployment includes two 707 aircraft refuelers, a 150-man SAS squadron, and an Orion Aircraft. Twenty-six other countries also contribute forces.

January-December 2002

Feb. 16, 2002: Australia suffers first non-U.S military fatality in Afghanistan when SAS Sgt. Andrew Russell is killed by a land mine.

March 11, 2002: In a speech on the six-month anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, President Bush praises Australia in the fight against terrorism and singles out Sgt. Russell and his family for special praise and remembrance.

May 28, 2002: Australian government sends ASIO, federal police, and foreign affairs officials to Camp X-Ray, Guantánamo Bay to interview two Australian captives, David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib, suspected of al-Qaeda links.

June 8-13, 2002: PM Howard visits U.S. and addresses joint session of Congress (the first PM to visit since 1988) and declares: “My friends, let me say to you today that America has no better friend anywhere in the world than Australia.”

June 27, 2002: Australia joins U.S. in \$200 billion development phase of the Lockheed Martin Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program.

July 12, 2002: FM Alexander Downer delivers speech in Dallas, “reaffirming Australia’s commitment to the dynamic and diverse relationship with the United States.”

Aug. 29, 2002: In Canberra, FM Downer delivers speech on the strategic importance of a free trade agreement to Australia-U.S. relations, stating that it is “now a major policy objective for the Government.”

Oct. 12, 2002: Terrorist attacks in Bali, Indonesia kill 202 people, including 88 Australians and 7 Americans.

Oct. 13, 2002: President Bush calls PM Howard to express his country's deepest sympathies for the Bali bombings, stating that the attack is a reminder that the war against terror must continue.

Oct. 30, 2002: Australia-U.S. ministerial (AUSMIN) talks held in Washington.

Nov. 14-15, 2002: In Canberra, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick formally announces America's intention to negotiate an FTA with Australia.

January-March 2003

Feb. 10, 2003: PM Howard travels to the U.S. for talks. Bush confirms that Australia is part of the U.S. "coalition of the willing" in any military action against Iraq.

Feb. 12, 2003: DFAT releases policy white paper which states, "Australia's links with the United States are fundamental for our security and prosperity and that the strengthening of our alliance is a key policy aim."

Feb. 12, 2003: Simon Crean, leader of the Australian Labor Party, rejects criticism from U.S. Ambassador to Australia Tom Schieffer that he had indulged in anti-American behavior, broken long-standing bipartisan support for the American alliance, and failed to develop meaningful relationships with members of the Bush administration.

Feb. 27, 2003: Crean meets with Schieffer, who agrees not to interfere in domestic Australian politics.

March 16, 2003: Schieffer says he has noticed wave of anti-Americanism across Australia.

March 17, 2003: President Bush advises Saddam Hussein and his sons that they have 48 hours to leave Iraq.

March 17, 2003: PM Howard pledges support to the U.S. military campaign in Iraq "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

March 17-21, 2003: First round of Australia-U.S. FTA negotiations begin in Canberra.

March 18, 2003: President Bush formally asks Australia to be part of the U.S. "coalition of the willing" in military operations against Iraq.

March 20, 2003: PM Howard tells Australian people that he has committed up to 2,000 Defence Force personnel to a U.S. coalition to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. The commitment includes Navy frigates, a Special Forces Task Group, a squadron of F/A-18 aircraft, and C-130 Hercules aircraft.

March 31-April 2, 2003: FM Downer visits Washington and New York, meeting with President Bush and his administration.

April-July 2003

April 1, 2003: U.S. Senate thanks Australia for its support in the war against terror.

April 16, 2003: Australian Navy seizes DPRK vessel, the *Pong Su* for smuggling illegal drugs.

May 1, 2003: Australia's Defence Minister Robert Hill announces the beginning of "Operation Catalyst," Australia's military contribution to assist postwar Iraq.

May 1, 2003: U.S. Congress establishes a caucus devoted to Australia. The immediate aim of the "Friends of Australia Congressional Caucus" is to support the U.S.-Australia FTA.

May 2-4, 2003: PM John Howard visits President Bush in Crawford, Texas.

May 19, 2003: The second round of U.S.-Australia FTA talks negotiations commence in Hawaii.

May 2-3, 2003: PM Howard visits President Bush at his Crawford Ranch in Texas. Bush states that an FTA between the two countries could be completed by the end of the year for submission to the U.S. Congress in 2004.

May 22, 2003: DM Hill denies report that there are plans to base U.S. military forces in Australia.

May 31, 2003: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, repeats comments of Australia's Ambassador to Washington, Michael Thawley: "We know what is right. We do what is needed. We stick by our mates."

June 1, 2003: DM Hill says that Australia will increase joint exercises with U.S. forces, allowing the U.S. to conduct their own training operations in Australia, and expand Australian ports facilities for the U.S. Navy.

June 3, 2003: Speaking in Tokyo, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz indicates that a strategic realignment of U.S. forces could see a greater emphasis placed on Australia in the Pacific region.

June 12, 2003: Eleven nation "coalition of the willing" supports U.S. Proliferation Security Initiative in Madrid.

June 13, 2002: Australian PM John Howard meets President Bush at the White House.

June 25, 2003: PM Howard announces Australian soldiers and police will be sent to Solomon Islands (following request by its PM) to prevent drug dealers and terrorists from exploiting current instability.