

**DEFENCE WHITE PAPER**  
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**A QUESTION of REGIONAL LEADERSHIP or U.N. REACTION FORCE**

**By LIONEL E. BEVIS**

In September 1991, while a committee person for the Mackay branch of A.D.A., I was asked to make a formal response to the then White Paper ( regarding Coastal Surveillance ) which was incorporated into the A.D.A.'s full submission "Future Organizational Directions for Maritime Border Protection: The Case for an Australian Coast Guard": author Michael O'Connor.

Since that time I have chosen to follow the geo-political dimensions of Australia's place in the emerging 'Global Village' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – with travel to nations from Japan to New Zealand, and as a lead activist in local multi-cultural organizations. From these activities, and close analysis of all manner of media and journal articles, I am of the opinion that Australia's interests will be best served by concentrating its affairs upon seeking a leadership role in the Western Pacific Arc of nations stretching from Japan to New Zealand.

Unlike our present Prime Minister, I do not see a future global overriding organization incorporating the emerging giants of China and India – nor their Border States which will no doubt succumb to hegemonic influences, as history teaches us. The Western Pacific Arc of Nations are our companions in the future 'Global Village'. Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Melanesia & New Zealand are our contemporaries. Just as the people, the economies, and desires for personal freedoms & advancement blend easily with each other—so, I believe, can the role of our Defence forces.

With this in mind, it is my opinion that Australia should soon reconfigure its Defence involvements to fit into a region bounded by 140 degree East longitude and the International Dateline. While always keeping our options open for more distant U.N. affairs, it would only seem sensible to accept that there are any number of Major players in other regions, such as NATO, the EU, the OAU, Russia, India and China. If they cannot accept leadership for and provide the capabilities to control problem issues such as Moslem extremism on their frontiers – how can a token force from far away Australia? To believe otherwise would not only be an act of great folly, it could possibly see Australia severely misjudged in future times.

When speaking with leaders from our local ethnic communities I gain the distinct impression that such groups do not see Australia's presence outside of our region as being crucial to world peace; and that we are now out of context by our aggressive presence in the Middle East: and such a continued presence will eventually see Australia sent home with the proverbial 'flea in it's ear' as was Menzies with his interference in the 1956 Suez crisis. Further, and this must be taken into consideration, we could weaken the growing homogenous nature of Australia's multicultural society which we have worked so hard to achieve in recent years.

The questions we must now ask ourselves are, "Where does this nation really see itself fitting into the emerging Global Village?" & "How does the rest of the world see us – not just our great and powerful ally the USA?" Answer these questions and we are well on the way to deciding our future Defence planning.

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