

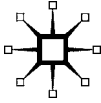
Australia and the Bomb

This page intentionally left blank

Australia and the Bomb

Christine M. Leah

palgrave
macmillan



AUSTRALIA AND THE BOMB

Copyright © Christine M. Leah, 2014.

A synopsis of this book originally appeared in the academic journal *Asian Security* (2012)

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014

All rights reserved.

First published in 2014 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the World, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978-1-137-47738-5

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leah, Christine M.

Australia and the bomb / Christine M. Leah.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-137-47738-5 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Nuclear weapons—Australia. 2. Deterrence (Strategy)

3. Australia—Military policy. 4. Australia—Foreign relations.

5. Australia—Politics and government. I. Title.

U264.L44 2014

355.02'170994—dc23

2014023289

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Integra Software Services

First edition: December 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-349-50213-4 ISBN 978-1-137-47739-2 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137477392

Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	xi
1 Introduction	1
2 Almost Oblivious to END, 1945–1957	11
3 An Emerging Appreciation of END, 1957–1968	29
4 “Acceptance” of US END, 1968–1973	59
5 “Reliance” on US END, 1973–1990	81
6 After the Cold War: END Thinking Remains Unchanged, 1990–Present	109
7 Conclusions: Conceptual Themes	121
8 Strategic and Policy Implications for the Future	131
Notes	147
Bibliography	187
Index	207

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

Most people do not suspect Australia of being very interested in nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy. This book shows the opposite. After World War II and until the early 1970s, policy-makers, defense officials, and the military almost managed to develop a national nuclear deterrent, which, they believed, would help defend their vulnerable island nation. But circumstances changed and eventually Australia dropped out of the atomic race. Most assume that Australia's ratification of the NPT in 1973 was due to specific American security assurances.¹ This work shows that the so-called American nuclear umbrella actually had very little to do with Australia's decision to abstain from going nuclear. Instead, it was the Asia-Pacific region transforming into a much more benign security environment that made Australia feel like it could "defend" itself without an indigenous nuclear deterrent. In the unique system of the Cold War after 1973, there were no major powers that could threaten Australia without also threatening the United States, so Washington was already "doing" nuclear and conventional deterrence for Australia. But in an Asia-Pacific currently undergoing transformational geopolitical change, that logic is soon likely to change.

Understanding the historical origins of the contemporary nuclear world is crucial for thinking about how we might navigate and manage alternative nuclear futures. Historians tend to be shy in offering perspectives on contemporary policy issues.² This is a big shame, as historians have tremendous understanding of the nuances and complexities of policy issues, which would benefit policy-makers around the world. Public debate is nowhere nearly as well-informed, accessible, and impartial as it should be. In that spirit, this is not a book about political science. Nor is it a historical work per se. This is a book in *strategic studies*.

Understanding the history of the nuclear aspect of the alliance between the United States and Australia is important for several reasons. First, it shows how certain geopolitical circumstances can shape attitudes toward the possession and use of nuclear weapons in different geostrategic contexts.

Second, it shows how such circumstances shape allied understandings of concepts of nuclear strategy. Third, it shows how different strategic circumstances can be more or less conducive to the perceived credibility of security assurances. Fourth, a proper understanding of Australia's relationship with US extended nuclear deterrence has implications for policy today. It helps us think about how that relationship might endure and evolve in different geostrategic contexts, especially given the challenges that stability in Asia faces today.

To think that Australia "relies" on US extended nuclear deterrence is misleading. Australia's relationship with nuclear weapons is complex, ambiguous, distant, and multilayered. Why did Australia pursue a nuclear weapons capability from the mid-1940s to the early 1970s? Why did Australia decide to cooperate with Great Britain on nuclear and missile research? Why did policy-makers then try to develop a nuclear weapon capability independently? Why did Canberra eventually renounce that option and instead choose to sign the NPT and "rely" on US extended nuclear deterrence in 1973? And under what circumstances might Australia, again, love the bomb directly rather than vicariously?

Acknowledgments

Writing a book is immeasurably fun, but also incredibly hard. I owe many debts to those who have helped me, for their incredible intellectual and moral inspiration and support. Whether they knew about it or not. “Thank you” does not really convey how wonderful these individuals have been.

Paul Bracken, Desmond Ball, Francis J. Gavin, David S. Yost, Robert Ayson, Harvey M. Sapolsky, Ron Huisken, Hugh White, Rod Lyon, David Hamon, Roland Popp, Liviu Horovitz, Jim Walsh, Bradley A. Thayer, Eliza Gheorghe, Lodovica Clavarino, Tim McDonnell, Sitara Noor, Michael Davies, Richard Bitzinger, Eva Luquet, and Paul, Corinne, John, and Jasmine Leah.

I am very grateful to my three PhD examiners for their time, patience, and efforts in evaluating the thesis that led to this book.

Special gratitude goes to the Stanton Foundation, which provided me with the wonderful opportunity of spending a year with the Security Studies Program at MIT; I am equally grateful to its wonderful people.

I would especially like to thank Professor Robert Ayson. For making me fall in love with the discipline of strategic studies all those years ago. His intellectual firepower and generosity will always inspire me beyond words.

I would also like to thank the leaders and organizers of the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Nuclear Boot Camp. This was more than an intensive summer school on international nuclear history; it was an experience that changed my life forever.

This page intentionally left blank

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAEC	Australian Atomic Energy Commission
ABM	antiballistic missile
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ANSTO	Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
ANZAM	Anglo-New Zealand-Australia-Malaya
ANZUS	Australia-New Zealand-United-States Treaty
AUSMIN	Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations
BMD	ballistic missile defense
C3I	command, control, communications
CHISOP	Chinese Integrated Strategic Operations Plan
CS	control symbol
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DSP	Defense Support Program
END	extended nuclear deterrence
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Agency
FBM	Fleet ballistic missile
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle
MNF	Multilateral Nuclear Force
NAA	National Australian Archives
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration
NPR	<i>Nuclear Posture Review</i>
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSDM	National Security Decision Memorandum
NUDET	Nuclear Detonation

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PGS	Prompt Global Strike
QDR	<i>Quadrennial Defense Review</i>
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RGS	Relay Ground Station
RISOP	Red Integrated Strategic Operations Plan
ROK	Republic of Korea
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SBIRS	Space-Based Infrared System
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USSTRATCOM	United States Strategic Command
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction