



**DEPARTMENT OF
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PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON

The following is the text of an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, to the National Press Club, Washington, at 1300 hours (Washington time) 30 July, 1973:

"It is an honor for me to be asked to address representatives of the world's greatest and most free press in the capital of the world's greatest and most free democracy.

The strength of each is the strength of both.

In accepting your invitation I pay tribute to the manifest and enduring strength of both.

It's been suggested that your chief interest today is to hear something about the changes in Australia's policies as a result of the change in the Australian Government, changes affecting our international relations and particularly the relations between Australia and the United States.

True, there have been changes, important and, I naturally enough believe, beneficial changes.

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To put them in perspective, however, I should say three things at the outset.

First, the changes the Australian Government has made are only part of a profound change taking place in the whole pattern of international relations, especially in the Western Pacific.

The initiative for these changes came not, of course, from Australia, but from the United States.

These initiatives - President Nixon's initiatives - have created a new reality for our region.

Part of Australia's task has been to ratify the new reality.

If in some specific matters - such as recognition of the People's Republic of China and the ending of the last vestiges of Australia's military commitment in Indo-China - Australia has been able to move immediately, it is largely because of a difference in obligations, not ultimate intentions.

Clearly, the United States has obligations, commitments and burdens far more complex than those of Australia.

Secondly, the ability of an Australian government, if so minded, to effect policy changes more rapidly than the United States, partly reflects a difference in our systems of government.

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For instance, while it's not true, as suggested at least in sections of the Australian press, that the American Embassy in Canberra or the State Department was caught by surprise by the election results in my country, there may have been some surprise in some quarters at the speed with which our machinery allowed us to move.

I did not have to wait three months for my inauguration.

Three days after election day, I was able to form a Government with one other colleague. It was in fact the smallest administration to have responsibility for Australia since the first Duke of Wellington was last Prime Minister of England.

In two weeks we were able to clear off a whole range of undertakings on which we have been campaigning.

As long as it doesn't go beyond these walls, I'll confide in you that I found those two weeks quite exhilarating.

But I do emphasise that nothing we did then, or which the rather larger Government has done since, was other than eminently predictable to anybody anywhere with any grasp of our specific policies or broader program.

And thirdly, there is an essential continuity underlying the process of change - a continuity in Australia's real national interests, in Australia's international obligations, in Australia's alliances and Australia's friendships.

We seek new relationships.

We do not seek them at the expense of old, firm ones.

I might bring these three points together - the world pattern of change within which the Australian Government is acting, the predictability of the changes we are making, and the continuity within change - with a single illustration.

It is just two years since I went to Peking as Leader of the Opposition.

In the Australian political context of the time, this was considered quite a risky business.

What nobody knew - even the world's best-informed and most alert and vigilant press - was that Dr Kissinger was in Peking at precisely the same time.

And when President Nixon made his historic announcement a week or so later, a quite remarkable transformation took place.

I have to acknowledge - I do so gladly - that if it had not been for President Nixon's initiative, my own Peking visit would, given the Australian climate of the time, have been no political advantage to me, even as late as last December.

Plainly, however, there could be no surprise that, within three weeks of our election, we were able to establish diplomatic relations with China on the exact terms we had for so long undertaken - by removing Australia's China Embassy from Taipei to Peking, the capital of China of which Taiwan is a province.

We are now quickly and successfully developing our contacts with China over the whole range of our mutual interests.

But in our efforts to redress the imbalance of a generation of unthinking hostility towards China, we do not propose to introduce a new imbalance by discarding or downgrading older relationships.

We do not intend to substitute a new distortion for old distortions.

Undoubtedly the most important of those relationships is the American connection.

This is symbolised by the Anzus Treaty. But Anzus is not the be-all and end-all of that relationship and never has been.

Important as Anzus is, the relationship is many-sided, and I am convinced deep and enduring, at all levels.

There are many misconceptions about Anzus.

It was originally designed as a reassurance to Australia and New Zealand against the possibility of Japanese military resurgence.

Nobody would now view it in that light.

Only a person totally insensitive to Japanese post-war aspirations would seek to encourage or anticipate such a resurgence.

Further, we have tended to overlook in Australia that Anzus invokes "the constitutional processes" of its partners.

We have tended to ignore the role of Congress in those processes.

Anzus happens to be one treaty which has not been seriously questioned by any section of Congress.

My government wants to move away from the narrow view that the Anzus Treaty is the only significant factor in our relations with the United States and the equally narrow view that our relations with the United States are the only significant factor in Australia's foreign relations.

Anzus is important but it is only one aspect of the very wide range of interests and obligations linking us with the United States.

Our relations with the United States are very important but again only one aspect of our interests and obligations in our region and around the world.

But I repeat that as we seek to widen and strengthen those other relations, we do not do so at the expense of existing ones.

Naturally there will be differences in approach to several international questions between Australia and the United States.

I believe, however, we should explore constructively the wide areas of agreement which unite us rather than

seek to emphasise those few matters on which we are divided or take a different approach towards the same basic end.

I believe that this alliance is old enough and strong enough to stand a little frankness on both sides.

I believe that the friendship which we offer America now, namely that of a robust middle power, making its own assessments and its own decisions in consultation with other interested countries, provides a better basis for a durable relationship of friendship between Australia and the United States than existed in the past.

We do not wish to grandstand or thumb our noses at the United States.

When our interests do not coincide and when we disagree with the United States we shall, as a good friend should, say so firmly and frankly, usually, and preferably, in private.

But again, let's get this in perspective.

The most important matters are not those on which the United States and Australia are likely to disagree, under this or any American or Australian administration.

What we wish to do, what we are doing, is to see that the official United States view is not the only view ever considered by an Australian Government.

For example, in determining our position on any matter before the United Nations, I wish to know the view of our neighbours and our other friends just as I want to know the view of the United States.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the suggestion that under the new Government Australia is going isolationist.

That is just as absurd as the idea that we are moving into a different ideological orbit.

Precisely what we are trying to do is to break out of a kind of ideological isolationism which has limited the conduct of our affairs in the past.

In our own region, in our dealings with all the countries of that region we think it's time for an ideological holiday.

That is why we have established diplomatic relations with a range of Governments as diverse as North Viet-Nam and the Vatican.

It is, if you like, a policy of diplomatic even-handedness.

It does not mean that Australia is not aligned.

We are by definition aligned, through Anzus.

It does mean, however, that we propose that our dealings with all nations should be less ideologically orientated than hitherto.

For twenty years I have been appalled at the damage we of the west have done to ourselves and to other peoples by our Western ideological preoccupations, particularly in South-East Asia.

We are not going to be readily forgiven for throwing away the chance we had for a settlement in Indo-China in 1954, after Korea, after Geneva.

And if I had to sum up my own determination and that of my Government in a single sentence, I would state that I am determined that nothing Australia does by action or inaction will contribute to a second, final loss of opportunity.

We have all been given a second chance.

It must not be thrown away.

This would be the unforgivable crime against humanity.

It may not be out of order for me to refer to something a distinguished correspondent of the "New York Times" said to a senior Australian diplomat a couple of years ago about Australia.

He said that even to the best informed American, Australia was merely a satellite of the United States; to the 20 million non-white Americans, or those of them who knew anything of Australia, it was a racist country; to the vast majority of Americans it was just a large and empty space on the map.

This judgment of two years ago is a harsh one indeed.

As a description of Australia it is 90 per cent wrong, and it was wrong even at the time it was made.

But it is just that 10 per cent of truth which can make an Australian uneasy, and which it is the concern of my Government to remove.

We are not a satellite of any country.

We are a friend and a partner of the United States particularly in the Pacific; but with independent interests of our own.

As a Government, we are determined that Australia shall not be open to charges of racism.

We are not just a large and empty space on the map.

We are a middle power with substantial resources, with a people of considerable skill and vigor.

Australia's past shortcomings, the mistakes in our international dealings have sprung in large measure from a vague and generalised fear of our own environment, the feeling of being alien in our own continent and our own region.

As a result, we have tended to swing between isolationism and interventionism, between "fortress Australia" and over-dependence on one great powerful protector; and, culturally, between slavish imitation and brash self-assertion.

What is sometimes called a new nationalism, for which the election of this Government is seen as a catalyst, is, I hope, really the beginning of self-confidence, the realisation that we are there to stay as a people whose possession of a vast rich continent has endowed us with unique opportunities, yet very great obligations.

My great hope for my Government, however long it may endure or as my opponents would say be endured, is that it will see the end of the old inhibitions, the self-defeating fears about Australia's place in the world, and the beginning of a creative maturity."