
Obama versus McCain: Implications for the United States–Australia Alliance

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Whether it is John McCain or Barack Obama, the forty-fourth President of the United States will be a firm supporter of that country's alliance with Australia. McCain believes that the United States should strive to be Australia's "best mate",¹ while Obama recently reiterated his "strong commitment" to the alliance as a "partnership of equals".² Under either of them the close and long-standing alliance would initially remain in good shape, reflecting the two countries' many shared experiences, values and strategic interests. Indeed, the notion that the 2008 presidential election could adversely affect Australia's level of support in Washington is the "biggest non-issue of the entire campaign".³

But the outcome of the presidential election remains important for the future of the US-Australia alliance. The alliance will continue, but the nature of the relationship will inevitably be shaped by the character of the next administration, by its policies, by its political standing and, especially, by its impact on the regional and global security environment. Current indications are that an Obama presidency would significantly differ from a McCain one on each of these scores.

This article outlines these differences and speculates on the implications for the alliance relationship. The focus is on how the next administration in Washington could influence the regional security environment in which the alliance operates, because it is through this indirect mechanism that the outcome of the election is of most importance to Australia.

Australia and the United States: Permanent Friends?

The alliance relationship is so close and long-standing that it is testing Lord Palmerston's claim that "nations have no permanent friends and no

¹ John McCain, Transcript of speech at the Seattle World Affairs Council, 23 February 2007, <<http://www.johnmccain.com/informing/News/PressReleases/bba416b9-372d-4c2e-ac02-866a37db0c86.htm>> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

² Barack Obama, 'Obama Statement on the U.S. Visit of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd', 31 March 2008, <http://obama.senate.gov/press/080331-obama_statement_129/> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

³ Hartcher, 'Australia now in the 'top tier' of US allies'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 2008.

permanent enemies, only permanent interests".⁴ For the past century, but especially since the Second World War, the United States and Australia have been very close friends, and have shared overlapping (although not identical) national security interests. The formal manifestation of this alliance, the ANZUS treaty that was signed in 1951, remains the "bedrock of Australia's strategic policy".⁵ It is a relationship characterised by strong social, political, economic and cultural linkages, as well as the traditional fare of international alliances, diplomatic and military cooperation.⁶ A principal reason for this, as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd observed during his first visit to Washington since taking office, is that the alliance has enjoyed bipartisan political support on both sides of the Pacific. Seeking to reassure his hosts that this would continue under his stewardship, and emphasising the longevity of the relationship, in Washington Rudd repeatedly made reference to the fact that the alliance has been supported by twelve American Presidents, both Republican and Democrat; and by thirteen Australian Prime Ministers, both Labor and Liberal.⁷

The relationship is also sustained because in practice alliances arise and are sustained with reference to shared values, beliefs and history as well as rational calculations of national interest.⁸ Such factors, dismissed by Paul Keating as the "warm fog of sentimentality that swirls around the relationship"⁹ are indeed no substitute for a clear-headed analysis of the alliance's strategic value.¹⁰ But the fact remains that the strong cultural affinity between America and Australia buttresses popular support for the alliance¹¹ while frequent high level ministerial exchanges and forums such as the Australia-America Leadership Dialogue help to cultivate the support of each country's political and business classes.¹²

⁴ Condoleezza Rice, 'Keynote Address at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum', Davos, 23 January 2008, <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/01/99624.htm>> [Accessed 20 May 2008].

⁵ Kevin Rudd, *The Australia-US alliance and emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Speech to the Brookings Institution, Washington, 31 March 2008, <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0157.cfm> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁶ Peter Edwards, *Permanent Friends? Historical Reflections on the Australian-American Alliance*, Lowy Institute Paper No. 08 (2005), p. 2.

⁷ Kevin Rudd, 'Australia, the United States and the Global Economy', Address to the American-Australian Association, New York, 30 March 2008, <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0153.cfm> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁸ Paul Dibb, 'Australia-United States', in Brendan Taylor (ed.), *Australia as an Asia-Pacific Regional Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 41.

⁹ Michael Fullilove, 'Still Looking to America: Labor and the US Alliance', *Perspectives* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, August 2007), p. 6.

¹⁰ Hugh White, 'Defence' in Robert Manne (ed.), *Dear Mr Rudd: Ideas for a Better Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2008), p. 107.

¹¹ Paul Dibb, *Will America's Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region Endure?*, Working Paper No. 345 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2000), p. 15.

¹² Michael J. Green, 'Alliance Maintenance', *The Diplomat* (September/October 2007), p. 54.

Critics of the alliance argue that it complicates our other Asian relationships, undermines our independence, isolates us at the United Nations and increases our visibility in the eyes of terrorists.¹³ But most Australians intuitively grasp that overall, the alliance is mutually beneficial. It is far from a symmetrical relationship of course, but is instead a symbiotic one.

For Australia, the United States is a powerful ally.¹⁴ Our alliance with the United States, even though it is our most “complex and demanding relationship”¹⁵ underpins our status as a regional power.¹⁶ The most obvious mechanism for this is that a formal treaty of alliance with the world’s preponderant military power acts as a powerful deterrent to any potential adversary.¹⁷ Other crucial benefits include the access to American military equipment and technology which has enabled Australia to maintain a distinct margin of technological superiority in the south-east Asian region, and the high level of intelligence co-operation.¹⁸ Australia also enjoys a level of access and influence in Washington “greater than any other middle power and comparable in many respects to the special relationship with Britain”.¹⁹ Australia could live without the alliance if it had to, but it would live with much less assurance.²⁰

For the United States, Australia is a reliable ally, both militarily and diplomatically. Australia is the only country to fight alongside the United States in every major conflict of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.²¹ The two countries also represent virtually the only regular votes in support of Israel at the United Nations.²² The United States also receives some direct material benefits from the alliance, particularly from the Joint Facilities in Australia.

Of course, an alliance that was forged more than half a century ago, against the backdrop of the Cold War and with the Second World War a recent

¹³ Fullilove, ‘Still Looking to America: Labor and the US Alliance’, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Hugh White, ‘Let’s not leap into the fire as we leave the frying pan’, *The Australian*, 14 March 2008.

¹⁶ Dibb, ‘Australia-United States’, p. 33.

¹⁷ Coral Bell, *Australia’s Alliance Options: Prospect and Retrospect in a World of Change*, Australian Foreign Policy Papers (Canberra: Australian national University, 1991), p. 46.

¹⁸ Dibb, ‘Australia-United States’, p. 36.

¹⁹ Green, ‘Alliance Maintenance’, p. 53.

²⁰ T. B. Millar, ‘Australia and the United States’, in Paul Dibb (ed.), *Australia’s External Relations in the 1980s* (Canberra: Croom Helm Australia, 1983), p. 164.

²¹ Michael Fullilove, ‘Ally with a new attitude; Australia’s prime minister, the staunchest of Bush supporters, is ousted’, *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 2007.

²² For example, in 2004 a non-binding resolution of the United Nations General Assembly condemning Israel’s building of a security barrier throughout the West Bank was opposed by only six member states (Australia, Israel and the United States as well as the micro states of Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau) and was supported by 150 others. See, ‘Israel rejects UN vote on barrier’, British Broadcasting Corporation, 21 July 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3912487.stm> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

memory, has had to adapt to changing circumstances. It has evolved from being essentially directed against the Communist threat and as an insurance policy for Australia against a resurgent Japan towards an emphasis on a shared interest in the maintenance of regional stability.²³ Recent decades have seen Australia take greater responsibility for its defensive burden, as demanded by President Nixon's "Guam Doctrine".²⁴ As regional power relativities continue to shift, further incremental changes to the alliance can be expected in the future.

But the *raison d'être* of the partnership remain robust. In both countries the importance placed on shared values and institutions is unlikely to decrease in the short or medium-term (and may increase judging by Condoleezza Rice's recent claim that the United States is permanently allied to those nations with whom it shares common values).²⁵ Similarly, in the short-term even though the United States' relative position in the region may decline somewhat, it will easily remain the strongest in absolute terms and a powerful friend well worth Australia having.

The Short-Term: Business as Usual?

Whatever the outcome, this year's presidential election will have little immediate effect on the conduct of the bilateral relationship. Both leading candidates have recently affirmed that they hold the Australian alliance in high regard,²⁶ and Kevin Rudd seemed capable of equally warm conversations with each of them on his recent visit. This is both an indication of Australia's high standing in the United States, and a reassurance that whoever emerges victorious in November, Rudd will be able to strike a good working and personal relationship with them.²⁷

This may not have been the case had John Howard remained in office. Having weighed into American domestic politics by suggesting that the Democrats (and Obama in particular) were the favoured candidates of terrorists,²⁸ Howard would have had a clear stake in a Republican victory. But Rudd could reasonably be expected to be indifferent as to the outcome. While Rudd may have more in common ideologically on most issues with Obama, McCain's record as a supporter of free trade is welcomed in

²³ Dobb, *Will America's Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region Endure?*, p. 15.

²⁴ Edwards, 'Permanent Friends? Historical Reflections on the Australian-American Alliance', p. 30.

²⁵ Condoleezza Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World', *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2008), p. 7.

²⁶ Hartcher, 'Australia now in the 'top tier' of US allies'.

²⁷ Greg Sheridan, 'Rudd with Curtin, Hawke on US bond', *The Australian*, 3 April 2008, <http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/gregsheridan/index.php/theaustralian/comments/rudd_with_curtin_hawke_on_us_bond/> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

²⁸ CNN.Com, 'Obama hits back after Australian PM slams his Iraq stance', 12 February 2007, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/02/11/obama.comment/index.html>> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

Australia and his election would provide insurance against the possibility of the increasingly protectionist rhetoric that featured in the Democratic primary campaign being translated into government action (although Obama has started to sound more measured on this issue since securing his party's nomination). McCain's emergence as the Republican nominee is a good outcome for Australia; as well as his stance on trade he is the most Asian-focused and the most familiar with Australia.²⁹ He is also an advocate for more active American participation in the Asia-Pacific, and engagement with its allies in the region. His victory in the Republican primary, over a field generally lacking foreign policy expertise and espousing largely populist economics, has apparently been privately welcomed by both sides of Australian politics.³⁰

Indeed, the election of the Rudd government in November 2007 is likely to have more impact in the short term on the alliance relationship than the outcome of the upcoming presidential election.

The Rudd government is likely to be more willing than its predecessor to disagree with the American position on major non-military issues, especially on such Labor shibboleths as climate change and nuclear proliferation.³¹ Already it has signed the Kyoto protocol and reversed the previous government's decision to sell uranium ore to India.³² Whether or not an Asia-Pacific Community along the lines proposed by Rudd earlier this year comes to pass, an increased emphasis on multilateralism, including the processes of the United Nations is likely. Specifically, the Rudd government will place a higher premium on securing United Nations support before agreeing to join future military action.³³ As Coral Bell has noted with reference to a previous Labor government, it will be particularly ironic if Rudd translates his strong rhetorical support for the United Nations into practical actions, given that it was the near-total ineffectiveness of the international body in the early Cold War period which provided the major intellectual basis for the military alliance with the United States.³⁴

However, the effect that these changes will have on the relationship should not be overstated. Rudd himself has acknowledged that the alliance relies

²⁹ Greg Sheridan, 'This is no time for a celebrity in the Oval Office', *The Australian*, 28 February 2008.

³⁰ 'McCain's win welcomed in Australia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 2008.

³¹ Fullilove, 'Ally with a new attitude; Australia's prime minister, the staunchest of Bush supporters, is ousted'.

³² Henry D. Sokolski, 'Mr. Rudd Says No to India on Uranium', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 2008, <<http://www.feer.com/board-of-contributors/2008/february/Mr.-Rudd-Says-No-to-India-on-Uranium>> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

³³ Fullilove, 'Still Looking to America: Labor and the US Alliance', p. 11.

³⁴ Bell, *Australia's Alliance Options: Prospect and Retrospect in a World of Change*, pp. 6-7.

primarily on shared interests and values, rather than on personalities.³⁵ The approach to the alliance of the Rudd government will be far closer to the Howard model than that promised by the last Labor leader to lose a federal election, Mark Latham. Contrast Rudd's statements that the United States is "overwhelmingly a force for good in the world"³⁶ and that the alliance is "overwhelmingly in Australia's strategic interests"³⁷ with Latham's take on the relationship as "the last manifestation of the White Australia Mentality" and "just another form of neocolonialism".³⁸ Also, while there is no suggestion that Rudd's views are not genuinely held, his government's stance is also partly a product of the reality that as in America, the conservative side of politics is traditionally regarded by the public as stronger on national security issues, including alliance management.³⁹ Rudd's strong pro-alliance stance helped to neutralise foreign policy as an election issue, and avoided repeating the mistake of Latham's 2004 campaign, when widespread perceptions that he would harm relations with the United States were a major factor in his heavy defeat.

Accordingly, Rudd will also be closer to Howard than some feared and others hoped in the prosecution of Australia's existing military commitments alongside the United States, in Iraq and Afghanistan. A minor "changing of the configuration" of our token forces in Iraq notwithstanding, there is no sense that Rudd will seriously alter Australia's position in support of the "War on Terror". Instead, he has repeatedly stated that the government is committed to Afghanistan "for the long haul",⁴⁰ and has even been willing to prosecute the Americans' case in the capitals of Europe that they should contribute more to the war effort there, to the disappointment of some.⁴¹

The Regional Security Environment

While the outcome of the presidential election is of little practical importance for the conduct of the alliance relationship in the short-term, Australia retains a significant stake in the result. This is because the alliance does not exist in a vacuum, but is both a product and a determinant of the regional security environment. Of course, American foreign policy, largely determined by the President, is itself a major factor in shaping this security environment.

Along with every other Presidential candidate, both McCain and Obama have expressed their desire to take American foreign policy in a new

³⁵ Transcript of joint press conference, Prime Minister of Australia and the President of the United States of America, East Room, Whitehouse, Washington D.C, 29 March 2008, <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview_0152.cfm> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

³⁶ Rudd, 'Australia, the United States and the Global Economy'.

³⁷ Kevin Rudd, 'Smart Power: From Baghdad to Honiara—New Directions in Australian Foreign Policy', *The Diplomat* (February/March 2007), p. 21.

³⁸ Fullilove, 'Still Looking to America: Labor and the US Alliance', p. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Rudd, *The Australia-US alliance and emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*.

⁴¹ White, 'Let's not leap into the fire as we leave the frying pan'.

direction and agree that an unwelcome legacy of the Bush administration will be a diminished respect for America in the world, including among its friends. But a great deal of caution should be exercised in attempting to predict future actions in office on the basis of statements made on the campaign trail. Indeed, the impact of a new administration on the American foreign policy is what Donald Rumsfeld might term a “known unknown”.⁴² For evidence, whatever one thinks of the merits of George W. Bush’s foreign policy record, it is difficult to reconcile with his promise throughout the 2000 election campaign to usher in an era of “humble” foreign policy.⁴³

Subject to this caveat, as the candidates’ views and intentions have come into sharper focus, they are increasingly leading to the conclusion that Obama and McCain are “different people, suited to different times, and they would take the United States in different directions.”⁴⁴ Nowhere are the differences starker than on their attitudes towards China.

The Sino-American relationship is supremely important to Australia.⁴⁵ It is difficult to argue with Hillary Clinton’s view that it will be this century’s most important bilateral relationship.⁴⁶ Managing the US-China-Australia strategic triangle is Australia’s biggest and most complex foreign policy challenge, recognised as such by Prime Minister Rudd,⁴⁷ not least because of our increasing economic reliance on China, a potential peer competitor of our principal ally.⁴⁸

America’s continued engagement in East Asia has, over recent decades, underwritten the largely stable regional security environment. This stability has allowed China to focus its efforts inwardly, on transforming its economy, just as Japan and South Korea have done previously. This situation has been of enormous strategic and material benefit to Australia, which has a large stake in the United States and China continuing to perceive that their

⁴² Rumsfeld memorably stated that: “As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say we know there are some things. We do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don’t know we don’t know.” Hart Seely, ‘The Poetry of D.H. Rumsfeld: Recent Works by the Secretary of Defense’, *Slate.Com*, 2 April 2003, <<http://www.slate.com/id/2081042/>> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁴³ Transcript of Presidential Debate, 12 October 2000, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec00/for-policy_10-12.html> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁴⁴ Hugh White, ‘Nixonian spirit is essential for US-China relations’, *The Australian*, 27 February 2008.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Hillary Clinton, ‘Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-First Century’, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20071101faessay86601/hillary-rodham-clinton/security-and-opportunity-for-the-twenty-first-century.html>> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁴⁷ Michael Fullilove, ‘Alliance goes back to business first with Rudd’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April 2008.

⁴⁸ Fullilove, ‘Still Looking to America: Labor and the US Alliance’, p. 13.

interests are best served by the maintenance of a stable security environment, and for both major powers to act accordingly.⁴⁹

This has never meant that the United States and Australia must agree with China on every issue. America's continued support of Taiwan's de facto independence and its criticisms of China's political and human rights record are resented by Beijing just as China's use of its veto power to protect despotic regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe from sanction by the United Nations irks Washington. But these irritants in the bilateral relationship have so far not been allowed to obscure the reality that both countries would lose far more than they could realistically hope to gain from pursuing an aggressive rivalry in the mistaken belief that such an enterprise would produce a zero-sum outcome.

However, it is far from certain that the United States will allow China to continue to increase its relative strength unchecked. Much will depend on how the next president reacts to China's increasing power and influence in the Asia-Pacific. Which candidate is most inclined to engage and accommodate China? Running as a revered war-hero with strong foreign policy and military credentials, McCain as president would enjoy a great deal of latitude in this area. This may make it easier politically for McCain than for Obama to strike a grand bargain with China,⁵⁰ but it appears that he is far less inclined to do so.

Bob Zoellick, as Deputy Secretary of State in 2005, articulated a view of China as a "responsible global stakeholder".⁵¹ Obama (as well as Rudd) broadly subscribes to this view, which sees China's growth as a good thing on the whole.⁵² He promises "a new chapter of American engagement", with a president "willing to talk to all nations, friend and foe".⁵³ This conciliatory language has been well received internationally notwithstanding the lack of accompanying detail. The Pew Research Centre reported in June that in twenty of the twenty-three countries they surveyed, more expressed

⁴⁹ Australians well recognise the importance of China's economic transformation and largely welcome this phenomenon for the benefits this brings to an energy and minerals exporting country such as Australia. Indeed, Australia is possibly the most sanguine Western country when it comes to China's rise. The Pew Research Centre's Global Attitudes Project reported in June that only 3 percent of Australians view China as an enemy, the equal lowest (with China's close ally Pakistan) of all countries surveyed. In contrast, a large strand of public opinion in the United States perceives China's growth as an economic threat, particularly to local manufacturing jobs. See, Pew Research Centre, '24 Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey', *The Pew Global Attitudes Project*, June 2008, p. 42, <<http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf>> [Accessed 27 June 2008].

⁵⁰ White, 'Nixonian spirit is essential for US-China relations'.

⁵¹ Rudd, *The Australia-US alliance and emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Barack Obama, 'A New Beginning', Speech to DePaul University, Chicago, 2 October 2007, <http://www.barackobama.com/2007/10/02/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_27.php> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

confidence in Obama than McCain to “do the right thing” in world affairs. In Australia, twice as many preferred Obama on this score to McCain.⁵⁴

Others are instead edging towards an attempt to build a democratic coalition (also including Japan and India) designed to contain China’s rise.⁵⁵ McCain seems attracted to this approach. He cites China’s rise as a “potential strategic competitor” as one justification for a “larger and more capable” American military,⁵⁶ and has pledged to combat Chinese proposals for regional forums and economic arrangements “designed to exclude American influence from Asia” with countervailing diplomatic efforts.⁵⁷ These efforts include seeking to develop the linkages between America’s allies in the region, such as moving away from the current hub-and-spokes model towards one where the military forces of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines and South Korea would be part of a common structure.⁵⁸ McCain is also a supporter of a “quadrilateral security partnership” between the United States, Australia, India and Japan, and, most ambitious of all, the formation of a worldwide “League of Democracies”, which he has pledged to initiate during his first year in office.⁵⁹ America under McCain would expect Australia to actively participate in each of these initiatives, from which China would be pointedly excluded.

McCain often casts himself in the mould of Teddy Roosevelt. However, on foreign policy his instincts (and ideas such as a League of Democracies) are far removed from the *realpolitik* practiced by Roosevelt and instead reflect the idealism most often associated with Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt’s political enemy and successor as president.⁶⁰ The risk is that this leads to a refusal to accept an authoritarian, nominally Communist state such as China as a legitimate world power and to an attempt to seek to actively deny it that role, a development which would surely be vigorously resisted in Beijing.

There is a real prospect then that Obama and McCain would lead American relations with China in different directions. Australia will be much better served if Obama’s more conciliatory, cooperative approach prevails. Any short-term boost to the alliance relationship with the United States flowing

⁵⁴ Pew Research Centre, ‘24 Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey’, *The Pew Global Attitudes Project*, June 2008, p. 36, <<http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf>> [Accessed 27 June 2008]. The three others, Jordan, Pakistan and the United States itself viewed the two candidates equally favourably.

⁵⁵ White, ‘Defence’, p. 111.

⁵⁶ John McCain, ‘National Security’, *JohnMcCain.Com*, <<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/054184f4-6b51-40dd-8964-54fcf66a1e68.htm>> [Accessed 25 May 2008].

⁵⁷ John McCain, Transcript of speech at the Seattle World Affairs Council.

⁵⁸ John McCain, ‘An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom: Securing America’s Future’, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20071101faessay86602/johnmccain/an-enduring-peace-built-on-freedom.html>> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), pp. 29-55.

from an Asian-focused McCain presidency would be outweighed if relations between China and the United States were allowed to deteriorate.

If this occurred then Australia would be placed in an invidious position, at risk of being forced to choose between supporting America in resisting China's challenge to US primacy, even at the cost of strategic competition or conflict,⁶¹ and seeking to adopt a position more equidistant between the two regional great powers.⁶²

Conclusion

The outcome of the 2008 United States presidential election is important for the future of that country's alliance with Australia. Whether John McCain or Barack Obama emerges victorious, the alliance will initially remain in good shape, as should be expected of such a close and long-standing relationship between two countries with many shared experiences, values and interests.

But in the medium term the strength and shape of the alliance will increasingly depend on the broader regional security environment and architecture, and especially on the relationship between the United States, China and Australia. It is in Australia's interest that both of these great powers are fully engaged in the Asia-Pacific region, and that they recognise a shared interest in and responsibility for the maintenance of regional stability. This seems more likely to occur under an Obama presidency than a McCain one. There is a danger that McCain's view of China as a potentially dangerous strategic competitor to the United States could become a self-fulfilling prophecy if diplomatic initiatives designed to exclude China are implemented. The generally benign strategic situation that Australia currently enjoys, with positive relations with both China as well as the United States, would be replaced by a most awkward choice: even deeper cooperation with the United States, at the likely cost of a deterioration in several key Asian relationships, or a fundamental recalibration of Australia's strategic posture, which sacrifices the intimate relationship with the United States in the uncertain pursuit of broader regional stability.

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⁶¹ White, 'Defence', p. 110.

⁶² Emma Chanlett-Avery and Bruce Vaughn, *Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture in Asia: Bilateral and Multilateral Ties among the United States, Japan, Australia and India*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (7 January 2008), p. 5.