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From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific? Evaluating Australia's changing terminology for its regional outlook

Abstract: In assessing the change in terminology from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific, this paper probes whether or not this is the first shift in terminology for Australia's regional outlook. By analysing relevant domestic history pertinent to Australian terminology for its neighbouring regions and by examining academic and political discourse from the 1950s onwards, this paper argues that the recent shift from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific actually reflects a return to the previous terminology for the region (Indo-Pacific). Furthermore, it identifies that the terminology of Asia-Pacific was only a fairly recent development and that for much of the post-World War II period, Australian terminology for the region was centred on Indo-Pacific terminology. Hence, the paper demonstrates that the Indo-Pacific terminology is not new. Instead, it is a return to previous terminology for Australia's neighbouring regions.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Two Ocean Navy, Kim Beazley, Western Australia

从亚太地区到印度太平洋地区？评估澳大利亚地区术语称呼的变化

摘要：本文对亚太地区到印度-太平洋地区这种术语上的变化进行了评估，探讨这是否是澳大利亚在地区称呼术语方面的第一次转变。通过分析澳大利亚描述其邻近地区所用术语的相关国内历史，并通过研究 20 世纪 50 年代以来的学术和政治论述，本文认为，澳大利亚近期从亚太地区向印度太平洋地区这种描述上的转变，实际上反映了其之前所用地区（印度洋 - 太平洋）术语的回归。此外，本文还指出‘亚太地区’这个术语的历史比较短暂，在第二次世界大战后的大部分时间里，澳大利亚主要使用‘印度-太平洋地区’来描述该地区。因此，本文表明‘印太地区’这个用法并不新鲜。相反，它是一种澳大利亚先前使用的描述本地区的术语的回归。

关键词：印度太平洋地区、亚太地区、两洋海军、金·比兹利（Kim Beazley）、西澳大利亚州

FROM ASIA-PACIFIC TO INDO-PACIFIC? EVALUATING AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING TERMINOLOGY FOR ITS REGIONAL OUTLOOK

Both Australia's 2016 *Defence White Paper* and the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper: Opportunity, Security, Strength* reinforced a prior shift in the Australian government's terminology for neighbouring regions, from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific. In doing so, both white papers accepted and reinforced the Indo-Pacific terminology used under the previous government's white papers, such as the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* and the 2013 *Defence White Paper*. By applying the terminology used in those earlier white papers, the Liberal-National Coalition (the Coalition) demonstrated bipartisanship with the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in the adoption of the Indo-Pacific terminology.¹ Furthermore, by using the term 'Indo-Pacific', both white papers also signalled bipartisanship with regards to Australian recognition of the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes to national, regional and global trade, finance and strategic outlooks.

In assessing the change in terminology from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific, this paper probes whether or not this is the first shift in terminology for Australia's regional outlook. It critically examines the nature of the shifting terminology in Australian discourse and finds that the term 'Indo-Pacific' has a much longer history in Australian political and academic discourse than is sometimes purported.² Indeed, by analysing relevant domestic history pertinent to Australian terminology for its neighbouring regions and by examining academic and political discourse from the 1950s onwards, this paper argues that the recent shift from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific actually reflects a return to the previous terminology for the region, that is, the Indo-Pacific. Further, it identifies that the terminology of Asia-Pacific was only a fairly recent development and that for much of the post-World War II period, Australian terminology for the region was the Indo-Pacific. Hence, the paper demonstrates that the Indo-Pacific terminology is not new, nor does it reflect Australian sycophancy with the United States (US) and its recent articulation of an Indo-Pacific concept.³ Instead, it is a return to previous terminology for Australia's neighbouring regions and actually reflects a more inclusive and encompassing approach to Australia's political, economic and strategic outlook. As a result, this paper argues that by adopting an historical lens, it is the terminology of Asia-Pacific that constitutes the anomalous terminology in academic and political discourse, not the terminology of Indo-Pacific.

However, before evaluating the shifting terminology, the paper first briefly situates the Indian Ocean within the Australian imagining. It also provides a concise overview of relevant Western Australian (WA) history, Australia's largest state located on the Indian Ocean. Long a frontier region within Australia, since Federation a number of mineral resource booms has

¹ Australia has two major political parties that can win office and lead the government, the ALP and the Coalition. The *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* (2012) and the *Defence White Paper* (2013) were prepared during the term of an ALP government whereas the *Defence White Paper* (2016) and the *Foreign Policy White Paper* (2017) were prepared under a Coalition government.

² A number of works position the change in terminology to be from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific only, inferring that Indo-Pacific is a new term and it has replaced the former established term for the region, that is, the Asia-Pacific. This ignores the long history of the Indo-Pacific terminology in Australia. See Scott, David, 'Australia's embrace of the 'Indo-Pacific': new term, new region, new strategy?', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13, no. 3 (2013): 425-448 and Bisley, Nick & Phillips, Andrew, 'The Indo-Pacific: what does it actually mean?', *East Asia Forum* (6 October 2012): accessed August 10, 2018, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/10/06/the-indo-pacific-what-does-it-actually-mean/>.

³ Please note: this paper is not examining the 'Indo-Pacific concept'. Instead, it is strictly focused on an examination of the terminology of Indo-Pacific as the name for the region.

seen Western Australia increase its power within the domestic political landscape and this too has influenced the return to Indo-Pacific terminology over Asia-Pacific. Therefore, some knowledge of Western Australia's history is important in contextualising Australia's outlook and to facilitate better understanding of Australia as a two oceans country. This understanding also highlights why West Australian parliamentarians have been significant drivers in a return to the Indo-Pacific terminology as they have long felt overlooked by the more restrictive Asia-Pacific terminology due to its narrowed lens on the Pacific Ocean to the perceived detriment of those situated on the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean in the Australian Imagining

Using an origin-focused approach to space and place, it could be argued that the Indian Ocean holds a crucial place in the Australian imagining for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. After all, it is this body of water that transported convicts and free settlers to Australian shores following the British invasion of Australia in 1788. Prior to British invasion, Dutch, French and English navigators made numerous incursions on Australian soil, largely on the western seaboard via the Indian Ocean sometimes making contact with, or at least being observed by, Indigenous Australians.⁴ In addition, from the early to mid-1700s fishers from Macassar, located in modern-day Sulawesi, were in annual contact with Indigenous Australians in northern Australia.⁵ The fishers fished for *trepang* (sea cucumber) in the waters to Australia's north and their visits continued until government regulations ended the trade in 1906-07.⁶ Their contact also came via the Indian Ocean and represented a reasonably non-threatening form of contact towards Indigenous Australians because unlike the Europeans, the Macassan fishers did not seek to colonise Australia.⁷ However, their contact did result in a serious impact because the Macassan fishers brought smallpox (*Variola major*) to Australia. It has been estimated that smallpox resulted in the deaths of approximately 50 percent of Indigenous Australians experiencing first contact with the virus.⁸ Hence for Indigenous Australians, the Indian Ocean has provided contact, threat, and ultimately dispossession as opposed to many non-Indigenous Australians, for whom the Indian Ocean provided the way to a new life and new opportunities in colonial Australia.

Western Australia is the state that is most connected to the Indian Ocean. It began in 1829 as the colony of Swan River and was established by British gentlemen seeking entrepreneurial endeavours in Australia. They sought free labour, rather than convict labour, preferring a colony that was refined and free. Their hope was that Swan River would be appealing to other English gentlemen and would result in a reproduction of British rural society in their new locale.⁹ However, life in the new colony was hard and harsh and it drained the economic resources of the gentlemen who invested there and they soon became disillusioned and devoid of their wealth.¹⁰ In the 1850s, the Swan River colony was still flailing and it was now receiving 'exiled' convict labour from other colonies, thereby entirely at odds with the more

⁴ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: A history since 1788*, 4th edn (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2010).

⁵ Marshall Clark, 'Tangible heritage of the Macassan-Aboriginal encounter in contemporary South Sulawesi,' in *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences*, eds. Marshall Clark and Sally K May (Canberra: ANU EPress, 2013), 159-182 and Kathleen Schwerdtner Manez and Sebastian C A Ferse, 'The History of Makassan Trepang Fishing and Trade,' *PLoS ONE* 6, No. 6 (2010): 1-8.

⁶ Clark, 'Tangible' and Manez and Ferse, 'The History'.

⁷ Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 12-13.

⁸ Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 13.

⁹ Jan Kociumbas, *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 2. Possessions: 1770-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 120.

¹⁰ Kociumbas, *Oxford History*, 178-179.

grandiose desires for the colony by the gentlemen who founded it. Part of the colony's early difficulties stemmed from its remote location, which separated it from the key centres of power within colonial Australia, namely New South Wales and Victoria.¹¹ Although it had its own infrastructure projects, it must be recognised that Western Australia was far removed from the infrastructure projects of the eastern states, which included rail, roads, port developments and telegraph poles.¹² As a result, Western Australia's ability to influence Australian policy was weakened, regardless of its importance to Australia's ongoing strategic and economic prosperity.

Western Australia experienced a much-needed boost as a result of the 1890s gold rush. This gold rush predominantly saw internal migration to Western Australia, as those living in other colonies sought their fortunes.¹³ This internal migration strengthened the call for Western Australia to federate, even though Britain had refused to grant any of the concessions demanded by Western Australia in the federation negotiations. In 1901, Western Australia did become part of the Commonwealth of Australia, along with five other colonies. Since federation, mineral resources have steadily risen to be an important part of the Western Australian economy and it is this mineral wealth that has positioned Western Australia as an important state within Australia. Since 1945, Western Australia's mineral resource exploration has grown and it has experienced a number of resource booms since the 1960s.¹⁴ In addition, Western Australia's mineral resource deposits have also reinforced the sense of an Indo-Pacific outlook, as ports in Western Australia transport Australian natural resources globally, via the Indian Ocean. This outlook has long influenced Australian terminology for the region.

The Indo-Pacific Terminology in Australia

In their examination of the Indo-Pacific concept, Conley Tyler and Shearman identify a number of early usages of the term Indo-Pacific. The first was an article by Cumpton published in *Australian Outlook* in 1956.¹⁵ The Cumpton article specifically referred to 'the older Indo-Pacific Dominions' when discussing regions experiencing decolonisation across the tropics and it identified the Commonwealth as a useful institution in assisting their transition to independence.¹⁶ In addition to this article, Conley Tyler and Shearman also identified two seminars where the term 'Indo-Pacific' was used in reference to Australia's surrounding region. The first was held in September 1964 and the other in September 1965,¹⁷ with both hosted by the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the Australian National University.

The first seminar, titled 'Nuclear dispersal in Asia and the Indo-Pacific Region' examined strategic relations across the region, identifying possible nuclear scenarios that might unfold

¹¹ For example, the distance between Perth and Sydney is approximately 3290 kilometres.

¹² B K De Garis, '1890-1900,' in *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1988), 216- 259.

¹³ Frank Crowley, '1901-1914,' in *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1988), 278.

¹⁴ Melissa Conley Tyler and Samantha Shearman, 'Australia Re-Discovering the Indo-Pacific,' in *Indo Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects*, ed. Rajiv K Bhatia and Vijay Sakhuja (New Delhi: Vij Books India, 2014), 37.

¹⁵ Conley Tyler and Shearman, 'Australia,' 42. See I M Cumpton, 'Consolidation by conference?,' *Australian Outlook* 10, no. 2 (1956): 61-64.

¹⁶ Cumpton, 'Consolidation,' 64.

¹⁷ Published reports of the seminars occurred in the following year for both.

and their likely outcomes and impacts for Australia. What is clear from reading the assorted papers is that the Indo-Pacific was the accepted terminology in Australian academic and government discourse when discussing the region.¹⁸ Furthermore, having considered the many regional and extra-regional parties actively engaged in the region, as well as speculating on possible future directions related to nuclearisation across the region, the final paper in the collection recognised the significance of Asia and the Indo-Pacific to world politics. It concluded:

Clearly, there can be, in the long run, no regional solutions to such problems. For that reason, 'nuclear dispersal in Asia and the Indo-Pacific area' is not a regional but a world issue.¹⁹

This collection of papers is valuable in reflecting the longevity of the terminology of Indo-Pacific in the Australian setting. However, there is no clear definition of the geographic scope it encompasses and in a number of instances, a distinction of 'Asia and the Indo-Pacific' is used, like in the above quote. Closer reading of the collected papers appears to define the Indo-Pacific region as encompassing Australia, New Zealand, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), the US, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and some references even stretch it out to include French interests in Africa and the Pacific. References to the term Asia appear to be solidly based around just China and Japan and it is used to single them out for particular attention. Southeast Asian states are referred to by using that umbrella sub-regional term or they are singled out by name for particular attention. This lack of clarity is something that has also been criticised in debates around the most recent deployment of the Indo-Pacific term.²⁰

The other seminar identified by Conley Tyler and Shearman occurred in 1965 and was titled 'Commonwealth responsibilities for security in the Indo-Pacific region'.²¹ This seminar brought together representatives from the British and New Zealand High Commissions, the Australian government, the Australian Defence forces, as well as academics. Again, the terminology of Indo-Pacific was frequently used in the seminar discussions reflecting its acceptance and usage at the time. The papers themselves demonstrate the complexities facing the Commonwealth as its members grappled with newly decolonised member-states, the challenges of nation-building, great power jostling, and conflicts such as the ongoing Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation (1962-1966) and the American War in Vietnam (1955-1975). The seminar was clearly a robust discussion, with some participants voicing concern that the 'quadrupartite' force, primarily including the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the US, needed to be extended to include other states such as Malaysia and Singapore so as to avoid being cast as an 'Anglo-Saxon Club'. The postscript to the papers in the collection is also interesting as it reflected Australian unease in its relationship with its 'great and

¹⁸ See Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, *Proceedings of the seminar on nuclear dispersal in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region*, 5-6 September 1964, Defence Studies Project (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, 1965).

¹⁹ A L Burns, 'Measures against nuclear dispersal in the Indo-Pacific area,' in *Proceedings of the seminar on nuclear dispersal in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region*, 5-6 September 1964, Defence Studies Project (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, 1965), 101.

²⁰ See Bisley and Phillips, 'The Indo-Pacific,' and Dennis Rumley, Timothy Doyle and Sanjay Chaturvedi, Sanjay, 'Securing' the Indian Ocean? Competing regional security constructions,' *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 8, no. 1, (2012): 1-20.

²¹ See Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, *Proceedings of the seminar on Commonwealth responsibilities for security in the Indo-Pacific region*, 11 September 1965, Defence Studies Project (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, 1966).

powerful friends' the US and the UK. However, the postscript ultimately concluded that 'quadrupartite' 'Anglo' states would continue to play important, albeit overlapping, roles in 'the maintenance of Indo-Pacific security' (Burns 1966, p. 71).²² Again, the seminar report reflects that at this time the terminology for the region was Indo-Pacific, it was not Asia-Pacific.

Another example of mainstream use of the Indo-Pacific terminology can be found in an article published in *Australian Outlook* in 1971 by Harry Gelber.²³ The article assessed nuclearisation in the Pacific and in doing so provided an overview of the changing security dynamics of the region as well as foreshadowing possible implications for Australia. Gelber's article concluded by speculating that by 1980 the US would have reduced its role within the 'Indo-Pacific region' (compared to its engagement in the region during the 1960s). Demonstrating a shifting regional strategic environment, Gelber argued that an increasingly complex Pacific four-power balance had emerged in the Indo-Pacific, consisting of the US, Japan, the Soviet Union and China. Throughout the article Gelber positioned Australia as a clear middle power and he identified Australia's security interests being 'safeguarded' by the aforementioned 'four-power Indo-Pacific balance'.²⁴ Together, these four examples (Cumpton, both seminars and the article by Gelber) spanning the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s provide strong evidence of the Indo-Pacific terminology being the accepted terminology within academic and political discourse in the Australian setting.

The Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific

Given the Indo-Pacific is a term that gives equal weighting to both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, government and academic discourse on the Indian Ocean is also worthy of consideration. In 1969, the Indian Ocean was elevated as a key strategic zone for Australian security and as a means by which Australia could play great powers off against one another. Gordon Freeth, the Member for Forrest in Western Australia and the newly appointed Foreign Minister, gave a statement in the Australian House of Representatives on 14 August 1969. Concerned over possible future US withdrawal from the Indo-Pacific region, Freeth identified the increasing presence of Russian ships in the Indian Ocean as potentially advantageous to Australia. He argued that should the US withdraw from the Indian Ocean, Soviet naval presence would fill such a vacuum ensuring the Chinese did not enter the Indian Ocean, thereby containing China.²⁵ While Freeth was castigated for this position and lost his seat at the next election, his statement indicated that the Australian government had been in contact with the Soviet Union and they had discussed 'matters of bilateral interest and also in discussing wider issues'.²⁶ In 1972, under the Prime Ministership of Gough Whitlam, Australia normalised relations with the People's Republic of China. This presented Australia the opportunity to move away from fear of China to seeking cooperation and opportunities with the Chinese. As a result, by the time Malcolm Fraser became Prime Minister in 1975,

²² A L Burns, 'Postscript: March 1966. Some implications of interdependence in Southern Asia and Indo-Pacific Security,' in *Proceedings of the seminar on Commonwealth responsibilities for security in the Indo-Pacific region*, 11 September 1965, Defence Studies Project (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs and The Australian National University, 1966), 71.

²³ See Harry Gelber, 'Nuclear Arms and the Pacific,' *Australian Outlook* 25, no. 3 (1971): 295-308.

²⁴ Gelber, 'Nuclear Arms', 307.

²⁵ S S, 'Russia's New Role in Asia,' *China Report* (January-February, 1970): 30-35, Hedley Bull, 'The New Balance of Power in Asia and the Pacific,' *Foreign Affairs* 49, no. 4, (July, 1971): 669-681, and Phillip Darby, 'Australia's Changing Perspective of the World,' *The World Today* 29, no. 3 (March, 1973): 119-125.

²⁶ S, 'Russia's,' 32.

Australian concerns regarding perceived Communist threats were firmly focused on the Soviet Union.

Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean represented a serious concern to the Fraser government. In response to such fears, Fraser supported the US development of Diego Garcia as a naval base, a move which again elevated the Indian Ocean as an important strategic region within Australian politics.²⁷ Fraser also offered the US territory in Fremantle, Western Australia for the development of an additional naval base, an offer that was refused. However, an offer of territory in Darwin was accepted and it became an important staging base for American B-52 strategic bombers. During this time, Fraser worked hard to ensure that the ANZUS alliance was meaningful into a new era, hoping to repair any damage that may have been caused by the former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam.²⁸ It is also important to recognise that the Indo-Pacific remained the terminology for the region, as reflected in the first Australian Defence white paper, published in 1976.

In the simply titled *Australian Defence* white paper,²⁹ the Australian Government again identified its neighbouring regions as the Indo-Pacific. Prepared under the Fraser Coalition government, the white paper identified the major powers in the region as comprising of China, India and Japan. However, when focused on particular issues and concerns, the report divided the Indo-Pacific region into sub-regional groupings such as South-East Asia, North East Asia and the South-West Pacific. Just over ten years later the Australian government published its second Defence white paper. It was titled *Defence of Australia* and was launched in 1987 by the then ALP Defence Minister, Kim Beazley. Beazley, a former academic at Murdoch University in Western Australia, became the Federal member for the Swan electorate in Western Australia in 1980, a position he held from 1980 to 1996. Born in Perth, Western Australia Beazley was a dedicated West Australian with an Indian Ocean outlook and he has had a significant impact in maintaining Australia's two oceans outlook.

The 1987 Defence white paper commands attention because it was transitional in regards to the terminology it deployed. Despite the involvement of Beazley, the Indo-Pacific terminology was absent from the document, with Australia's regional outlook being directed towards the previously defined sub-regional entities of South-East Asia, South-West Pacific and the East Indian Ocean. This is likely due to the push by Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating to pursue deeper engagement with states in Asia and the Pacific. In one notable speech, Keating called for an end to Australian 'Anglophilia' arguing that it was time for Australia to recognise its future lay within Asia.³⁰ Despite the shift away from the Indo-Pacific terminology, the 1987 Defence white paper is also significant because it announced Australia's 'Two Oceans Navy' Strategy. This development resulted in a major surface and submarine fleet being based in Western Australia. Since the 1970s, Beazley, first as an academic, then a member of parliament and later as a government minister, had been keen for greater government interest to be paid to the Indian Ocean, particularly in the area of defence. Reflecting on this time in an interview with Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe in 2012, Beazley said:

²⁷ Stewart Firth, *Australia in International Politics: An introduction to Australian foreign policy* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 40.

²⁸ Firth, *Australia*, 40-41.

²⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Defence*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/Publications/wpaper1976.pdf>.

³⁰ See Paul Keating, 'Australia and Asia: Knowing Who We Are,' Speech, (April 7, 1992), accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.keating.org.au/shop/item/australia-and-asia-knowing-who-we-are---7-april-1992>.

Australia has been strategically conscious of the Indian Ocean since Federation... Our experience in World War II took our focus off the region slightly because communication across the Pacific became more critical for our defence... Until the past 30 to 40 years, the Indian Ocean was the critical highway of communication for the imperial defence system. But the Indian Ocean has reasserted itself quickly in the aftermath of World War II and altered its character completely since the collapse of the British Empire. To a greater or lesser extent, the geography of the Indian Ocean region has always concerned Australia.³¹

As has already been demonstrated in this paper, given the Indo-Pacific terminology had been deployed for much of the post-World War II period, it seems the central focus for Beazley was that rhetoric needed to be supported through action. Therefore, naval presence in Western Australia and a national naval strategy with explicit reference to the Indian Ocean was needed in order to cement in the minds of the Australian government the importance of the Indian Ocean to Australia's strategic interests.³²

By the time of the 1994 Defence white paper, terminology for Australia's regional outlook had shifted to 'Asia and the Pacific'.³³ By the 2000 Defence white paper the terminology had become 'Asia Pacific region' or simply 'Asia Pacific'.³⁴ Both the 1994 and the 2000 white papers still drew on sub-regional groupings like Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, like the observations made of the 1987 white paper, the 1994 and 2000 white papers corroborate that the Indo-Pacific terminology had now well and truly disappeared. However, references to the importance of the Indian Ocean had not disappeared. The 1997 foreign policy white paper contains a section titled 'Indian Ocean Region'. This section discussed the rise of India and the continuing importance of the region, which would see it 'assume greater importance to Australia'.³⁵ The subsequent white paper, *Advancing the National Interest*, also gave specific attention to India under the heading 'India's growing importance'. The white paper signalled that India's rise had enabled an expanded dialogue between Australia and India on 'military and security issues'.³⁶ Written post-9/11, this white paper also dedicated significant attention to the strengthened US-Australian alliance, which had been a feature of the 1997 foreign policy white paper. These papers also drew on references to Asia and the Pacific, as well as sub-regional identifiers.

The 2009 Defence white paper is notable because it gave greater emphasis to Asia and the Pacific rather than other sub-regional groupings, and it deployed the shortened 'Asia-Pacific'

³¹ Kim Beazley cited in Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 'Interview: Australia in the Indo-Pacific Century,' *Policy: A Journal of Public Policy and Ideas* 28, no. 3 (Spring, 2012): 51.

³² Beazley was no doubt influenced by the earlier Indian Ocean Peace Zone discussions which drew attention to the growing strategic significance of the Indian Ocean.

³³ See Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/Publications/wpaper1994.pdf>.

³⁴ See Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2000), accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/publications/wpaper2000.pdf>.

³⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, *In the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997), accessed June 1, 2018,

³⁶ Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2003), accessed June 1, 2018, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan012801.pdf>.

to refer to the region.³⁷ Interestingly, while it was titled *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, the 2009 Defence white paper does not engage with the ‘Asia Pacific Century’ outside of the title. It is not until the release of the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper³⁸ that the new named Century is provided deeper scope and analysis. However, by 2012 the ‘Pacific’ had been dropped from the named Century so it had simply become the ‘Asian Century’. Despite the brief mention it gave to the Asia-Pacific Century in the title, it should be noted that the 2009 Defence white paper does identify the increased role the Indian Ocean would play into the future. It stated ‘[o]ver the period to 2030, the Indian Ocean will join the Pacific Ocean in terms of its centrality to our maritime strategy and defence planning’, thereby highlighting the need for increased attention to be paid to the Indian Ocean as its strategic importance continued to grow.³⁹ Despite it only being one paragraph within the entire white paper, this paper argues that this one paragraph signalled the future return of the Indo-Pacific terminology into Australian political and academic discourse. However, like the transition from Indo-Pacific to Asia-Pacific, terminology changes tend to take a number of years before they come to fruition.

Contemporary Definitions of the Indo-Pacific

In the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper, there is a clear foreshadowing of a potential change in terminology to either ‘Indo-Pacific’ or ‘trans-Asian’, terms which it argued may be better placed to reflect the increasing significance of the Indian Ocean, the growing economic integration of Asian states, as well as encompassing the potential impacts of various road, rail and trans-regional infrastructure projects being promoted by China, India and Japan. The white paper identified the Indo-Pacific as the ‘western Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean [being] considered as one strategic arc’.⁴⁰ However, this is not a transitional white paper when it comes to terminology as it continues to use Asia-Pacific in references to the region. Rather, it foreshadows a possible change in terminology due to the elevation of the Indian Ocean and the increased connectivity of the states within the region.

The transitional white paper in terms of the switch of terminology from the Asia-Pacific back to the Indo-Pacific is the 2013 Defence white paper. In justifying the change in terminology, the white paper argued that:

[t]he Indo-Pacific is a logical extension of this concept [Asia-Pacific], and adjusts Australia’s priority strategic focus to the arc extending from India through Southeast

³⁷ See Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2009), accessed August 1, 2018, http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2009/docs/defence_white_paper_2009.pdf.

³⁸ See Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia in the Asian Century: White Paper 2012*, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, (Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2012), accessed June 12, 2018, http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf.

³⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia*, 37. Interestingly, Kim Beazley has claimed that the original version of the 2009 Defence white paper did not include the paragraph on the Indian Ocean from which the above quotation is sourced. According to Beazley, prior to the release of the white paper, Kevin Rudd re-committed the white paper for updating and following discussions on the geo-politics of the region the paragraph on the Indian Ocean was added. See Kim Beazley cited in Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, ‘Kim Beazley on the Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean to Australia,’ *Future Directions International, Strategic Analysis Paper* (June 3, 2010), accessed June 1, 2018, <http://futuredirections.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/1277087160-FDI%20Strategic%20Analysis%20Paper%20-%202003%20June%202010.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia in the Asian Century*, 74.

Asia to Northeast Asia, including the sea lines of communication on which the region depends.⁴¹

It also described the Indo-Pacific as ‘an emerging system’, ‘predominately maritime’, consisting of ‘a series of sub-regions and arrangements rather than a unitary whole’ and constitutes an arena that heralds considerable influence on Australia’s security environment’.⁴² The importance of the Indian Ocean as a major transportation corridor for mineral resources and trade goods is also used as a rationale for why the change was necessary.⁴³ Put simply, given the rising significance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes, the more restrictive Asia-Pacific terminology needed to be widened.

Both the 2016 *Defence White Paper* and the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* further advance the Indo-Pacific terminology, cementing it as Australia’s current terminology for the region. The 2016 *Defence White Paper* does not contain a single reference to the Asia-Pacific. All references to the region use the Indo-Pacific terminology.⁴⁴ This is also true of the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, which identified the territories that comprise the Indo-Pacific region as including ‘the region ranging from the eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean connected by Southeast Asia, including India, North Asia and the United States’.⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, given the above discussion, it identified the Indo-Pacific as being of ‘primary importance’ to Australia, and indicated that a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific also offers many opportunities for Australia. For Medcalf,⁴⁶ the Indo-Pacific terminology forces Australia to recognise ‘that the accelerating economic and security connections between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean region are creating a strategic system’. In addition, he argued that the Atlantic Ocean has now been replaced by the Indian Ocean, as the ‘globe’s busiest and most strategically significant trade corridor’.⁴⁷ Cognisant of global statistics that identify two-thirds of oil shipments and one-third of bulk cargo shipments now pass through the Indian Ocean,⁴⁸ Medcalf’s proposition is sound. In addition, considering 30 percent of Australian exports leave via ports in Western Australia,⁴⁹ passing through the Indian Ocean, the importance of the Indian Ocean to Australia, and Australian desires to ensure the continued stability of the region, becomes increasingly clear.

One other factor in examining Australia’s shifting terminology for the region from Indo-Pacific to Asia-Pacific and back again is encapsulated in a response Beazley gave in his interview with DeSilva-Ranasinghe. Identifying the difference between Australia’s West Coast and East Coast outlooks Beazley stated:

⁴¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2013), accessed June 12, 2018, http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/WP_2013_web.pdf, 7.

⁴² Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 7-8.

⁴³ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 7.

⁴⁴ See Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2016*, Department of Defence, (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), accessed June 12, 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper*, 1.

⁴⁶ Rory Medcalf, ‘The evolving order in the Indo-Pacific,’ *Indo-Pacific Maritime Security: Challenges and Cooperation*, National Security College, Australian National University, (July 2016): 9.

⁴⁷ Medcalf, ‘The evolving order,’ 9.

⁴⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 74.

⁴⁹ Conley Tyler and Shearman, ‘Australia,’.

I do think that West Australians have a different perspective to those in the East. For instance, South-East Asia is viewed from the Indian Ocean perspective and the Indian Ocean, and what happens with India has always been seen as slightly more important in Western Australia than in the east. There's a sort of sense in WA, having a different focus, and one of the obsessions in Australia is that we've never been defended and when the Eastern States say we have been and we say, 'Where's the evidence of it?' This is what really gave some political impetus to the idea of a 'Two Ocean Navy' which was arrived at for strategic reasons. But West Australians like to see a substantial defence presence and very proud they are of the SAS⁵⁰ and of serious air bases in the north. Also, they want indications that we are capable of protecting the offshore developments in Western Australia. People don't think about that in Sydney and Melbourne, but people in Western Australia obsess about it, so, coming from WA, I think I do have a different perspective.⁵¹

This is an important and often missed element in Australia's shifting terminology. Space and place matters and for West Australians, the Asia-Pacific terminology simply did not include them. As already discussed, Western Australia has had a harsh history and it has been far removed from the centres of power. Many of the key developments in forging recognition of the significance of the Indian Ocean to Australian interests, and many drivers of the Indo-Pacific terminology, have come from Western Australia. The resurgence of the Indo-Pacific terminology has occurred alongside a significant number of West Australian parliamentarians occupying prominent roles within the government and Cabinet. Hence, their voices in the halls of parliament and in the Cabinet rooms of both the major parties have undoubtedly influenced the refocusing of Australia's outlook on both the Indian and Pacific regions via the return of the Indo-Pacific terminology.⁵²

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the Indo-Pacific is not a new terminology for Australia's neighbouring regions. By analysing relevant domestic history pertinent to Australian terminology for its neighbouring regions and by examining academic and political discourse from the 1950s onwards, it has shown that the recent shift in terminology from Asia-Pacific

⁵⁰ Special Air Service Regiment.

⁵¹ Kim Beazley cited in Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 'Kim Beazley on the Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean to Australia,' *Future Directions International, Strategic Analysis Paper* (June 3, 2010), accessed June 1, 2018, <http://futuredirections.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/1277087160-FDI%20Strategic%20Analysis%20Paper%20-%202003%20June%202010.pdf>, 6.

⁵² At the time of writing (to August 24, 2018), the Cabinet of Australia comprised of 23 members, 6 of whom are West Australian parliamentarians. They included: Julie Bishop, representing Curtin in the House of Representatives (HoR), who was the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party; Michaelia Cash, representing WA in the Senate, Minister for Jobs and Innovation; Mathias Cormann, representing WA in the Senate, Minister for Finance; Michael Keenan, representing Stirling in the HoR, who was the Minister for Human Services; Ken Wyatt, representing Hasluck in the HoR, who was the Minister for Aged Care and the Minister for Indigenous Health; and Christian Porter, representing Pearce in the HoR, who was the Attorney-General. In addition to this, other senior positions in the government also held by WA parliamentarians included: Melissa Price, representing Durack in the HoR, who was the Assistant Minister for the Environment and Dean Smith, representing WA in the Senate, the Deputy Government Whip in the Senate. Previous West Australian Cabinet Ministers who have influenced the return to the Indo-Pacific terminology include: Kim Beazley, representing Swan in the HoR (1980-1996) and the former Minister for Defence (1984-1990); and Stephen Smith, representing Perth in the House of Representatives, former Minister for Foreign Affairs (2007-September 2010), Minister for Trade (June 2010-September 2010), and Minister for Defence (September 2010-2013).

to Indo-Pacific actually reflects a return to the previous terminology for the region, that is, a region delineated as the Indo-Pacific. Further, the paper has established that the terminology of Asia-Pacific was only a fairly recent development and that for much of the post-World War II period, Australian terminology for the region was centred on the Indo-Pacific terminology. In doing so the paper confirmed that the Indo-Pacific terminology is not new. Rather, given the geographic position of Western Australia, its rising importance due to natural resources, the extent of shipments from Western Australian ports, and the geographic reality of Australia having extensive coastlines on both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the return of the Indo-Pacific terminology is neither surprising nor likely to significantly alter Australia's current regional outlook. Instead, the re-emergence of the term Indo-Pacific within Australia reflects a more inclusive and encompassing terminology reflecting Australia's political, economic and strategic outlook.