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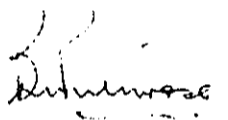
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AUSTRALIAN NAVAL POLICY, 1919 to 1942:  
A CASE STUDY IN EMPIRE RELATIONS

B. N. PRIMROSE

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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This thesis is my own original work.



B. N. Primrose.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anti-Aircraft armament
ACNB	Australian Commonwealth Naval Board
ACNS	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AJPH	Australian Journal of Politics and History
AMC	Armed Merchant Cruiser
AMS	Australian Minesweeper (also called 'corvette')
ALP	Australian Labor Party
CAO	Commonwealth Archives Office (now Australian Archives)
CCAF	Commodore Commanding the Australian Fleet
CCAS	Commodore Commanding the Australian Squadron
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
C in C	Commander in Chief
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
CO	Colonial Office
COS	Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (British)
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DO	Dominions Office
HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives (Commonwealth Parliament)

NMM National Maritime Museum, Greenwich  
PM Prime Minister  
PRO Public Records Office, London  
RACAF Rear Admiral Commanding the Australian Fleet  
RACAS Rear Admiral Commanding the  
Australian Squadron  
RAN Royal Australian Navy  
RANC Royal Australian Naval College  
RN Royal Navy  
RAAF Royal Australian Air Force  
RAF Royal Air Force  
SL Sea Lord  
S of S Secretary of State  
Sec Secretary  
US United States of America  
USN United States Navy

## PREFACE

Australia's sense of national identity has developed differently from most other nations which have emerged in the past two hundred years. Until the fall of Singapore, Australia's development had been notable for the absence of trauma in relationships with the Mother Country. Australia has not been embroiled in war with the Mother Country to gain either cohesion or independence as was the case with the United States, the Mother Country was not so weak and subject to rival Powers that the Imperial relationship atrophied as with the South American nations, and Australia was not subject to the centrifugal influence of large, diverse ethnic groups as were both Canada and South Africa. Australia's history has no dramatic 'turning points', only 'milestones' in a process of comparatively orderly development.

Conservative elements consequently have an important role in Australia's relationship with the Mother Country. Geographic location, the problems of distance as well as its strategic advantages, the racial and economic distinctness of the neighbouring peoples and Australia's wealth, size and small population have acted to reinforce the filial ties, making naval defence a significant conservative element in the relationship. So long as the relationship evolved fast enough to accommodate Australia's growing sense of nationalism, the benefits which flowed from membership of the British Empire outweighed the disadvantages and loyalty to Britain remained largely unchallenged.

At the present juncture, when there is much discussion about Australia's national identity and a widespread feeling that a more independent stance internationally is necessary, an understanding of the nature, effects and consequences of Australia's former dependence upon Britain is important. Examination of Australian naval policy sheds light upon the fundamental elements of that relationship, in particular the blend of loyalty, trust and self-assertion which characterised the Australian outlook during the inter-war period.

Inevitably I have been drawn into assessing the effects on Australian development of dependence upon a protector. The balance of this thesis leans toward examining the difficulties and disadvantages of dependence rather than the advantages because the predominant opinion of the inter-war generation was overwhelmingly convinced of the advantages and these advantages are well recorded. The difficulties and disadvantages are more apparent in retrospect and need to be examined. Nevertheless, I have not been convinced that dependence upon Britain for Australia's ultimate protection was *per se* either unwise or inimical to Australia's interests. In broad terms, there was no realistic alternative. The real contention lies, not in the extremities of dependence or independence, but in the more subtle arena of the middle ground. For a small power, the benefits of reliance upon protection must be balanced against the accompanying loss of independence and jeopardizing of peculiar national interests; acceptance of equipment, expertise and facilities must be balanced against maintenance of freedom of action. The cost of relationships with the rest of the world must be balanced against domestic needs in the allocation of resources. In the conduct of this relationship the outlook engendered in both Government and public opinion by the nature and level of dependence is of crucial importance in the small power's perception of the advantages and problems of the relationship.

I am indebted to many people who have aided my work. I have received generous help from archivists and librarians wherever I have worked, especially in the Commonwealth Archives Office, and equally ready help from service and ex-servicemen. I am grateful to the Royal Australian Navy for taking me to sea and to the Royal Navy for arranging an inspection of HM Dockyard, Portsmouth. The Australian National University provided my fares and living allowance for four months in the United Kingdom which was invaluable, not only for the documents researched, but also for the insights gained. I was able to consult Professor A. J. Marder *en route*. I am grateful to Captain S. W. Roskill whose help, while I was in the United Kingdom, was most appreciated. To members of the Department of International Relations I should like to express my pleasure at their fellowship and help over the past three and a half years. I am indebted to all who have read parts of the work and to Miss Jo Marsh who typed the final draft. In particular I should like to express my appreciation to Dr R. J. O'Neill, whose gentle, thorough supervision has aroused my considerable respect. To my wife, who has shared the trials and satisfaction of engrossing research, I owe not a little.

B. N. Primrose