

At the very least it is clear that there are major problems on the horizon if greater attention is not paid to the (empirical) detail and (politico-cultural) specifics of our general engagements with the region, and if we fail to think seriously enough about the opportunities as well as the dangers inherent in our present situation. There can be no any easy answers for the Australian policy community in this regard, nor do I have any simple answers to offer to the questions they must now ask of the global arena. But as I have stressed throughout this paper my concern is that many, within the policy sector and within the mainstream analytical community, continue to seek easy (modelled) answers and adopt simple (modelled) preferences at a moment in Australia's history when we have little margin for error in our judgements about what are the most adequate and least dangerous conceptual and strategic directions for the 21st century. In the brief concluding section of the paper I indicate, in very rudimentary terms, what might be done about this situation in the pursuit of a more adequate critical realism in this context.

Beyond Westphalia: Towards a Critical Realism in Australian Foreign Policy

On the basis of what has gone before a reorientation of theory and practice would seem sensible and necessary in the Australian foreign policy context. In the short term this reorientation need not be terribly radical and it should not undermine the best efforts of those who have already genuinely sought to reorient our perspectives on ourselves and the once threatening Others in the Asia/Pacific region. In particular it is vital that we remain engaged in the Asia/Pacific region and that we maintain good relations with societies such as Indonesia. It is important too that a cooperative approach to security remain central to policy planning and that the general principles of openness and flexibility be applied to our global and regional relations.

On the Indonesia issue, nevertheless, there is room for manoeuvre beyond the parameters of the present policy 'art of the possible', involving in the first instance some judicious shifting of policy eggs from the Suharto basket. This might mean an uncomfortable period when walking on policy eggshells cannot be avoided but the risks of closer engagement with such a regime are increasingly obvious as Suharto and his clique struggle to control an archipelago-wide surge for change. The point, to reiterate it, is that Australia's narrowly conceived support for the Indonesian ruling elite is effectively precluding Australian policy-makers from engaging in the broader and more creative efforts of many around the world to resolve complex politico-ethical problems (e.g. East Timor) and create a more stable politico-strategic and economic environment for the region.