

more pluralistic form of governance in a post-Suharto Indonesia as the basis for long-term stability and prosperity. Indeed, for long-time commentator on the region, Peter Hartcher, this is already the “towering silence” of Australian foreign policy.<sup>87</sup>

At this point it is worth recording that the concerns outlined above are given short shrift by official and/or mainstream commentators, who insist that Australia’s policy preferences in the region add up to prudent realism. From this perspective Australia’s relations with the region’s ruling elites, and its restricted frame of policy reference, represents an updated concern to retain and enhance traditional kinds of security guarantees (with major powers) while gradually engaging in a new uncertain integrationist procedures. From this perspective, moreover, it is the systemic constraints upon a small or middle-power such as Australia which are regarded as the paramount factor in the decision process, not any preference for a particular regime or a particular mode of maintaining order. From this perspective, in short, the Westphalian model ‘art of the possible’ remains a severely restricted one.<sup>88</sup>

I have been critical of this kind of response throughout this paper. There is, however, nothing of analytical value to be gained by condemnation in this context. There is salience too in the argument that as a middle-power with only limited capacity to compete in the global market-place Australia is, by definition, working under ‘constraint’. I have argued, nevertheless, that we need to think more acutely about what the parameters of policy constraint actually are in Australia’s present situation, rather than simply assuming into policy reality a (Westphalian) grand-theory of constraint. Or, as the earlier sections of the paper sought to explain, we need to think more acutely about how a grand-theory of constraint became so embedded within the Australian IR consciousness that any counter-questioning of it is simply deemed inappropriate, irrelevant and/or ‘unreal’.<sup>89</sup> This has been an issue underlying this final section of the paper which, in a variety of ways, has sought to illustrate that there are very real reasons for a critical counter-questioning of the dominant foreign policy perspectives in Australia, where a contemporary variation on the Westphalian theme continues to orient foreign policy thinking and practice in ways that could well be detrimental to Australia’s regional future and to future global relations more generally.

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<sup>87</sup> See P. Hartcher, “Australia and the Crackdown: do as Little as Possible” in Australian Financial Review, August 7, 1996:12

<sup>88</sup>For an exemplar of this argument see P. Dibb, “Whither Strategic and Defence Studies?” in D. Ball and D. Horner eds. Strategic Studies in a Changing World (ANU, Canberra: SDSC, 1992)

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 412