

dimension is starkly evident in mainstream perspectives on Australia's future role and relationships in the Asia-Pacific region - the keystone issue in our 'new' foreign policy. Here, for example, questions of class, of religion, of poverty, of environmental devastation, of gender, of ethnicity, of non-western, non-Christian, non-elite, non-capitalist views of everyday reality are ignored and/or rendered silent in Australia's efforts to enhance our politico-strategic and economic position in that region.⁵

The consequences of this have, to a large extent, been overshadowed by the drama of the economic 'melt-down' in some of Australia's most important neighbours since late 1997. This phenomenon has elicited a good deal of anxiety in some quarters and more than a little smugness in others, with the Howard Government in particular infusing all official analysis with the proposition that we (Australia) at least have our fiscal fundamentals right. This kind of response, I suggest, only reinforces the need for a broader more comprehensive approach to future regional relations, one that goes beyond (neo-liberal) boundaries of understanding concerning the nature of 'fundamentals'. Indeed as the spectre of widespread social and political unrest grows amid a region once celebrated in terms of economic miracles, it becomes clearer that Australia's 'fundamentals' in this regard need to go far beyond the notion of having our hands on the right economic levers.

This, significantly, is a conclusion supported by the findings of arguably the most illustrious of the recent inquiries into contemporary and future world orders, The Commission on Global Governance (1995). This grouping of major global figures, policymakers, intellectuals and political leaders is regarded by Richard Falk as "the last of the great liberal Commissions".⁶ Its conclusions are entirely prescient to the Australian situation, indeed they might have been reached with the Australian context and its missing dimension in mind. In short the Commission concluded that the very issues left out of contemporary mainstream Australian policy analysis are precisely those integral to any realistic policy evaluation of future security risks and economic development in regions like the Asia/Pacific.

It proposed, moreover, that future instability and threats in regions such as Australia's are less likely to follow traditional patterns of inter-state conflict but are much more likely to be triggered by tensions associated with policies of global economic rationalism regarded as the 'fundamental' element of neo-liberal Government such as

⁵On these omissions see the commentaries on Gareth Evans Cooperating for Peace in S. Lawson ed. The New Agenda for Peace: Cooperating for Peace and Beyond (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995)

⁶Cited in A. McGrew ed. The Transformation of Democracy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p. 244; The fuller citation for the Report is, The Commission for Global Governance: Our Global Neighbourhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)