Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’: Hu Jintao Addresses the Australian Parliament

Chinese President Hu Jintao’s address to a joint meeting of the Australian Parliament in October 2003 was a landmark event in the history of Australia–China relations. A moment of great ceremonial and symbolic significance, it represented a highpoint in the Howard Government’s engagement with China. This chapter examines President Hu’s address to the Australian Parliament from a range of perspectives. It begins by giving consideration to the history of parliamentary addresses by foreign heads of state, before turning to examine the addresses of President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Howard. Having provided an account of the way that these addresses came to offer some unexpected insights into the complexities that underscore the Australia–China relationship, it places the two addresses within the context of John Howard’s regional diplomacy.

Prior to October 2003, only two foreign heads of state had addressed a joint meeting of the Australian Parliament: United States President George Bush senior (January 1992) and United States President Bill Clinton (November 1996). On each occasion, the parliamentary setting had been chosen to honour the shared traditions of representative government and parliamentary democracy. When Parliament was recalled in late October 2003, in what Prime Minister John Howard referred to as ‘an unprecedented sequencing of speeches’, Parliament would be addressed on consecutive days by the United States President, George W. Bush, and the President of the People’s Republic of China, Hu Jintao.  

The British House of Commons and the United States Congress have contrasting positions on inviting guests to address their legislative assemblies. British parliamentary practice only permits elected representatives to address the House of Commons while the United States Congress has a tradition of regularly extending invitations to foreign dignitaries. By and large the Australian Parliament has adopted the British model. In the fifty years following Federation, the Australian Parliament was addressed by only one visiting delegation—a delegation from the British House of Commons. The visitors presented the Mace to the Parliament, on the occasion of the Parliament’s jubilee in 1951, and each member of the delegation addressed the House.

of Representatives. It was not until the 1990s that the Australian practice began to shift more substantially towards the United States model, a change evidenced by the addresses made by President George Bush senior and President Bill Clinton.

The resolutions that were agreed to for the Bush and Hu visits in 2003 were similar to those which had been agreed to for the previous presidential visits:

The House of Representatives by resolution invited the foreign visitor to address it, and invited the Senate to meet in the House of Representatives chamber at the same time to receive the address. The Senate by resolution then invited the foreign visitor to address the Senate, and agreed to meet in the House of Representatives chamber for that purpose. The resolutions of the two Houses also provided that the Speaker would preside over the joint meeting and that the procedures of the House of Representatives would apply to the joint meeting ‘so far as they are applicable’.

Both presidents would therefore address a simultaneous and co-located meeting of the Senate and the House of Representatives; these meetings would be presided over by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and would follow House procedures.

Prior to the Senate agreeing to these resolutions, Democrats Senator for Victoria, Lyn Allison moved two motions that Presidents Bush and Hu be received in the Great Hall.

---

2. As head of state, Queen Elizabeth II has delivered numerous speeches to the Parliament: 15 February 1954, 28 February 1974 and 8 March 1977. The delegation from the House of Commons visited on 29 November 1951 and included: Richard Law, David Rhys Grenfell and Joseph Grimond. I thank Rob Lundie from the Politics and Public Administration Section of the Parliamentary Library for this information.

3. The practice of inviting foreign heads of state to address the Australian Parliament emerged during the early 1990s. Prime Minister Hawke had wished to confer on the President of the United States the same honour that had been conferred upon him in 1988—an address to a joint meeting of both Houses of Congress. Prime Minister Keating would later follow Hawke’s practice by extending an invitation to President Bill Clinton. Ironically, as Alan Ramsey points out, by the time George Bush senior addressed the Parliament, Keating had replaced Hawke as Prime Minister and by the time Clinton addressed Parliament Keating had been replaced by John Howard. (‘A crowded House of Yankee lackeys’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2003, p. 43.) Therefore, in 2003, John Howard became the first Prime Minister to host a foreign head of state invited during his prime ministership.


Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

at Parliament House, rather than the House of Representatives. Senator Allison’s motion was defeated (Ayes 9 to Noes 35). However, it resulted in a debate which made it clear that there was strong minor party opposition to inviting a non-democratically elected head of state to address the Australian Parliament. Senator for Tasmania, Brian Harradine, the longest-serving independent federal parliamentarian in Australia’s history, advanced the following position:

The proposal is to allow President Hu, who is a dictator—he is not elected and certainly not democratic—to address the democratically elected parliament of this country in the chamber. I take the view that, if we accept this, it will set a very bad precedent indeed and will reflect on the elected chambers.

Greens Senator for Tasmania, Bob Brown, who identified President Hu as ‘a dictator who has blood on his hands’, concurred with Senator Harradine and argued that in offering the podium to the Chinese President, the Parliament had become a supplicant to ‘a rich and powerful trading nation’.

6. Michelle Grattan suggests that the Chinese President was only invited to address the Parliament because President Bush was addressing the Parliament a day earlier. Grattan claims when President Hu had first indicated that he would like to visit Australia following the APEC meeting in Bangkok (October 18–21) arrangements were made for him to visit Canberra on the Thursday. However, George Bush then suggested that he would also like to visit Canberra on the same day. In order to accommodate President Bush, it was then suggested the Chinese President spend Thursday in Sydney and come to Canberra on Friday. Precedent dictated that Bush be invited to address Parliament as his father and President Clinton had done. Concerned that ‘it could become a matter of comment’ if President Hu was not also asked to do so, a parliamentary invitation was also extended to Hu. Michelle Grattan, ‘Lessons in the delicate art of diplomacy’, Age, 25 October 2003, p. 8. Grattan adds, while Hu’s was a ‘state visit’, President Bush’s was a ‘visit’; Hu entered through the House of Representatives and met with the Presiding Officers while Bush entered through the front door and did not meet with the Presiding Officers.


Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

President Bush’s Address

Senators Brown and Nettle defamed this nation and dishonoured our legislature ... by heckling the American President. Senator Santo Santoro

Surely we must have a right to interact with anybody who comes into our parliament. Senator Bob Brown

On 23 October 2003, President Bush stood before the joint meeting of the Australian Parliament and spoke of the forces of good and the forces of evil. He suggested that the world was a better place without former Iraq President Saddam Hussein’s prisons, mass graves, torture chambers and rape rooms. At the point at which the President suggested that no one should mourn the passing of Saddam Hussein’s regime, Senator Bob Brown interjected. The Speaker immediately responded by warning Senator Brown about his behaviour. (In practice, interjections that are responded to by the Speaker should be documented in Hansard; however, Senator Brown’s comments have been expurgated from the historical record.) Shortly after, Senator Brown interjected a second time. This prompted the Speaker to request the Senator excuse himself from the Chamber. Senator Brown defied the Chair by failing to comply with the Speaker’s order. Some minutes later, when President Bush’s attentions had turned to matters of security in the Pacific, he was again interrupted, this time by the Greens Senator for New South Wales, Kerry Nettle. After Senator Nettle’s second interjection the Speaker told the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove her. By the time President Bush had concluded his speech, the Serjeant-at-Arms had not been able to remove Senator Nettle. Senator Brown had also failed to withdraw from the chamber. Thereafter, the Speaker ‘named’ Senators Brown and Nettle for defying the Chair and the Liberal Leader of the House of Representatives, Tony Abbott, moved ‘that Senators Brown and Nettle be suspended from the service of the House’. The question was agreed to and Senators Brown and Nettle were


12. See letter from the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Australian Greens submission to the Senate Privileges Committee’s inquiry into ‘Matters arising from the joint meetings of the Senate and the House of Representatives on 23 and 24 October 2003’.

13. ‘Address by the President of the United States of America’, Senate, Debates, 23 October 2003, p. 16721. It could be argued that their exclusion prevented Senators Brown and Nettle from fulfilling their primary objective—drawing attention to the matter of human rights in Tibet during President Hu’s address on the following day.
suspended. The two senators were suspended not because they interjected during President Bush’s speech, but because they defied the orders of the Speaker. Their 24-hour suspension would prohibit them from attending President Hu’s address the following day.

On 23 October, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate issued an instruction to parliamentary security personnel, informing them of the vote to exclude the two Senators. This instruction included the extraordinary, and unprecedented, directive that security officers, if necessary, employ ‘preventative force’ to enforce their suspension.

Senators Brown and Nettle, who had questioned the authority of the Speaker to ban them from attending the Chinese President’s address, approached the chamber on the morning of 24 October. As they proceeded through the glass link-way, they were spoken to by parliamentary security personnel before they withdrew. They did not attempt to enter the chamber.14

The disorder that resulted from the interjections by Senators Brown and Nettle during President Bush’s address raised a number of procedural and jurisdictional anomalies. Shortly after the presidential visits, Senator Brian Harradine suggested that the only constitutional precedent for a joint sitting was section 57 of the Constitution which permits both houses of Parliament to sit together to resolve deadlocks.15 Section 57 of the Constitution, Disagreement between the Houses, suggests a joint sitting is a specific body constituted under the provision that members of both houses may meet to vote on legislation which remains in disagreement after a simultaneous or ‘double’ dissolution. There is no other constitutional authorisation permitting senators and members to meet together. It would appear, therefore, that some years ago, when the Parliament began to replicate the American practice of inviting foreign dignitaries to address Congress, little or no consideration was given to the differences between the Australian and the United States constitutions.

11. Security Directive—Friday 24 October, 2003, included in the Australian Greens submission to the Senate Privileges Committee’s inquiry into ‘Matters arising from the joint meetings of the Senate and the House of Representatives on 23 and 24 October, 2003.16

A critical distinction emerged between the status of joint sittings and joint meetings. There has only been one joint sitting of the Australian Parliament under section 57 of the Constitution. This occurred in August 1974 in order to pass 6 bills that had led to a

double dissolution. Since 1992, there have been five occasions when the houses have been brought together for joint meetings. In four instances this was to receive addresses by foreign heads of state. The fifth joint meeting was held in 2001 in the Royal Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne to commemorate the centenary of the first meeting of the Commonwealth Parliament on 9 May 1901.17

The suspension of the two senators called into question the legitimacy of the joint meeting. It was unclear whether, constitutionally, these were in fact proceedings of Parliament. Moreover, there was uncertainty as to whether, in suspending senators from a meeting of the Senate, without a vote of the Senate, the Speaker’s ruling violated the principle of the complete autonomy of the Houses. In the months that followed the addresses of Presidents Bush and Hu, the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure and the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges investigated how the Senate should deal with future addresses by foreign heads of state.18 The Committee on Procedure’s Third Report of December 2003, ‘Joint Meeting to Receive Addresses by Foreign Heads of State’, argued that the provisions which were made for the joint meetings of the two houses made them virtually indistinguishable from joint sittings. Moreover, given that there was no constitutional authority for a joint meeting, the authority of the Speaker to exercise disciplinary power over Senators was potentially invalid. Both Committees therefore agreed that the practice of joint meetings be discontinued. The Committee on Procedure argued:

… the procedure for the occasions be changed so that they [addresses by foreign heads of state] would be meetings of the House of Representatives in the House of Representatives chamber, which senators would be invited to attend as guests, and not formal meetings of the Senate. This would not change the appearance of the occasions, but would avoid the problems of the joint meetings. Senators would not be under the same obligation to attend as for sittings of the Senate.19


18. The Senate Standing Committee on Procedure was requested ‘to draw up rules which should apply to joint meetings of the Parliament, if any’, ‘Joint meetings to receive addresses by foreign heads of state’, Third Report of 2003, December 2003, p. 1. The Committee of Privileges was to examine a range of supplementary matters arising from the joint meetings including: the presence of foreign security personnel, the seating of senators’ and members’ guests and the implications for the powers, privileges and immunities of the Senate which arose as a result of the joint meeting.

Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

The Committee recommended therefore that:

… the Senate pass a resolution expressing its opinion that future addresses by foreign heads of state should be received in this manner and that the resolution be forwarded to the House of Representatives so that the government can consider this proposal whenever future occasions arise.\footnote{20}

The Committee of Privileges endorsed the recommendation made by the Committee on Procedure while making a number of important statements about the powers, privileges and immunities of Senators during a joint meeting. The Committee claimed that ‘serious doubts must remain about the status and validity of arrangements under which the Speaker of the House of Representatives purported to exercise the disciplinary powers of the House over Senators who were participating in a meeting of the Senate’. It added further, that it is quite possible that the Senate could not constitutionally forego or waive any of ‘its powers, privileges and immunities, let alone submit to the jurisdiction of the House’.\footnote{21}

On the recommendations of the Committee on Procedures and the Committee of Privileges an alternative practice for a joint meeting of the House of Representatives and the Senate was adopted.\footnote{22} Message no. 297 acquainted the Senate with the resolution, agreed to on 2 March 2006, that in the future, senators be invited to attend the House as guests. When Tony Blair became the first British Prime Minister to address the Australian Parliament on 27 March 2006, he did not address a joint meeting of Parliament, but a meeting of the House of Representatives which senators attended as guests. Senators also attended the House as guests when the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, addressed the Australian Parliament on 12 September 2007.\footnote{23} President Hu’s address was therefore the last occasion on which the two houses of the Australian Parliament would meet for a concurrent sitting.

\footnotetext{20}{ibid.}
\footnotetext{23}{Prime Minister Harper was asked to address the Parliament to reciprocate the courtesy extended to Prime Minister Howard. In May 2006 John Howard became the first Australian Prime Minister to address the Canadian Parliament since John Curtin in 1944.}
Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

Prelude to President Hu’s Visit

Much of the parliamentary debate which occurred prior to President Hu’s visit took place in the Senate. It was led by the Democrats, Greens and Independents and primarily focused upon China’s human rights record. In examining aspects of this debate we can develop some appreciation of how the voices of both the major and minor parties contribute to the operations of Parliament and the activities of multi-party, parliamentary democracy. The discussion also helps to highlight differences in the political and representational functions of different political parties. It emerges that while the minor parties can examine issues like human rights in China, as isolated concerns, the Government, and even the Opposition, feel obliged to situate such concerns within the context of a concert of foreign policy interests.

Senators Harradine and Brown were the first parliamentarians to request that the government use the opportunity of President Hu’s visit to raise Australian concerns about human rights in China. The Greens also took the position that if Hu was to address the Parliament then parliamentarians should be permitted to put questions to him. Senator Brown suggested:

> If we are to entertain the thought of President Hu coming to the rostrum to address the several hundred representatives elected by the people of Australia, for goodness sake, let us not even mock the situation in the Great Hall of the People in China, where nobody can speak on any subject unless permitted to do so. We are not mummies. We are not here just to listen. We are here to take part in debate. 24

When pressed about whether the government would use the opportunity of the visit to raise concerns over human rights in China, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Robert Hill, spoke of Australia’s ongoing Human Rights Dialogue with China, asserting that as China continues to develop economically, there will be equivalent improvement in human rights. Hill added, ‘Certainly Australian foreign affairs ministers take the opportunity, when appropriate, to raise these issues with China and press upon China our values and also to point out the advantages of a more open and liberal society’. 25 In the House, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, claimed Australia’s Human Rights Dialogue with China has given Australia ‘an

---


extraordinary opportunity to be able to raise a full range of human rights issues, including those related to Tibet’ adding that ‘The range of issues that are of interest and concern between Australia and China will, of course, be discussed’. 26

Democrats Senator for South Australia, Natasha Stott Despoja, who also described President Hu’s visit as an opportunity to challenge the Chinese Government on its human rights record, proposed a motion that the Senate note that wide ranging human rights abuses were taking place across China. 27 The wording of Motion 641 was modelled on a similar resolution that was passed by Congress. It included calls for the release of prisoners being held in relation to non-violent protest activities, the repeal of laws which permit the government to interfere in religious affairs and the call for an immediate visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religion. 28 Senator Stott Despoja drew attention to the fact that while the Opposition was prepared to support a motion about human rights issues in the United States they were not prepared to support a motion expressing similar concerns in relation to China. The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator John Faulkner, offered a response in which he reiterated the Opposition’s support for upholding human rights internationally; he reminded the Senate of the Labor Party’s ‘long and proud history with China’ and he acknowledged that human rights abuses continue to occur in China. However, he added that Motion 641 was ‘too broad to be considered seriously without a fully-fledged and proper debate’:

Motions on foreign policy matters are a blunt instrument that cannot easily express the nuances that are necessarily a part of effective international diplomacy. There are a number of elements to which we are, of course, naturally sympathetic but there are other elements of the motion that do not accurately convey our position on these matters. That is why we have not given leave for this motion to be declared formal. 29

26. Questions without notice, ‘Human Rights’, House of Representatives, Debates, 13 October 2003, p. 21177. On the same day Luke Hartsuyker, Trish Worth and Ann Corcoran presented petitions to the House drawing attention to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. Senator Stott Despoja also claimed that many senators had received phone calls, faxes and letters requesting that these issues be highlighted.


The unsuccessful motion was supported by the Democrats, the Greens and Independent, Senator Harradine.

To coincide with the visit of President Hu Jintao, the Australia Tibet Council prepared an advertisement requesting that the Chinese President engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives about the future of Tibet. The full-page advertisement, appeared in the Australian and was signed by supporters of the Australia Tibet Council, including members of federal and state legislatures. China’s Consul-General in Melbourne, Junting Tian, wrote to one of the coordinators of the advertisement, Victorian parliamentarian Elaine Carbines, with the following message:

I am now writing to remind you that the Tibet issue is an internal matter of the People’s Republic of China which is very sensitive. Tibet has been part of China since the Yuan Dynasty in the mid-12th to the mid-13th century, and it is recognised by the whole international community, including the Australian government, that Tibet is a part of China.30

The Consul-General then met with the Presiding Officers of the Victorian Parliament. After being criticised for his interference in the Australian political process, and for his intimidatory behaviour, the Consul-General explained to the Australian newspaper, ‘he did not wish to silence parliamentarians. But he felt the advertisement would be “disrespectful” to the President’.31

Following the representations that were made by the Chinese Consulate in Melbourne the Chinese Embassy in Canberra made direct representations to the Australian media. The Press Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy, Feng Tie, emailed the following message to Fairfax newspapers about ‘anti-China forces’ operating in Australia:

30. ‘Vic MPs say they will persist with pro-Tibet ad’, The World Today, 17 October 2003.
To the President of China, Mr Hu Jintao
– a message from Australians

We, the undersigned, welcome you to Australia and wish you a successful and pleasant visit. We are encouraged by China’s recent steps regarding the situation in Tibet, in particular the re-establishment of contact between the Dalai Lama’s envoys and Chinese government. We call on you to build on this initial contact and engage in a substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives about Tibet’s future.

President Hu Jintao, please speak to the Dalai Lama

This message was organised by the Australia Tibet Council and endorsed by:

... (list of endorsers)

For more information contact: Australia Tibet Council PO Box 1236, Potts Point NSW 2011
Phone: 02 9285 3466 Fax: 02 9285 3466 Email: tibetcouncil@atc.org.au Website: www.atc.org.au

12. ‘To the President of China’, Australia Tibet Council, Australian, 24 October 2003—reproduced with the permission of the Australia Tibet Council Ltd (www.atc.org.au)
Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

As you may already know, President Hu Jintao of China will soon come to visit Australia. This visit will be a major event in China-Australia relations with profound significance. Now both the Chinese and Australian sides are working to ensue [sic] the smoothness and success of the visit. However, we have learnt that some anti-China forces in Australia, such as organizations for independence of Tibet or Falungong, are planning to disrupt the visit by issuing an open letter or putting up political advertisements in local papers at the time of the Presidents [sic] visit. To make sure that the visit will be free from such disruption, we hope that your paper will not publish their open letter, carry their political advertisements or any of their propaganda. It is our wish that with the success of the visit by President Hu, the friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries will grow further.32

To which the editor-in-chief of the Australian Financial Review, Michael Gill, replied:

I’m afraid that our policy on accepting or refusing advertisements does not provide for such requests. It is, naturally, our wish that relations between Australia and China should continue to improve. However, we do not believe that goal would be served by censoring advertisements or other legitimate expressions of opinion.33

The Australia Tibet Council advertisement appeared in the Australian newspaper on the day of President Hu’s address and carried the names of the following federal parliamentarians: Greens Senator for Tasmania, Bob Brown; the Labor Member for Melbourne Ports, Michael Danby; Labor Member for Denison, Duncan Kerr; the Greens Member for Cunningham, Michael Organ; the Labor Member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek; the Greens Senator for New South Wales, Kerry Nettle and the Labor Member for Melbourne, Lindsay Tanner.

President Hu Jintao’s Address

In what was one of his first overseas addresses as President, Hu offered a sweeping speech structured around the four principles he considers necessary for smooth state-to-state relations: mutual political respect, economic complementarity, cultural understanding and a commitment to security and world peace. In describing the China–Australia relationship as one of ‘all-round cooperation’, an expression which he used four times, President Hu outlined the characteristics of the relationship which fulfil each of these principles. Yet, within this seemingly benign framework, Hu gestured that, while cooperative, the bilateral relationship is by no means unconditional. Hu inferred that there numerous criteria that must be satisfied for the spirit of economic

33. ibid.
cooperation to continue. Australia should recognise Taiwan as ‘an inalienable part of Chinese territory’, oppose the ‘splittist activities’ of Taiwanese independence forces, maintain a position of non-interference in China’s internal affairs and reaffirm Australia’s commitment to multilateralism. (The full text of President Hu and Prime Minister Howard’s addresses are contained in Appendix A.)

Hu opened his address with a narrative connecting China with Australia—the expeditionary fleets of the Ming Dynasty which travelled to Australian shores in the fifteenth century:

The Chinese people have all along cherished amicable feelings about the Australian people. Back in the 1420s, the expeditionary fleets of China’s Ming dynasty reached Australian shores. For centuries, the Chinese sailed across vast seas and settled down in what was called ‘the southern land’, or today’s Australia. They brought Chinese culture here and lived harmoniously with the local people, contributing their proud share to Australia’s economy, society and thriving pluralistic society.

While Hu avoided the terms discover or discovery, instead choosing the term reached, the phrase all along is suggestive of an original or originating point, not simply for Chinese contact, but for contact itself—350 years before Cook. In acknowledging that this land was identified as ‘the southern land’, Hu also implied that the land, if not regularly visited, existed in the Ming imagination—with the Chinese giving the land both a name and a cartographic identity. In each instance, somewhat controversially, Hu created a distinctively Chinese counter-narrative of Australia’s early history.

The debate about the Chinese discovery of Australia has been revived in recent years by the publication of Gavin Menzies’ book, 1421: The Year China Discovered the World (2002). Menzies, a retired British Royal Navy Commanding Officer, who was born in China in 1937, claims ‘it is virtually impossible to claim that Columbus discovered America, that Cook found Australia or that Magellan was the first to circumnavigate the world. You have to be a crank nowadays to believe that’.34 Instead, Menzies argues that Chinese fleets, under the command of the eunuch-admiral Zheng He (1371–1433), travelled through Southeast Asia to Africa and beyond. Among the objects that Menzies offers as evidence of the Chinese voyages to Australia are a map on porcelain showing the coastline of what is now New Guinea, Aboriginal rock carvings depicting junks, wreckages of ancient ships, wooden pegs found near Byron Bay, provisionally carbon-dated to the mid-fifteenth century, and an ancient Chinese

stone head depicting a goddess found at Ulladulla on the New South Wales coast. Since its publication, professional historians have called into question the historical accuracy of 1421. In establishing a chronology of factual, interpretative and sourcing errors, these historians have suggested that Menzies’ text be best read as a work of alternative history or historical fiction.

Hu Jintao’s historiography comes into conflict with two historical legacies, two other histories. In suggesting a pre-European, Chinese discovery of ‘the southern land’, Hu challenged the white settlement narrative that Australia, and the Parliament itself, has anxiously created to conceal the history of indigenous dispossession—Cook’s discovery of terra nullius, Australia. Yet, while Hu overwrote this legacy he also demonstrated complicity with it. In rendering the traditional owners of the land invisible, indistinguishable within a culture of pluralism, Hu’s historiography similarly overlooked the legacy of indigenous sovereignty. Potentially offensive to indigenous, nationalist and postcolonial sensibilities, the President’s remarks are made more problematic by the fact that he called for, nay demanded, that Australia respect China’s territorial integrity, identify Taiwan ‘an inalienable part of Chinese territory’ and play a ‘constructive role in China’s peaceful reunification’.

While foreign policy speechmaking is largely declaratory, public statements on foreign policy are, more often than not, the result of a complex and strategic process. Given this, how should we interpret Hu’s appropriation of a nationalist narrative which suggests a Chinese discovery of Australia? It could be argued that Hu drew upon the story of Zheng He, not simply to situate Australia within the Chinese historical consciousness, but to demonstrate that China has a long history of peaceful contact with the people of this land. In claiming that the Chinese had ‘lived harmoniously with the local people’, Hu suggested that China has never been an imperial or colonising power, and inferred, allegorically, that Australians can be reassured—they have nothing to fear from China’s rise.

35. The Chinese–Australian artist, Guan Wei, has drawn upon Menzies’ account of a Ming discovery of Australia to create the exhibition, Other histories: Guan Wei’s fable for a contemporary world. In contrast to Menzies, Guan Wei draws upon the legend of Zheng He, and the Chinese voyages of 1405–1433, to demonstrate the instability of history and the constant exposure of history to the forces of manipulation and fictionalisation. Guan Wei employs the notions of historical contestability, palimpsest and invention to destabilise or even replace the concept of historical empiricism and remind us of the instability of all our historical visions.
Hu was not the only Chinese Government official to draw upon Zheng He’s friendly voyages. In her attempt to illustrate the peaceful continuity in China–Australia relations, Ambassador Madame Fu Ying would also go on to speak of Zheng He’s expedition to Australia, claiming that ‘Australia has always been on China’s map of world voyage’. Zheng He fever extended beyond the peaceful nationalism of Chinese officials and in the days following Hu’s address, Liberal Senator for Western Australia, David Johnston, suggested Zheng He be rightly acknowledged in Australian history:

Our history books should make greater acknowledgement of their feats [the fleets of Zheng He]. Tonight, time prevents me from further detailed discussion of these monumental voyages of exploration and discovery. However, I would like to concur with President Hu Jintao’s statement that the Chinese fleets of 1421 did in fact visit our shores … I direct senators who have an interest in this area to read the excellent work of Gavin Menzies in his book 1421—The Year China Discovered the World. I am indebted to Gavin Menzies, Royal Navy submariner, and his outstanding research that has greatly assisted me in my understanding of this aspect of our history [emphasis added].

President Hu’s address was largely delivered without incident. Senator Brian Harradine was the only member of Parliament to boycott Hu’s address. Liberal Senator for New South Wales, Bill Heffernan, was described as protesting against President Hu’s presence by refusing to wear his translation-headset, while several other Liberals were alleged to have failed to clap at the conclusion of the speech. The only representative of the Australian Greens present, Michael Organ, wore a Tibetan flag on his jacket lapel and a black armband to protest against political prisoners held in China. However, while President Hu’s address was largely delivered without incident, the address began late. Minutes before the scheduled commencement of the meeting, the Chinese Foreign Minister met with the Presiding Officers and insisted that certain guests be removed from the public galleries in order to prevent any potential interruptions. This resulted in the meeting beginning at 10:04 rather than the scheduled time of 10:00.

The intervention by the Foreign Minister resulted in claims that the Chinese Government had exercised, or sought to exercise, inappropriate influence over

parliamentary proceedings. The Committee of Privileges was charged with examining two allegations. First, whether the Chinese Government had in fact sought to have the guests of the Greens senators removed from the open public galleries and seated in the enclosed galleries. Second, whether the Chinese Government had been in any way responsible for seeking the exclusion of Senators Brown and Nettle from the House. The Committee of Privileges found, somewhat inconclusively:

The question of Chinese government influences on the exclusion of Senators Brown and Nettle from the proceedings and the method by which that exclusion was achieved is impossible to determine in the absence of further evidence from the Speaker and evidence from the Chinese government.

The Speaker made the decision to place guests of the Australian Greens in the glazed galleries and accepts that Chinese government agents did not directly inappropriately influence his decision. The committee is unable to pursue with the Speaker the extent to which he may have been influenced by a desire to avoid offending the Chinese and whether this amounted to inappropriate influence, albeit indirectly.

Should Australians be concerned about the Chinese Government’s attempt to censor Australian media content or their efforts to extend influence over Australia’s parliamentary proceedings? Is Hu’s speech of long-term strategic importance? In coupling Hu’s alternative version of the past, with the conditions he outlines for the future, it could be argued that Hu’s comments signalled a new era in Australia–China relations, an era when a more self-assured and assertive China would begin to project its influence. For Hu makes clear that if Australia is to continue sharing the yields that derive from China’s ‘socialist modernisation drive’, then Australia can expect China to be more explicit in its attempts to influence public debate and Australian government policy.

---

40. According to Matt Price, ‘Organ’s invited guests—two Tibetans and a Chinese democrat—were ordered out of the open visitor’s gallery and deposited behind the glass high above the chamber, all on the orders of Hu Jintao’s security’. ‘Wilting Green a wallflower in the house of nil dispute’, Weekend Australian, 25–26 October 2003, p. 9. Michael Organ’s guests were Democratic China Chairman, Chin Jin and Mr Dhondup Phun Tsok and Mrs Tsering Deki Tshokoto.


42. ibid.

43. For a discussion of the way China envisages the role it can play in international affairs see: Jian Zhang’s Building ‘a harmonious world’? Chinese perceptions of regional order and implications for Australia, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, June 2007.
Prime Minister Howard’s Address

Prime Minister Howard’s invitation to President Hu to address the Parliament was strategic: it fortified a relationship with one of the world’s most dynamic economies, it signalled Australia’s embrace of China as a regional partner, while also placing China, at least symbolically, on a foreign policy footing alongside the United States. Beyond this, the opportunity allowed Howard to challenge the longstanding myth that the Australian Labor Party, which has perennially considered itself the traditional custodian of the Australia–China relationship, was best placed to manage its development. Hu’s appearance before the Parliament would inexorably link Australia’s burgeoning relationship with communist China with the Liberal Party’s strategy of practical and commonsense engagement with Asia. While Howard’s invitation to Hu confirmed the strength of the relationship, it also demonstrated Howard’s credentials as an effective and dominant foreign policy prime minister, at once vindicating his commitment to a foreign policy dominated by ‘pragmatic’ bilateralism.\footnote{The Howard Government’s relationship with China had not always been so trouble free. In 1996, the new government supported the dispatch of a United States naval group to}
In his opening statement to Parliament, Prime Minister Howard pointed out that ten years previously it would have been very unlikely that a Chinese head of state would address the Australian Parliament: ‘It would be no exaggeration to say that 10 years ago an event such as this would have been seen as not only unlikely but indeed highly improbable’. In making such a claim Howard alluded to the advances that have taken place in Australia–China relations as well as within China itself. China had not only become a major importer of Australian raw materials, but within the decade, China had experienced a profound shift in its economic character. China had adopted various liberal market ideals: promoting the individual work ethic, connecting personal prosperity to national wealth, increasing domestic savings and substantially boosting its foreign reserves. Within the ten-year period, China had also become integrated into the international trading system through gaining membership to groups like the World Trade Organization, while also emerging as a key international stakeholder.45

Like Hu, Howard made it clear that mutual interest and economic complementarity are the forces that have built a co-operative bilateral relationship: Australia, rich in natural resources, has supplied China with the mineral and energy resources to fulfil its development needs. However, while Howard identified this complementarity, his welcoming remarks were preoccupied with identifying the perceived differences between Australia and China. In what was a short speech, Howard used the word different six times … ‘We are different societies. We have different cultures, we have different traditions and we have different histories. No purpose is served in pretending

the Taiwan Straits, after China conducted missile tests to threaten Taiwan. While China was openly critical of Australia, for being too closely tied to the United States, there were no long term repercussions for the bilateral relationship. For a more complete description of the character of John Howard’s pragmatic bilateralism see: Paul Kelly, Howard’s decade: an Australian foreign policy reappraisal, Lowy Institute paper 15, Longueville Media, Sydney, 2006 and Michael Wesley, The Howard Paradox: Australian diplomacy in Asia, 1996–2006, ABC Books, Sydney, 2007.

45. In response to concerns raised by the Member for Cowan, Graham Edwards, about the anticipated length of President Hu’s address and the travel arrangements for those who live in ‘distant states’, the Leader of the House, Tony Abbott, responded that he had not been informed of a specified period of time but that he imagined that ‘a ceremonial address of this nature would not go for an inordinate length of time’ and that he was confident that members could book a lunchtime or an afternoon flight. At which point the Member for Banks, Daryl Melham, interjected: ‘Castro does four hours!’: The Leader of the House responded, ‘I think the President of China is a reformed member of a certain political party, and I think that the member would be safe to catch an early afternoon flight back to Perth’, ‘Address by the President of the People’s Republic of China’, House of Representatives, Debates, 16 October 2003, p. 21657.
otherwise’. Howard proceeded to speak of people-to-people links; he cited the role China has played in nuclear disarmament negotiations with North Korea, before concluding that it is Australia’s aim to promote constructive dialogue between China and the United States—countries with whom Australia has ‘different but nonetheless close’ relations.

Given the setting, the uniqueness of the occasion and the symbolic and political weight attached, one would anticipate that Hu’s presence would have been marked by a lively speech which brought the significance of proceedings into focus. Instead, Howard offered a speech which was cold and devoid of colour. It was uncrafted, employed plain, dispassionate language and was replete with awkward and unmemorable sentences, for example: ‘I would characterise the relationship between Australia and China as being both mature and practical and as being a relationship that is intensely built upon growing people-to-people links’. Moreover, where Hu expressed some affection for Australia and its people—speaking of cultural exchange as a bridge of friendship between the two peoples—Howard failed to display either an interest in China or any affection for the Chinese people. Beyond this, Howard failed to deliver a message that is by any measure representative. He spoke of himself, and for his government, not once mentioning the Australian people. When Howard did refer to people-to-people links, he spoke of the number of Chinese-Australians in his seat of Bennelong. Despite the uniqueness of the occasion, the speech failed to reflect upon the character or beliefs of either the Australian or Chinese people and implied that the two countries (and their political leaderships) share little beyond complementary economies.  

46. Paul Kelly claims ‘Howard was inadequately prepared’ and ‘failed, surprisingly, to seize the moment’ while Annabel Crabb suggests that the speech was delivered ‘off the cuff’, Paul Kelly, ‘Power at Stake’, Weekend Australian, 25–26 October 2003, p. 17 and Annabel Crabb, ‘Off the cuff looking a little frayed’, Age, 25 October 2003, p. 8. By contrast, Howard’s speech to Sydney’s Australian-Chinese community in December 2004 is more successful in articulating what is common to the two nations, ‘We seek friendship with the Chinese people but very particularly I want to take the opportunity today of expressing my admiration to the Chinese Australian Community for the contribution it has made to our nation over a very long period of time. You’ve brought to Australia … your strong sense of family unity, your hard work, your thirst for education, your business acumen, your willingness whilst preserving your own cultural identity to become part of the broader Australian community’. John Howard, ‘Address to Sydney’s Australian Chinese Community, Golden Century Chinese Restaurant’, Sydney, 22 December 2004.
Howard’s coolness became more apparent when these welcoming remarks are compared with those made for President Bush on the previous day. Howard’s personal affection for Bush, his celebration of the nations’ common values and his honouring of the shared military history, resulted in a speech with a contrasting content, rhythm, tenor, language, sentence structure and an overwhelmingly different range of temporalities. Bush’s speech conveyed a similar—albeit folksy—sense of closeness.

47. This disproportion is also reflected in the official gifts presented to the two presidents and their wives. President Hu was given a hand-blown cobalt blue freeform vessel & jarrah wine presentation box (value: $332.00) and a jackaroo akubra hat (value: $127.27) while the President’s wife, Madame Liu, was presented with black emu and cow leather handbag (value: $91.00). President Bush was given a cobalt blue glass platter (value: $240.00), Helen Hewson’s 300 Years of Botanical Illustration—limited edition (value: $267.27), and he and his wife were given his-and-her drizabone short coats with fleece liners (value: $503.64). The President’s wife, Laura Bush, was also given a standard edition of Helen Hewson’s 300 Years of Botanical Illustration (value: $65.45) and a signed copy of Geoffrey Blainey’s Black Kettle and Full Moon (value: $76.36)—total values: $550.27 (President Hu) and $1144.42 (President Bush). ‘Questions in Writing: Official Gifts’, House of Representatives, Debates, 10 May 2005, p. 72. The total cost of the Hu visit was $211,456.60 (travel: $47,662.35, accommodation: $43,945.54, security: $2,492.07, other expenses: $117,356.64) Daryl Melham, ‘Question in Writing: President
and affection and Bush reminded the Parliament that when Howard recently visited the Bush ranch in Texas he dubbed him, a ‘man of steel’.

The welcoming address delivered by the Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, succeeded, in many instances, where Howard’s failed. Drawing upon the Labor Party’s China-legacy, Crean borrowed the aphorism used by former Chinese President Jiang Zemin, when visiting Australia in 1999—‘There is an old Chinese saying: when you go to the well to draw water, remember who dug the well’. Crean paid tribute to the old well-diggers: Gough Whitlam, who was sitting in the public gallery, his father Frank, who accompanied Whitlam during his first visit to China as Prime Minister in 1973, and the Chinese Premier of that time, Zhou Enlai. In elaborating upon this shared history, Crean was able to honour the relationship in a way that Howard, with his fixation on difference, commonsense and practicality, could not. Crean also created a sense of affection and intimacy through congratulating the Chinese, on behalf of the Parliament, and the Australian people, on their recent manned space flight. Crean’s speech avoided the cool, guarded, uncompromising and values-focused perspective that is offered by Howard and he made a better attempt at demonstrating what the political leaderships might have in common.

**Practical Realism**

If we consider foreign policy speeches as a political and diplomatic mechanism for overlooking, or even overcoming, cultural and ideological difference, it seems odd that Howard would use this opportunity to draw attention to the differences between the nations. So why did Howard offer a speech so clearly focused upon the difference between Australia and China? It could be argued that Howard wanted to remind people not to become unrealistic about a relationship which is forged by countries who hold different values. Moreover, Howard attempted to use ‘difference’ strategically; he employed it to operate as a buffer between the two nations, a strategic space from which Australia can enter into ‘open and frank discussions’ with China.

---

48. It should also be noted that Crean refers to ‘this parliament of the Australian people’.

49. Howard’s address avoids the question that lingers at its heart: how do two countries with ‘distinctive yet different traditions’ manage their differences in times of disagreement or conflict? For surely the ‘maturity’ of any transactional relationship is tested not in times of progress, but in times of strife.
In order to fully understand this focus on difference we need to place it within the context of Howard’s foreign policy vision. Howard described his approach to foreign policy as ‘positive realism’. Positive realism suggests a strategy of maintaining a realistic appreciation of the difference between societies and cultures while positively focusing on shared interests and mutual respect; elsewhere Howard called it ‘pragmatic engagement’. Howard’s foreign policy realism was positive, because it could benefit from shared interests, but it was also predicated upon observing difference. Nevertheless, Howard’s position was not without contradiction, for elsewhere he had claimed:

The basis of the way in which I have conducted Australia’s relations with China in the time that I have been Prime Minister has been to build on the things that we have in common and not become obsessed with the things that make us different.

Throughout his speech Howard was at pains to make clear that while we have a value-convergence with the United States and a value-difference with China, the value discrepancy does not prevent Australia from effectively engaging China. For the theory of positive realism enables Australia to maintain two types of foreign policy relationships: those which evolve from common history and shared values and those based on mutual respect and shared interests—what Michael Wesley has termed, ‘organic’ and ‘transactional’ relationships.

It is possible that the values-focused speech for Bush and the difference-focused speech for Hu are sufficiently co-dependent that they can be read as one. The common values that are identified as being shared between Australia and the United States are directly equivalent to the differences that are identified to exist between Australia and China. The pairing, sequencing and juxtaposition of the speeches reinforces this. In reading the


52. In spite of the fact that each speech is framed around the notion of value-convergence or value-difference, we are given little sense of what a value is: how is a value constituted, who these values might represent, who they exclude, or how an Australian value is similar to an American value or different from a Chinese one. Perhaps the 690,000 Australians who claim Chinese ancestry or who have emigrated from the People’s Republic might feel that the differences between Australia and China are not as comprehensive or as absolute as the Prime Minister suggests.

two speeches together, we can identify at least three important and complex foreign policy statements that Howard appeared to be making. In the first instance, Howard used the shared interests/different values template in an attempt to place China near the centre of Australian foreign policy, while signalling to the United States what the Australia–China relationship is not. In the second instance, Howard alerted the domestic audience to the fact that his government was not singularly focused on its alliance with the US; that he could simultaneously honour the alliance with the United States and ‘get on’ with Asia. Thirdly, in offering a closing comment that Australia wants to see ‘calm and constructive dialogue between the United States and China on those issues which might potentially cause tension between them’, Howard sent the message to the Chinese that—despite President Bush’s claim that ‘Australia’s agenda with China is the same as my country’s’—Australia does not see China in exactly the same way as the United States.54

In summary, if we focus exclusively on the content of the welcoming remarks for President Hu, it could be argued that Howard’s preoccupation with difference resulted in a message which was impersonal, awkward and lacking in diplomatic finesse. However, if we focus upon the context of the comments, reading the welcoming remarks for Hu alongside those offered for President Bush, Howard’s speech appears to have a clearer purpose and a more recognisable foreign policy objective. Howard drew upon the powerful symbolism that was attached to the sequencing of the visits, while successfully communicating a highly complex and nuanced trilateral foreign policy position.

**Relational Politics and Practical Realism**

As a nation we’re over all that sort of identity stuff. We’re far more self-possessed and self-confident and self-believing and sure of our place in the world. And it is a very identifiably Australian place.55

Howard appeared, almost intuitively, to develop certain policy positions in a very relational or oppositional manner—he regularly defined and promoted policy positions against that which they were not. Consistent with this pattern, Howard’s positive realism emerged in contradistinction to the model for Asian engagement that was developed by the Hawke and Keating Governments. In claiming that the Australia–

54. President Bush made this comment during his address on the previous day, George Walker Bush, ‘Joint Meeting’, Senate, *Debates*, 23 October 2003, p. 16720.

China relationship should not be ‘burdened by the kinds of unrealistic expectations that featured so prominently at certain times in the past’, Howard made it clear that he did not approach China with what he saw as the romanticism and ‘unrealistic’ expectations of the ALP.\(^56\) Moreover, Howard always believed that the Labor model for Asian engagement was predicated upon trading Australia’s history, heritage and traditions for a seat at Asia’s table.

In April 1995, shortly after assuming the leadership of the Federal Parliamentary Liberal Party for the second time, John Howard delivered the Fifth Asialink Lecture. This wide-ranging lecture was Howard’s first foreign policy address since regaining the leadership of the Liberal Party. The views expressed are remarkably consistent with those articulated during eleven years of government. Speaking with a voice charged with the activism of opposition, Howard attacked the notion that the ALP is the only political party that can effectively engage the region. In promoting the Coalition’s Asia credentials, Howard cited John McEwen’s negotiation of the Australia–Japan Agreement on Commerce (1957), Malcolm Fraser’s response to the Indochinese refugee crisis of the 1970s and the commitment of generations of Liberal prime ministers/foreign ministers to Australia’s engagement with the region. Howard then went on to deride Paul Keating and Gareth Evans’ ‘self-serving, partisan re-writing of history’, rejecting the idea that the Labor Party discovered Asia, before committing himself to a new and independent model for Asian engagement.

Even though China hardly rates a mention, the 1995 Asialink address was the originating point for some of Howard’s classic formulations about Australian identity and Australian foreign policy:

> We [the Coalition] do not believe that Australia faces some kind of exclusive choice between our past and our future, between our history and our geography. We see such a choice as a phoney and irrelevant one proposed by those with ulterior motives. Australia must meet the regional challenges of the future, in Asia and elsewhere, with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances but with pride in our history, our values and our institutions … Once we start disavowing our history, or disowning our values or changing our institutions simply because we think regional countries will respect us more for doing so, then we will be badly mistaken …\(^57\)


\(^57\) John Howard, ‘Australia’s Links with Asia: Realising Opportunities in our Region’, Fifth Asialink Lecture and Asialink Birthday Celebrations, 12 April 1995.
Chapter Three: Foreign Policy and ‘Identity Stuff’

Whether or not the Australian Labor Party really wanted to renounce Australian identity or forswear Australian traditions in the way Howard suggested, Howard had continually used this suggestion to structure his model for positive realism. Australia’s engagement with Asia would be based upon mutual respect and mutual interests and not upon any ‘phony’ recalibration of Australian identity.

Howard did not simply reject Keating’s foreign policy vision; he rejected Keating’s domestic cultural vision for Australia, wholesale. Howard believed Keating’s cultural agenda plunged the nation into a cultural malaise, resulting in ‘unwarranted act(s) of national self-abasement’ and an intellectual culture of self-hatred.\(^{58}\) Howard would go on to replace Keating’s culture of ‘self-abasement’ with an equally authoritative version of the past. Predicated upon the rejection of what he characterised as the ‘black-armband’ view of Australian history, the refusal to apologise to indigenous Australia and an entrenched distrust of multiculturalism, Howard’s white cultural nationalism mobilised the legacy of the Anzac, promoted the monarchy and celebrated culturally-specific values such as mateship and the fair go.\(^{59}\)

In honouring such values—and in getting over ‘all that sort of identity stuff’—Howard believed he could be realistic about the differences between Australia and the nations of Asia. This would help forge relationships of mutual respect, which in turn would help in the development of relationships built upon mutual self-interest.

---

58. ibid.

59. In 1996 Howard claimed, ‘I profoundly reject with the same vigour what others have described, and I have adopted the description, as the black armband view of Australian history. I believe the balance sheet of Australian history is a very generous and benign one. I believe that, like any other nation, we have black marks upon our history but amongst the nations of the world we have a remarkably positive history. I think there is a yearning in the Australian community right across the political divide for its leaders to enunciate more pride and sense of achievement in what has gone before us. I think we have been too apologetic about our history in the past. I think we have been far too self-conscious about what this country has achieved and I believe it is tremendously important that we understand, particularly as we approach the centenary of the Federation of Australia, that the Australian achievement has been a heroic one, a courageous one and a humanitarian one. Any attempts to denigrate that achievement I believe will derive the justifiable ire and criticism of the Australian community; however people may lie in the political spectrum’. John Howard, ‘Racial Tolerance’, House of Representatives, Debates, 30 October 1996, p. 6155.
For Howard, the pairing of the Bush and Hu visits offered proof that Australia need not choose between its history and geography. Howard made this clear in a comment made in the weeks leading up to the presidential addresses:

… it’s a wonderful message to communicate to our friends and to our own people that we can be close to the Americans yet develop a very constructive relationship with China, a very different country and one that will be enormously important to us in the years to come.60

Plain and measured rhetoric became a hallmark of Howard’s governance. Howard was particularly deliberate in the language he chose to describe the Australia–China relationship. Howard claimed, ‘I’ve always sought to build our relationship with countries like China, not [with] overblown rhetoric, but through realistic engagement in areas where we have common interests’.61 Yet beyond this, Howard created a new vocabulary for describing Australia–China relations. The speech welcoming Hu is flushed with words from Howard’s foreign policy lexicon: he claimed that the relationship had a ‘commonsense character’; that it was ‘practical’, ‘mature’, ‘constructive’ and ‘wholly positive’.

In Howard’s terms, plain language helps keep the relationship ‘realistic’ and ‘sensible’. Yet Howard also used plain language to differentiate himself from his Labor predecessors, who he argued have often made inflated claims about the Australia–China relationship. Even where there was little or no difference between Labor and the Coalition’s foreign policies, Howard could be found to create a language system that suggests difference. Keating’s ‘immature’ foreign policy was replaced by a ‘mature’ foreign policy; the Labor Party’s ‘special’ relationship with China was transformed into a ‘sensible’ relationship and so on. As recently as April 2006, Prime Minister Howard introduced Premier Wen Jiabao by claiming: ‘Now I don’t seek to invoke language such as special relationships and so forth, but I simply make the point that the transformation of the relationship with China has been remarkable’.62

Charm Offensive

Joshua Kurlantzick’s *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Changing the World* (2007), argues that as the People’s Republic emerges as an international power it seeks to influence nations who are critical to its economic, political and strategic interests, through employing soft power. Borrowing from the Harvard academic Joseph Nye’s notion that ‘soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others … attracting others to do what you want’, Kurlantzick identifies Chinese soft power as:

… anything outside the military and the security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers like aid and investment and participation in multilateral organizations.  

‘High’ soft power targets elites through exploiting the gravitational pull of the Chinese market, while ‘low’ soft power targets the public through events like the Olympic Games, the promotion of Chinese language studies, through sponsoring Chinese New Year celebrations and through offering student scholarships. Within such an argument, these forms of influence or co-option are considered to have replaced past forms of grey diplomacy—more explicit in their coerciveness. Some have argued that President Hu’s speech can be read as an example of China’s soft power diplomacy,

---


64. In Australia we have seen Chinese influence emerge through the partial funding of Confucius Institutes at the universities of Western Australia, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Former Australian diplomat to China, Jocelyn Chey, has warned that Australian universities need to understand the political and strategic motives behind the establishment of such institutes, adding that any move by the institutes to promote academic research was ‘fundamentally flawed’ because of their close association with the Chinese Communist Party. Professor Chey adds that Australia has become a ‘special target for soft power diplomacy’ because of its large ethnic Chinese community, natural resources and close relations with the United States. As quoted by Tom Hyland, ‘Confucius say … universities at risk in link-up with Chinese Government’, *Sunday Age*, 18 November 2007, p. 7.

65. *Charm Offensive* was one of two books Kevin Rudd presented President George Bush during their meeting at APEC in September 2007. Through the gift, Rudd appeared to send a message to the President about the way in which nations like China and the United States are understood to assert their influence. (The other was David Day’s biography of John Curtin.)
particularly when juxtaposed against President Bush’s uncompromising declarations about war and terror.\textsuperscript{66}

Kurlantzick, an American journalist, juxtaposes the parliamentary and community responses to President Bush and President Hu’s addresses in October 2003 to develop his argument about the way China’s soft power has improved its public image:

Protected by an enormous security cocoon, Bush planned to address the Australian Parliament. Bush could barely get rolling on his speech—in which he planned to tell the story of how American and Australian World War II troops together saved Australia from Japanese invasion—before Australian senators began heckling him. Two senators from Australia’s Green Party yelled at Bush, screaming that America should follow international law and stop human rights abuses like those at the US prison compound at Guantánamo Bay … (Bush quipped) ‘I love free speech’ as police pushed the senator-hecklers out of the chamber.

Only days later, Australia offered Chinese president [sic] Hu Jintao a vastly different welcome … Hu toured Australia like a hero … Even Australian Tibet campaigners, normally angry about China’s treatment of Tibetans, went out of their way to be polite to Hu. One Tibetan group purchased a full-page advertisement in a leading Australian newspaper telling Hu, we welcome you to Australia and wish you a successful and pleasant visit …\textsuperscript{67}

In comparing the reception of the two presidents, Kurlantzick overstates the differences—almost to the point of misrepresentation. Kurlantzick’s analysis, which does not include any consideration of the welcoming remarks by Prime Minister Howard, also contains numerous interpretative and factual errors. In the above extract, Kurlantzick claims that the two Greens Senators were pushed from the chamber by police. As explained earlier, the Senators defied the orders of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and refused to leave the Chamber—police are not permitted to enter the chambers of the Australian Parliament. Significantly, the Bush and Hu addresses were sequenced to occur on consecutive days—not as Kurlantzick claims, days apart. The toadying ‘Tibet campaigners’ Kurlantzick refers to are, in actual fact, the Australia Tibet Council—who produced an advertisement that lobbied for dialogue between Hu Jintao and the Dalai Lama and which, as we have seen, included several hundred signatures, including those of a number of federal parliamentarians.\textsuperscript{68} In his attempt to


\textsuperscript{67}. Joshua Kurlantzick, op. cit., pp. 2–3.

\textsuperscript{68}. Kurlantzick also stretches the results of the Lowy Institute poll to claim that 69% of Australians (rather than respondents) viewed China positively.
expose the transformation that has taken place in the way Australia understands China, Kurlantzick also suggests that as recently as the 1980s, China was a ‘pariah’ in Australia, ‘Australia’s responses to the Bush and Hu visits reflected shifts in Australian public opinion. Only twenty years ago, Australia viewed China as coldly as it greeted American [sic] warmly’—a statement clearly at odds with the description of the Hawke Government’s China policy in Chapter Two. Finally, while continuing to be cavalier about political events ‘Down Under’, Kurlantzick goes on to overstate the closeness of Australian politicians to China by suggesting booming Chinese markets have seen Australian politicians ‘back away from ANZUS’.

It is likely that Howard would respond to Kurlantzick by suggesting that he needs to stop seeing China’s rise in ‘zero-sum terms’:

Many of our critics said a closer relationship with the United States would come at a cost to our relationships in Asia. Nothing could be further from the case. Relationships are not a zero sum game. Our relationship with China has flourished at the same time as we have strengthened the US alliance.

Yet more than this, in hosting the two presidents on successive days, Howard was seeking to develop a different type of position. In a somewhat clumsy closing statement, Howard—rather ambitiously—suggested that Australia might have a role as a facilitator to promote ‘constructive and calm dialogue’ between China and the United States:

... it is self-evident that the relationship between Australia, the United States and China respectively, on a two-way basis—that is, our relationship with the United States and then again our relationship with China—will be extremely important to the stability of our region. Our aim is to see calm and constructive dialogue between the United States and China on those issues which might potentially cause tension between them. It will be Australia’s aim, as a nation which has different but nonetheless close relationships with both of those nations, to promote that constructive and calm dialogue.

69. Joshua Kurlantzick, op. cit., p. 3. In Chapter Two we observed the way the Hawke Government was committed to growing the relationship and that by the mid-1980s more Ministers were visiting China than ever before. This was also a time when an unprecedented 70,000 Australians—one in every 200—visited China, Peter Cole-Adams, ‘China’s Favourite Barbarians Need to Avoid Self-delusion’, Age, 14 September 1985.


Conclusion

Chapter Two examined J. G. Latham’s Eastern Mission of 1934, describing it as a key precursor to Australia’s engagement with the region. In the report detailing the activities of the Mission which was tabled in Parliament in July 1934, Latham explained that when the President of the National Government of China, Dr Lin Sen, recently visited Canberra, he was accorded a seat on the floor of the House of Representatives.72 This was typically the way the Australian Parliament honoured a visit by a foreign head of state at the time. This chapter has observed how, seventy years later, the strength of the Australia–China relationship was acknowledged through an even more significant act of parliamentary diplomacy. In examining this historic moment, this chapter has offered an account of how the bilateral relationship developed under the prime ministership of John Howard. It also gives preliminary consideration to the way the Chinese government manages its international relations. In so doing, the chapter provides context for the following chapter which turns to examine how the bilateral relationship developed during the 41st Parliament of Australia.
