

scheme. To be sure, public opposition led to the actual scheme being dropped (p. 22). However, the policy was continued by other means. In 1987, measures (mainly financial) were introduced to encourage more births. They provided special incentives for parents with higher incomes which indirectly benefited graduate mothers. The PAP's dedication to cherished values explains its reluctance to yield to popular demands which, it thinks, might imperil the survival and prosperity of Singapore.

In spite of the differences of opinion expressed here, the book should certainly be read; it is so challenging that this reviewer would have read it almost as carefully if he had not been fortunate in having been chosen to review it.

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In Jeopardy: The Royal Navy and British Far Eastern Defence Policy, 1945-1951. By Malcolm H. Murfett. Southeast Asian Historical Monographs. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995. 178 pp.

At the end of the Pacific War, Clement Attlee's Labour government was in a dilemma. Pledged to the expensive creation of a welfare state at home and its leadership known to be anti-colonial in temperament, the government had to formulate an apparently contradictory foreign and defence policy in the Far East which would re-assert British authority, maintain harmony with its colonial allies in the region and not alienate the United States. This book is the first detailed study of the pressures and difficulties involved in the development of such a policy during the Labour Party's term of office. Murfett has made extensive use of the manuscripts in the official collections at London's Public Record Office, together with the private papers of many of the most important figures, buttressed by newspaper and scholarly sources. The author's treatment of the subject is as authoritative as is possible considering that the British Government still refuses to allow scholars access to the records of the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East). Although those papers might show that the differences between the

military establishment and the Cabinet were even greater than Murfett suggests, it is unlikely that they would materially alter his overall interpretation.

Financial constraints, rather than ideological convictions, formed the biggest stumbling block to any forward defence policy for the British in East Asia. The Singapore naval base is central to the story. In 1946, in order to rebuild British power in the region, the government had three options as the main base for the still-powerful British Pacific Fleet — Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney — none of which were wholly satisfactory. Hong Kong's proximity to China and its civil wars made the crown colony hopelessly insecure; Sydney would be expensive to develop and, in any case, was simply too far away from the possible scenes of action; Singapore, although vulnerable, was centrally located, its naval base was virtually intact and, the Cabinet hoped, could function with minimal rehabilitation and, hence, minimal expense. Another important factor which persuaded the government to proceed with the Singapore option was the economic value of Malaya's tin and rubber, the exports of which to the United States were a matter of highest priority to the Treasury. The government's attitude towards the Singapore base, however, was ambivalent, swaying according to Treasury demands and the state of international affairs in East Asia. Between 1946 and 1948, the future of the naval base looked dismal; as the Malayan Emergency and the Cold War intensified, so the base's importance grew. Singapore's place in the British defence scheme seemed assured with the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 and the consequent growth in military expenditure.

In late 1946, Prime Minister Attlee appointed the former First Lord of the Admiralty, A.V. Alexander, as Minister of Defence charged with the virtually contradictory tasks of drastic retrenchment of the fighting forces and devising a workable blueprint for defence on a much reduced military budget. From the Commonwealth Conference of 1946 it took Alexander four years to cajole Australia and New Zealand into collaborative planning for regional defence. Essentially, the plans called for the Royal Navy, in the event of a general war, to withdraw to European waters, leaving the Singapore base to the Royal Australian Navy. The savage cuts, which included closure of the Singapore base, proposed by the Harwood Working Party's Report in 1949 would have shorn Britain of any military capability in Asia at a time when the Malayan Emergency and the Chinese civil war threatened to draw the country ever deeper into Asian affairs. Alexander sided openly with the armed forces against the Treasury. This soon cost him his job. But the very

factors which had forced Alexander to oppose the Treasury now ensured the retention of the Singapore naval base for another decade.

This book is neither naval nor political history in the conventional sense of those terms. In stressing the important dimensions of maritime power and the struggles between defence requirements and Treasury necessity in British post-war policy-making, Murfett offers an original view which complements the broad-based works of scholars like Dockrill, Owendale or Frankel and the more narrowly constructed writings of, for example, Peter Dennis (on Mountbatten in Southeast Asia) and M.R. Gordon (on Labour's foreign policy). Like many historians, Murfett has himself written valuable monographs on topics which then crop up as part of the broader study. For example, the present work puts more fully into the context of defence policy the 1940 *Amethyst* crisis, of which Murfett's *Hostage on the Yangtze* (1991) is far and away the best account. *In Jeopardy* is a very good piece of policy history which brings into focus the complexities of British defence planning in the years immediately after the end of the war in the Pacific.

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Australia and North-East Asia in the 1990s: Accelerating Change.
Canberra: East Asia Analytical Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1992. 306 pp.

This book presents the reader with yet another useful collaborative effort between the Australian Government, the academic community at the Australian National University and a variety of private consultants under the auspices of the East Asia Analytical Unit at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Building on a report completed by Ross Garnaut in 1989, entitled *Australia and Northeast Asian Ascendancy* (hereafter cited as the Garnaut Report), *Australia and North-East Asia* attempts to identify and succinctly explain the factors which contribute to Northeast Asia's ongoing and dramatic structural change, as well as many of the other accompanying trends and patterns which are