

# Abstract

The events in East Timor and Canberra during 1998 and 1999 provide the focus for this study of Australian Government policymaking in national security crises. The research for this study builds on a range of published government, media and academic sources, and interviews with nearly sixty Australian political leaders, public service officials and military officers. These interviews provide a deep and broad look at the Australian Government, from the top-level National Security Committee down to desk officers within the major departments of state. The subsequent examination of this evidence shows how the Australian Government operated during this crisis, as well as the broader impact of this crisis upon Australian policy.

The study uses a policy cycle as an organisational and structural heuristic to examine this inherently messy process. Five essential characteristics of Australian policymaking in national security crises provide this work's key finding. These characteristics can be summarised as a dominant executive, collegiality, a closed and secretive system, an essential role for external actors, and complex and complicated implementation.