

# Chapter 4

## Bringing Policy Advice Together

While advice may be well-developed after the initiating phases of the cycle, policymakers generally see advantage in exposing that advice to others before seeking decisions. Chapter 4 examines how international and domestic audiences are brought into the policy cycle through consultation, and other internal government actors through coordination. This chapter follows the format used in Chapter 3 and, once again, each section is drawn together by a short observation covering the main points about that phase in lieu of a conclusion for the chapter.

### Consultation

The Consultation phase involves testing policy with audiences outside the originating policymaking department. For Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis, consultation responds to democratic pressure because people ‘want a say between elections’.<sup>1</sup> Consultation is expected to increase public involvement and, in turn, increase policy legitimacy. The phase has two typical characteristics:

- Citizens demand a say in policy between elections, and sometimes, consultation is mandatory; and
- Consultation occurs across a continuum from information to control.<sup>2</sup>

Bridgman and Davis’ consultation continuum (see Figure 3) spans information (the minimum where people are simply told of decisions), through increasing interaction between government and stakeholders, to control where governments allow citizens to make decisions through referenda.<sup>3</sup> This section shows that the consultation phase in a crisis differs greatly from the typical—so much so that a modified continuum has been developed to show the options for consultation during a crisis. It also shows how consultation can reduce the government’s freedom on action in crisis.

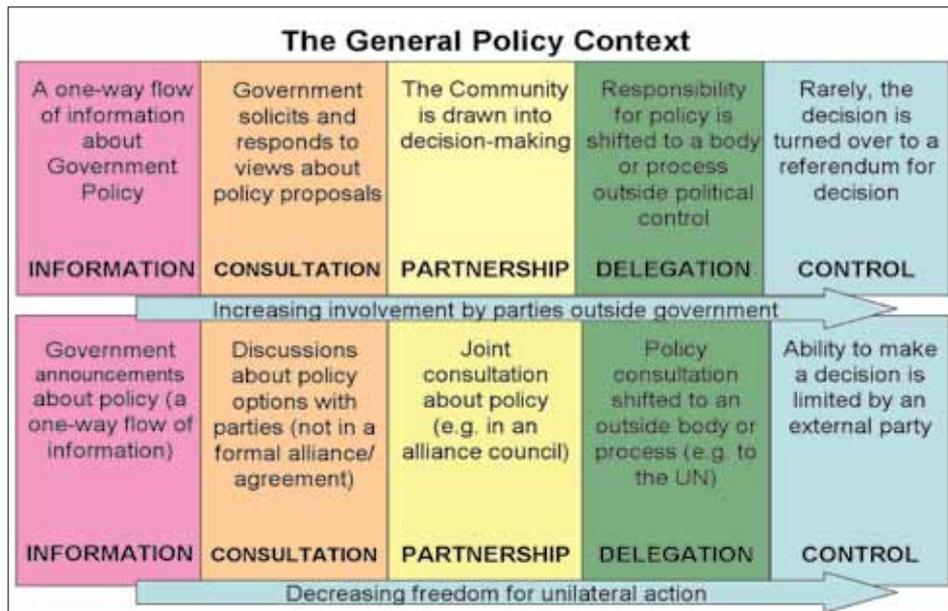
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1 Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, 3rd edn, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004, p. 78.

2 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, p. 78 and pp. 80–82.

3 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 80–82.

**Figure 3: The Consultation Continuum<sup>4</sup>**



### Consultation with international actors

The Australian Government consulted a range of international actors in 1998–99, with different entities being important at different stages. Early in the crisis, most consultation was conducted with the Indonesian Government, East Timorese community leaders and Portugal. In all three cases, the Australian Government was operating at the ‘discussion’ point along the Bridgman and Davis continuum—there was an attempt to identify the positions of the various parties and, sometimes, to convince them to change their policy preferences. Australia adopted a similar position with other major actors early in 1999, particularly those who might provide support to the popular consultation and future nation-building operation in East Timor. This position moved further to the right on the continuum as the crisis became acute, before reaching ‘delegation’ and ‘control’ as the international community decided on action to restore stability. This section explores how the modes of Australian Government consultation changed during 1999, before moving to consultation during the period of acute crisis.

Prior to September 1999, Australia’s consultation with Indonesia aimed at firstly determining the attitudes of the key Indonesian actors—such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the military and the new president—and then towards convincing the Indonesians to uphold their agreement to maintain security

4 Adapted from Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 82–87.

during the popular consultation. These discussions were conducted mainly through Australia's embassy in Jakarta, and included a number of visits by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and meetings with Indonesian leaders. Other ministers, including Defence Minister John Moore and Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, also engaged Indonesian leaders and sought to exchange opinions on the situation.<sup>5</sup> The main thrust of these discussions went towards convincing the Indonesian Government to undertake a more meaningful dialogue with East Timorese leaders.<sup>6</sup>

After the Howard Letter was leaked and the Indonesian Cabinet decided to conduct the ballot, Australian consultation mainly concerned security in East Timor. This discussion ran on two tracks. The first concerned diplomatic efforts to convince the Indonesian Government to discharge their responsibility for security in East Timor, while the second track involved occasional attempts to get the Indonesians to agree to accept a peacekeeping presence for the ballot. This second track culminated with the Bali Summit between Prime Minister John Howard and President B.J. Habibie on 27 April 1999. This meeting, which occurred during the period where the Indonesian Government was considering the final tripartite agreement, marked the last time Australia pressed for peacekeepers before the consultation.<sup>7</sup> After this, the main theme of Australia's formal and informal representations switched to reminding the Indonesians of their commitment to maintain security.<sup>8</sup>

While the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)'s efforts to consult with Indonesia were covered in the Policy Instruments phase (see Chapter 3), there were also informal and 'off-line' consultations throughout the crisis. These contacts provided an advantage in this sensitive situation, largely because they could be explained as second-tier or unofficial.<sup>9</sup> The Australian Federal Police (AFP) had good relations with Indonesia's police, and they used these links effectively in 1999 and after.<sup>10</sup> Significant discussions at the military-to-military level also occurred. These included a formal seminar about civil-military relations in March 1999, which allowed the apolitical Australian military to

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5 Interviews with Tim Fischer and John Moore. These exchanges included a round of formal ministerial discussion on 24–25 February 1999.

6 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp. 25–26.

7 See Chapter 2, footnote 55.

8 David Goldsworthy, 'East Timor,' in David Goldsworthy and Peter Edwards (eds), *Facing north: a century of Australian engagement with Asia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 2003, pp. 232–33; and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, pp. 98–99 and pp. 109–111.

9 For example, note the representations by Downer to the Indonesian Government, as recorded in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, p. 109 and p. 114.

10 Interview with Adrien Whiddett.

discuss the role of military organisations in democracies with their Indonesian counterparts. Informal contacts were also important. Interviewee 046-06 recalled one such exchange with high-ranking Indonesian officers in 1998:

There was always that issue of Australia's apparent support for the freedom of East Timor and agitation was going on in Australia at the time. We talked about it, typically off line. They were concerned that we had a predilection for supporting various groups<sup>11</sup>

These military-to-military discussions became sharp at one point, when a senior military leader and Defence official were dispatched to Jakarta to provide their counterparts with evidence of Indonesian military complicity with the East Timorese militias.<sup>12</sup> Consultation like this provided ways to pass diplomatic messages, and to effect important coordination.

DFAT also met with East Timorese leaders from mid-1998. These included visits by Ambassador John McCarthy to the province during 12–16 June, informal consultations about the future of East Timor from June 1998 and financial support to intra-Timorese reconciliation.<sup>13</sup> Other contacts between senior Australians and influential Timorese also occurred, such as the meeting between Downer and Bishop Carlos Belo in Melbourne in February 1999.<sup>14</sup> These discussions were, on one level, simply attempts to gauge the opinion of potentially influential people. However, the manner in which the consultation occurred, and the central proposition expressed to Xanana Gusmão during this time,<sup>15</sup> indicated that Australian consultation was designed to shape East Timorese opinion toward a more moderate and unified position.

Portuguese leaders were also consulted in an attempt to persuade them towards Australia's views. As the former colonial power, Portugal was a member of the UN-sponsored Tripartite Talks, and a *de facto* representative of East Timorese opinion. On one occasion, Downer rebuffed the demand for an immediate recognition of East Timorese independence by Portuguese Foreign Minister Jamie Gama. Instead, Downer argued for a staged process, citing the examples of other peace processes in the region.<sup>16</sup> Further meetings were held between the

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11 Interview with 046-06.

12 This meeting was discussed in Chapter 1.

13 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, pp. 20–23, pp. 26–29 and pp. 101–102.

14 Bishop Carlos Bello, a Nobel Laureate, was the Catholic Bishop for Dili in 1998–99. Interviewee 064-07 recalls that Bishop Bello accurately predicted the result of the popular consultation at that early stage.

15 In 1998, Xanana Gusmão was an imprisoned but influential East Timorese resistance leader. He later became independent East Timor's first President. Australia's ambassador to Jakarta had 'regular contact' with Gusmão in 1998, and this helped the Australian Government to obtain a clearer picture of Gusmão's views (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, p. 27).

16 Greg Hunt, 'Timor peace plan more palatable after dinner', *Australian*, 14 January 1999, p. 1.

foreign ministers, with the aim being to coordinate the two nation's positions on East Timor. During a meeting on 27 February 1999, Downer stressed the need to convince the East Timorese to support the process, clearly hoping the Portuguese would use their influence toward this end.<sup>17</sup>

The Australian Government also consulted intensively with the United Nations, especially with those officials responsible for organising the ballot. These consultations included the March 1999 discussions with Francesc Vendrell's UN assessment team. While this meeting was an exchange of views at one level, the Australian delegation took it as an opportunity to influence UN views on East Timor and Indonesia. Australia-UN consultation continued throughout 1999, with frequent visits to UN Headquarters by a DFAT-Defence team and a series of policy 'non-papers'. Matthew Skoien said these 'non-papers' were provided to the United Nations for use in their own processes:

Non-papers ... did not have a heading or footer, and no title. They were pages of information, advice and policy options that were consistent with Australia's interests that he [Brigadier Smith] would send off to New York. They would often come back as a UN document. ... That was one way we were able to walk that line of not being formally involved but still influencing heavily.<sup>18</sup>

These were all common techniques within the UN system to help talks progress without implying commitment,<sup>19</sup> and were clearly useful in a situation where considerable sensitivity was required during consultation.

Contact between Australia and the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Political Affairs (DPA) had very subtle and sensitive aims. Significant work was done to convince these departments to use Darwin (rather than Denpasar in Bali) as the key logistic base for the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET)—a decision that proved beneficial when the peacekeeping force was subsequently required.<sup>20</sup> It was clear to Australian policymakers that the DPKO did not have the staff to conduct detailed appreciations of the situation or to design the necessary force for an operation. In addition, the DPKO was operating in an uncertain environment where pre-emptive contingency planning for a peacekeeping force, in the absence of an assured mandate, created diplomatic challenges with no assurances of troop commitments. In order to reduce this problem, Australia sent a group of defence

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<sup>17</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition*, pp. 46–47. See also Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', p. 233 who cites NAA, A9737, 92/051651, Cablegram O.PA6346, Paris to Canberra, 2 March 1999 for detail of this discussion.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Matthew Skoien.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe: The Diplomatic Struggle for East Timor*, Aksara Karunia, Jakarta, 2006, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with 007-05.

planners to assist the under-strength Military Planning Staff at the DPKO in September 1999 to design a potential structure for a follow-on peacekeeping force. The team also helped the DPKO gauge the willingness of member states to make troop contributions. This cooperation was not only about consultation; it was done to ensure that Australia did not maintain the lead in East Timor for longer than necessary.<sup>21</sup>

AusAID also tried to engage the DPA (and the US Department of State) around mid-1999 to discuss post-ballot structures for governance, possible international contributions, and Australia's role in that contribution. However, the discussions lacked the specificity of detailed planning and were constrained by the inability to prejudge the outcome. As a result, AusAID 'spent a fair bit of time around those sorts of issues—not all of which were very productive at the end of the day', according to Scott Dawson.<sup>22</sup> These discussions with the United Nations were more than attempts to convince; they began to take on characteristics of partnership as UNAMET was launched and the popular consultation drew closer.

Australia also conducted discussions with other potential partners. In the case of New Zealand, the aim was to maintain their interest in supporting Australia with forces at a later date. The purpose of these discussions was to create a sense of partnership, because the New Zealanders were considered valuable coalition partners due to their assessed willingness to engage in offensive military operations under a UN mandate.<sup>23</sup>

From the point of view of both the Australian Government and the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the most important line of consultation was occurring with the United States. Formal consultation started early in 1999 with an exchange of views between DFAT's Secretary, Dr Ashton Calvert, and Stanley Roth of the US Department of State. This meeting provides an insight into the aims of Australian consultation at this time. It also shows the differences between US and Australian views about the likelihood of a peacekeeping mission, and of options to influence the situation.<sup>24</sup> The similarities in policy positions were still strong, however, especially on key points such as alerting the Indonesians to their security responsibilities and their assessment of Habibie's 'unreal'

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21 Interviews with 007-05 and 062-07.

22 Interview with Scott Dawson.

23 Interview with Allan Behm.

24 The official record of this meeting was leaked in 1999. See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Calvert-Roth Meeting, February 1999', copy in author's possession, paragraphs 10–12. The divergence is somewhat ambiguous in this account of the conversation as Calvert and Roth were discussing the same hypothetical situation in different timeframes. As a result, it is likely Roth was playing a 'devil's advocate' role rather than representing official US policy, as Paul Kelly reports (Paul Kelly, *The March of the Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 2009, pp. 495–96).

deadline.<sup>25</sup> Occurring early in the crisis, this conversation shows how the Australian Government was clearly moving towards the ‘partnership’ point of the Bridgman and Davis continuum as it sought to influence the US Government to develop a position that was complementary to Australia’s view.

Consultation between Australian ministers and officials and their US counterparts continued throughout the year. This consultation was complicated because different parts of the US Government held different views on the how the United States would act if the situation in East Timor required intervention. General John Castellaw of USPACOM provided an insight into how Washington—meaning the US Departments of State and Defense—were thinking at the time:

I had the opportunity to host John Hamre, who was the Deputy Secretary [of Defense] and he gave an insight into how [the United States viewed the East Timor situation]. I would say that we viewed this very reluctantly. If you look at that period there we are talking about, 1999, we had come out of Desert Storm and we were still doing no-fly zones in Iraq. We’d done Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. ... So Hamre said, quite frankly, we were tired by this time in the decade and the Clinton Administration was [tired] too. It became apparent to me, as we were getting pressure to reduce the numbers involved that the policymakers and senior leadership were very reluctant to get involved in the effort.<sup>26</sup>

Despite this indicator, USPACOM—the key US military arm in the Pacific—continued contingency planning for a large involvement in East Timor.<sup>27</sup> For some in Australia, this gave the impression of there being two US positions: one of anticipation of action in Hawaii, and the other of significant reluctance in Washington, DC. This difference was noted by senior ministers and it became the subject of media speculation after mid-year leaks.<sup>28</sup> However, others such as Calvert took USPACOM’s activities in a different context:

It was pretended, in terms of some of the media commentary, [that] they [the United States] were ready to do peacekeeping ... and with just a bit of extra urging [the Australian Government] would have gotten them

25 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Calvert Roth Meeting’, paragraphs 7–9.

26 Interview with John Castellaw. This view was consistent with that expressed by Earl Hailston and a number of Australians including Chris Barrie and Bob Treloar. See also Goldsworthy, ‘East Timor’, pp. 234–35.

27 Interviews with Earl Hailston, John Castellaw, Bob Treloar and Ashton Calvert. The contingencies considered at this time by USPACOM ranged from low-level evacuations up to a multinational peacekeeping intervention—the figure of 15 000 US troops was mentioned in the Australian Parliament (Stephen Martin, MP, House of Representatives, *Votes and Proceedings*, vol. 55, 11 August 1999, p. 8419).

28 Interview with John Moore. For examples of how the media portrayed this difference, see Paul Daley, ‘Timor: We Snub Offer To Send In The Marines’, *Sunday Age*, 1 August 1999, p. 1; and Paul Daley, ‘Rift Denied With US Over Timor’, *Age*, 3 August 1999, p. 3. Don Greenlees and Robert Garran, *Deliverance: The Inside Story of East Timor’s Fight for Freedom*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2002, pp. 240–48, describe the reluctance of influential leaders in Congress to commit troops.

there. My understanding was this was not the case. They [USPACOM] certainly had no authority from Washington for peacekeeping. What they were doing was ... military contingency planning for one or both of those scenarios.<sup>29</sup>

Consultation can be politically dangerous when confidential information is leaked. In this case, the revelations contained in the Australian press were politically embarrassing because they created the perception of differences between the positions of the Australian and US Governments, and obliquely between Washington and USPACOM.<sup>30</sup> Leaks also created problems further down the line, according to Bob Treloar: '[The leaks about USPACOM planning] caused some grief and severe compartmentalisation of [ADF] planning processes. Compartmentalisation is an anathema to good planning and preparedness of the troops. It undermines confidence ... and morale.'<sup>31</sup>

The discussions between Australian and USPACOM staff were conducted through liaison officers, videoconferences and visits. These exchanges had a number of aims including comparing each party's understanding of the situation, reviewing the type of contingencies that might arise, and outlining possible military options. The power of this consultation at the operational level was built on very strong bonds between senior USPACOM officers and their ADF counterparts, and resulted in a close and shared understanding between the two organisations by the middle of 1999.<sup>32</sup> Castellaw described the relationship in this way:

We understood completely how the Australian Army operated, and they understood how we operated. We trained together, planned together, played together. ... We were friends and we enjoyed working with each other. We had a shared view of how planning and operations were conducted. I think you are looking at one of the very, very few situations where US forces were willing to subordinate themselves to another country's military leadership.<sup>33</sup>

However, consultation across the political and military levels was not always so easy to manage despite the alliance and a high degree of familiarity among many of the key leaders. The size and complexity of the US Government seemed

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29 Interview with Ashton Calvert.

30 Refer to Daley, 'Timor: We Snub Offer', which broke this story. This report drew a denial from Foreign Minister Downer (Sean Aylmer, 'Timor: Downer Says There's No Rift With US', *Australian Financial Review*, 2 August 1999, p. 7). Give the absence of access to US planning documents, it is difficult to determine whether an actual difference between Washington and PACOM existed.

31 Interview with Bob Treloar.

32 Interviews with Bob Treloar, Allan Behm and John Castellaw.

33 Interview with John Castellaw. He was referring to Major General Peter Cosgrove, then Commander of the 1st Australian Division and future commander INTERFET, and Colonel Mark Kelly, Cosgrove's Chief of Staff.

to be one contributing factor. For one interviewee, this crisis exposed a lack of understanding of among Australian officials of the US political system. While the relationships were strong, particularly with USPACOM and the US intelligence community, there was a lack of understanding about how Washington—particularly the US Department of Defense—worked.<sup>34</sup>

Other factors also complicated Australia-US consultation. Marian Wilkinson reported the difference of opinion about the Indonesian military's capacity to maintain security throughout the ballot, and Australia's reluctance to provide the United States with intelligence due to a need to protect 'sensitive Australian intelligence sources'.<sup>35</sup> So while there was clearly some level of misunderstanding between the Australians and their US counterparts before the ballot, the work done throughout 1999 still resulted in a high degree of cooperation between Defence and USPACOM in particular. This work proved beneficial once the crisis became acute in September 1999.

As the situation in East Timor grew into a violent crisis, Australia's consultation—often led by Prime Minister John Howard—aimed to secure international support for an intervention force with an appropriate mandate.<sup>36</sup> The trend for consultation was clearly now towards 'partnership', although it could be argued that Australian consultation had become 'delegation' as the UN Security Council (UNSC)'s decision became crucial to Australian policy in mid-September.

The Australian Government continued to make use of its good relations with key UN bodies as the crisis developed. Howard was in direct contact with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which was crucial because the aim of Australian diplomacy at the time was to create support for a robust Chapter VII (of the UN Charter) mandate. It is easy to forget that such a mandate was not assured, even after significant international opinion came to favour intervention. One interviewee talked about the importance of continued consultation with UN members, such as the Russians, who may have vetoed any UN operation.<sup>37</sup> At this point, Australia's consultation almost became 'delegation' as the government refused to be part of a peacekeeping force without a UN mandate, clear US support and Indonesian permission.<sup>38</sup>

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34 Interview with 051-06.

35 Marian Wilkinson, 'Why we kept Timor secrets from the US', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1999, p. 1. The view of separation between Australia and the United States was taken up in Parliament by opposition member Laurie Brereton and challenged by Foreign Minister Downer (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 'What force in East Timor', 11 August 1999, p. 14).

36 James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order: intervention and its aftermath in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, London, 2004, p. 121.

37 Interview with Michael Scrafton. In the end, the Russian Federation indicated a willingness to 'expeditiously consider additional measures to resolve the situation in East Timor.' (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, p. 252).

38 These conditions (or close variations) were described in numerous public statements, including Defence Public Affairs, 'Transcript, Hon. John Moore, MP & Hon. Alexander Downer', Commonwealth Offices,

Given these conditions, and the rising public support for intervention described in Chapter 3, it is possible to see a situation where the desire for consultation could have unhinged Australia's preferred policy line during the acute crisis. For instance, if a permanent member exercised their veto against the Chapter VII mandate, Australia (and others in the international community) would have needed another mechanism to legitimise any operation into East Timor. That did not happen of course and, given the support of all permanent members, this scenario was most unlikely.

The form of US support was only assured after a series of meetings between Australian and US officials from 6–9 September 1999. These meetings included at least two videoconferences which discussed the detailed concept for the operation and the likely US contribution.<sup>39</sup> While there was clear political support for ending the violence (the president and a number of senior officials made direct approaches to their Indonesian counterparts during this time),<sup>40</sup> the United States was unwilling to commit combat troops to the mission unless the situation became dramatically worse.<sup>41</sup> This surprised ministers who thought they knew US leaders well and thought they understood the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS). John Moore recounted one such instance:

I spoke to Bill Cohen, who I knew before. ... The answer from Cohen was 'it is your baby'. I said that you need to help—it's part of ANZUS. But he said it is all yours. I asked what he would do, and he said he'll have to think about it. He said they would give us intelligence, and he would get back to us. But he said precisely, 'no troops'.<sup>42</sup>

This sparked further consultative efforts on multiple fronts:

When I [John Moore] spoke to Howard about the fact that we were getting absolutely nowhere with [Bill] Cohen on the matter, I said I was

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Melbourne, 6 September 1999, available at <<http://www.minister.defence.gov.au>>, accessed 12 December 2007; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998–2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, p. 133; and Interview with Chris Barrie.

39 Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', pp. 248–49.

40 These approaches are outlined in Greenlees and Garran, *Deliverance: The Inside Story of East Timor's Fight for Freedom*, pp. 240–48, and included calls by then US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and General Henry Shelton. Commander Then USPACOM Admiral Denis Blair also made a short and reputedly pointed visit to General Wiranto on 8 September 1999. President Bill Clinton made a number of approaches to President B.J. Habibie, including the direct call for Indonesia to accept a peacekeeping force on 10 September (Associated Press, 'U.S. Suspends Military Relations with Indonesia', *The Augusta Chronicle*, 10 September 1999, p. A09).

41 Interview with John Castellaw. John Moore recalled how he asked Bill Cohen for an assurance that US troops would provide additional support if the situation became 'murky', which the US Defense secretary agreed to do. Goldsworthy claims the US decision not to deploy combat troops on the ground with INTERFET was made clear to the Australians on 9 September (Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', p. 249).

42 Interview with John Moore.

astonished. He said that APEC [the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting] is on in Auckland, and I'll speak to [US President Bill] Clinton. Downer went off to New York, and he was going to chase around there. Nothing came of that. When Howard spoke to Clinton, Clinton said he would have to do something for us. So I rang Cohen again and Cohen rang back. He said he'd come out to Australia to meet me in Cairns.<sup>43</sup>

The importance of obtaining support for the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) from Southeast Asian nations was quickly understood, and Australia used a range of methods to ensure such consultation occurred quickly. The 9–12 September 1999 APEC meeting in Auckland was critical to this effort, as it brought many key regional leaders together. But, as the earlier discussion of Air Marshal Doug Riding's regional tour in September shows, not all consultation was successful to the extent initially anticipated. In Malaysia's case, early discussions with Australian diplomats indicated that a significant leadership role and a sizeable troop contribution would be forthcoming.<sup>44</sup> Malaysia's ultimate decision not to participate provides an example of where domestic political issues and concern for international relationships intrude on consultation.<sup>45</sup> Other ASEAN nations also needed to balance competing concerns. Singapore's decision calculus included local sensitivities about sending conscripts overseas, and a desire to avoid offending Indonesia or Australia.<sup>46</sup> The Philippines Government was concerned for the danger to its Catholic neighbours, but also wanted to maintain a good relationship with Indonesia. This led to the dispatch of a 'humanitarian task force' from the armed forces of the Philippines to East Timor, and a medical team to West Timor.<sup>47</sup> That 22 nations eventually joined the coalition speaks for a significant success of this consultation, even if it did not achieve exactly its desired outcome.

Consultation continued with Indonesia, with the aim of establishing the modalities for deconflicting INTERFET and TNI operation in Dili. Martin Brady attended talks with senior TNI leaders to achieve this outcome:

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43 Interview with John Moore.

44 Some have also pointed to the importance placed in not 'offending' Indonesia and to the Association of Southeast Asian state's (ASEAN) doctrine of 'non-interference' (Interview with Ashton Calvert, and Alan Ryan, *Primary responsibilities and primary risks: Australian Defence Force participation in the International Force East Timor*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, Canberra, 2000, p. 41).

45 It is hard to separate this outcome from other factors, such as the poisonous relationship between then Prime Minister Mahathir and Australia and concern over command and funding arrangements (Interviews with 051-06 and 046-06. See also Ryan, *Primary responsibilities and primary risks: Australian Defence Force participation in the International Force East Timor*, pp. 40–42 and Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', p. 251)

46 Interviews with 051-06 and 046-06; and Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', pp. 251–52.

47 Goldsworthy, 'East Timor', p. 252.

We wanted to de-conflict their operations, so we had three days of talks [at the United Nations in New York] to manage the matter in great detail. It also gave them a sense of partnership, and might have even helped in the long run. We never talked about it publicly, and it never came up.<sup>48</sup>

On the aid front, consultation moved quickly once the humanitarian task became clear and the need to create a new government from scratch was known. In this case, AusAID was able to provide immediate assistance and create an interim development strategy. Their work before the popular consultation provided a springboard for this. Established links with the United Nations and United States also helped, even though new players from these organisations entered the scene.<sup>49</sup>

### Domestic consultation

At best, there were two indirect methods of consultation with domestic audiences during this crisis. The first, which has been mentioned earlier and will be taken up again in Chapter 5, was Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee enquiry into East Timor.<sup>50</sup> This committee heard testimony from many individuals, community groups and officials during its hearings, and these provided a broad picture of what the Australian community thought about the situation in East Timor. Second, the government had access to polling data about the crisis at frequent intervals.<sup>51</sup> However, because neither constitutes a solicitation of opinion by the executive, or discussions before decisions are taken, they cannot be considered consultation in the sense proposed by Bridgman and Davis.

While falling well short of the consultation measures used during other crises (such as during 1941–42 when the Australian Government formed a bipartisan Advisory War Council<sup>52</sup>), the government still provided information directly to the opposition about their policy on East Timor. This contact followed

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48 Interview with Martin Brady. Interviewee 007-05 also recounted the importance of these talks, and of the important work done by Australia's mission to the UN during the crisis.

49 Interview with Scott Dawson.

50 Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Final Report into the Inquiry into East Timor*, 2000.

51 Newspoll conducted a survey on 12 September 1999 that asked voters directly about the government's handling of the crisis (available at <<http://www.newspoll.com.au>>, accessed 26 August 2006). Roy Morgan Research also asked voters about their perceptions of the government and the opposition three times during September–October 1999, and made comment on voters' positive views of how the prime minister was handling the crisis ('Labor Stretches Two-Party Preferred Lead As Troops Go In To East Timor', Finding No. 3240, 12 October 1999, available at <<http://www.roymorgan.com>>, accessed 26 August 2006).

52 The Advisory War Council was a compromise arrangement to ensure unity of decision-making after the Labor Opposition declined Prime Minister Menzies' invitation to join a 'national government' (see David Day, *The Politics of War: Australia at War 1939–45 from Churchill to MacArthur*, HarperCollins Publishers, Pymble, 2003, p. 86; and David Horner, *Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort 1939–45*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, pp. 20–21).

convention where the Australian Government seeks to create a bipartisan view of policy by discussing major commitments, such as the deployment of troops, with the Opposition. This may also extend to allowing Opposition leaders to read intelligence reports and receive briefings from officials. However, these briefings were one-way communication according to then Opposition leader, Kim Beazley:

The opposition is not consulted on national security. The opposition is often quite intensively briefed, but we are not seen as part of the decision-making process. On some occasions, such as when it is necessary for us to facilitate a piece of legislation [through Parliament] you get engaged, but that's up to the prime minister ... [with regard to East Timor specifically] ... I was briefed occasionally [as opposition leader], but our defence and foreign affairs spokesmen were briefed all the time. Very regularly. It was much more intense than now.<sup>53</sup>

Despite this, the opposition was given advance notice of the major deployments, such as the commitment of UNTAET and INTERFET, but not other major initiatives, such as the Howard Letter. Beazley's final remark shows that this convention may not be applied consistently, or at least applied as consistently as the alternative government might like.

### Secrecy and consultation

The principle of strict secrecy was applied in this crisis although, as the comments above about leaks showed, it was not always maintained. Despite these breaches, four main reasons for maintaining secrecy can be identified in this case. The first involves protecting a policy position while it is being developed. The Howard Letter was a good example of how well secrecy could be applied, and how secrecy can prevent an initiative from being pre-empted by other parties or derailed by opponents. A second, related reason is to allow one side to make preparations for an activity without alerting possible opponents or the public. This helps to maintain the element of surprise; it may also allow the government to act without scrutiny during sensitive activities. A third reason for secrecy involves protecting confidences; this is why the Calvert–Roth cable was classified, and why its leaking embarrassed the Australian Government. Lastly, secrecy helps protect intelligence sources and methods.<sup>54</sup> This need

53 Interview with Kim Beazley.

54 For instances where information about intelligence activities came into the public domain, see Paul Daley, 'Spy effort stepped up in Timor', *Age*, 20 March 1999, p. 5; Paul Daley, 'Armed with information, now what?', *Age*, 29 May 1999, p.4; and Ian Hunter, 'Elite forces scouted island from April', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1999, p. 11.

explains why the Riding/Behm mission to Jakarta in June 1999 was very risky, for it involved an admission that Australian intelligence had access to sensitive Indonesian information.<sup>55</sup>

These advantages allow governments to feel justified about maintaining secrecy in crises. However, it may be more difficult to maintain secrecy in the future. While measures can be taken to avoid leaks, these are not foolproof and come at a cost for efficiency and internal cohesion. More importantly, the public's increasing access to information, analysis and opinion is likely to place pressure on the government's narrative in a future crisis. While some activists and the media tried to produce a different story to promote immediate intervention during the acute crisis, the Australian Government was not forced to act prematurely and the public remained broadly satisfied with the government's actions in September 1999.<sup>56</sup>

### Observations about consultation

This examination of the Consultation phase shows some continuity with the 'typical' characteristics, but also significant differences that are attributable to the nature of national security crises. Consultation during the crisis also spanned Bridgman and Davis' continuum, and showed clearly that governments can cede control over national security policy to outsiders during a crisis.

In this case, consultation efforts did not involve the government engaging the public in any real way. Instead, the main consultation was between the Australian Government and foreign entities, especially the governments of the United States, Indonesia, Portugal and New Zealand; and non-government agencies and agents including the United Nations and East Timorese leaders. Most of this consultation took place in the space between information and partnership on the Bridgman and Davis continuum. The Australian Government used this space to obtain views about policy options (generally in terms of others' aims and positions), convince others of the merits of the Australian case and develop aligned positions with important actors.

Interaction with specific entities later in the crisis showed consultation in the form of delegation, verging on control. In this case, the Australian Government was only willing to act decisively to stabilise East Timor if their desired

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55 Greenlees and Garran, *Deliverance: The Inside Story of East Timor's Fight for Freedom*, pp. 166–68.

56 For examples of media encouragement, see Paul Kelly, 'From the Lips of Prime Ministers: Diplomacy at the Crossroads', *Australian*, 15 September 1999, p. 13; and Andrew Bolt, 'Don't Expect Praise', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 16 September 1999, p. 18. Of course, critics also assailed the government for its handling of the crisis (for example, see Greg Sheridan, 'The Burden is Here to Stay', *Australian*, 17 September 1999, p. 15). For the public's reaction, Newspoll's 12 September 1999 questions shows opinions evenly split between support for the government's actions and opinion that the government was not doing enough (see <<http://www.newspoll.com.au>>, accessed 26 September 2006).

conditions for intervention were met by Indonesia, the United Nations and others. This movement along the consultation continuum showed the real limits of the Australian Government's agency in this crisis, and demonstrated the importance of creating space for future activity through constant attention to relationship building. Such space was needed because the Australian Government was unwilling to create a deeper conflict with Indonesia by pressing ahead unilaterally. It therefore relied on bringing others to a similar way of thinking about the problem, using both the post-ballot violence and the pattern of diplomatic contact that had been developed over the previous—and indeed, many—years.

Bridgman and Davis consider consultation as intrinsically good for policy development because it increases policy legitimacy and acceptance, and this case provides examples where consultation was beneficial to Australia. It is clear, for instance, that consultation reduces friction in policymaking because it allows the government to understand the policy positions of others and provide opportunities to devise strategies to overcome possible friction. For example, the limited consultation between the Australian Government and the Opposition served to build sufficient consensus for the government's action without letting the opposition share the credit for the decisions. While this consultation may only come late in the crisis or appear perfunctory, it remains an important step for winning bipartisan support, especially for military action, in a crisis. The value of consulting with international leaders was also shown in this crisis. Although the consultation undertaken at the APEC meeting in Auckland imposed a short delay in the process, it was clearly worth using this opportunity to gain international support for intervention.

The Howard Letter shows the risk when consultation is not undertaken. After the government's new policy position became known, wider and more focused consultation began with a broader range of actors. Since some actors held opinions that differed from those of Australia, the government found that it needed to do significant work to close the gaps in views (notably with the United States over the likely outcomes and the applicability of the ANZUS Treaty) as the pressure to act increased throughout the year.

Regardless of the potential for gains and cost avoidance, consultation is not automatically beneficial in crises because it can actually decrease the chances of success. First, consultation increases the time it takes to make a decision by increasing the number of actors involved, potentially allowing other parties to take the initiative or resulting in missed opportunities. Second, consultation also gives opponents time to take pre-emptive action or marshal opinion against a policy. This desire to limit the potential for damaging criticism or debate was one reason why knowledge of the Howard Letter was confined to a very small group and not shared with allies. Third, consultation also increases the chances

of allowing other parties to know one's intentions. Thus the compromise of policy intentions during consultation can jeopardise surprise and reduce trust among potential partners. These reasons provide support for anticipating a continued role for the characteristic of secrecy in crisis policymaking.

This examination of the Consultation phase shows that the typical characteristics can be modified for crisis policymaking as follows:

- All consultation options are used with overseas interlocutors (who are primarily other governments and major international organisations), with information, discussion, partnership and delegation commonly occurring;
- Consultation between the government and the public usually takes the form of a one-way passage of information; and
- Much consultation occurs in secret.

## Coordination

The Coordination phase aims to achieve 'tolerable compatibility' across government activities in an attempt to minimise harmful inconsistencies. This phase is characterised by the way coordination is institutionalised through structures and routine processes.<sup>57</sup> However, there is more to coordination than this, and other influences—often described as bureaucratic politics—can also interfere. Two characteristics for the Coordination phase can be identified from Bridgman and Davis:

- Governments will describe structures and routines that suit their particular preferences and best thinking for the time, the task at hand, and external factors.
- Coordination is conducted in a competitive environment.<sup>58</sup>

This section examines how the structures and routines described in Chapter 1 actually worked in this crisis, while pointing to the importance of informal practices that bind this system together. The thorny question of bureaucratic politics is then broached, for it provides evidence to show that collegiality prevailed over harmful competition in this case.

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57 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 93–97.

58 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 93–104.

## Structures and routines for coordination

Structure is often used to promote coordination where tasks are complex and require different types of specialised knowledge, or where conflicts of interest can occur.<sup>59</sup> In this case, structural changes were made to clarify roles, to improve dialogue between departments and to meet the tangible challenges of this crisis. However, opinions about the role of central agencies—which Bridgman and Davis see as essential to coordination—and the effectiveness of those changes were varied. The role of political leadership in coordination is also underplayed and deserves separate consideration.

Early interdepartmental dialogue became formalised in a number of different ways by April 1999. Further to existing committees and forming new ones (such as Bill Paterson’s Committee), departments extended standing invitations to other agencies for internal planning meetings (such as Defence’s East Timor Working Group and, sometimes, the Strategic Command Group), while joint delegations travelled to places such as the United Nations and Washington. DFAT helped to tie these structural changes together by exercising a leading role in the period before INTERFET’s deployment. This involved being the focal point for Cabinet submissions, leadership of a variety of interdepartmental delegations, raising a consular crisis centre with *ad hoc* staffing, and retaining the chair of the Strategic Policy Coordination Group (SPCG).

The nature of the acute crisis in September tested these existing coordination structures and created a need for new ones. One of the main changes to interdepartmental coordination came as the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSCC) began to operate on a daily basis, and the main coordinating role of the SPCG passed to the Taylor Committee.<sup>60</sup> While it could be argued that such arrangements could have been put in place before the crisis, some interviewees remarked that it was either difficult to foresee some aspects of what happened (such as leading the international force), or that the need to create new bodies would not have arisen if the violence had not triggered a rapid international intervention.<sup>61</sup>

Opinions varied on the effectiveness of the new arrangements, particularly the Taylor Committee. While the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPM&C)’s role in coordination was widely acknowledged, many also recognised that existing coordination mechanisms were not delivering as well as they should. But some close to the committee (although outside it) were sceptical about its role and effectiveness. Some commented that the Taylor Committee

59 Anthony Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy*, RAND/Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1968, pp. 50–53.

60 Interviewee 051-06 observed that the informal processes of the SPCG made it unsuited to managing a crisis and noted broader concerns about the need to coordinate better at the official level. For background, see the section in Chapter 2 titled ‘Acute crisis and response’.

61 Interviews with Chris Barrie, 024-05 and 028-05.

became too bureaucratic and inflexible, or that it existed on the fringe of the action.<sup>62</sup> Others such as Hugh White and General Michael Keating did not consider *ad hoc* solutions suitable in any case:

It seemed to me that the establishment of this new mechanism under [D]PM&C, to replace other mechanisms that I think were working satisfactorily, was a mistaken move and a move that was made more about bureaucratic politics than good advice to government.<sup>63</sup>

I'm not so sure about the 'wrong output from the SPCG' line [as justifying the need for the Taylor Committee]: if you don't like the output, (leaders should) tell the SPCG to create the right output, rather than create another body.<sup>64</sup>

Other interviewees, often those closely involved in the committee, were more supportive—perhaps because they had a different view of the committee's mandate:

The whole support to government stepped up eight or ten notches as a consequence of Allan's committee. A lot of it was due to having the function, and a lot was Allan's ability to manage it.<sup>65</sup>

The [Taylor] Committee ... kept the discipline if you like. ... It wasn't a high-powered policymaking body, it was there to coordinate. To smoothe the wheels.<sup>66</sup>

... to some degree the creation of another committee was amusing at the time. But with hindsight, what we didn't realise at the time, was that we were learning. So when we found something wasn't working, we formed the Taylor Committee. It wasn't the case that we just stuck with something. We moved onto a different model ...<sup>67</sup>

The Taylor Committee came after a very hectic year and an acute crisis. It was time to find a way to step back, draw a breath and find a way to develop some medium- and long-term policy options for the relationship with Indonesia.<sup>68</sup>

The adoption of new methods to coordinate policy shows, as Aldo Borgu said in his interview, that the government as a whole was learning as it went. The

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62 Interviews with Aldo Borgu, 009-05, Michael Scrafton and 032-05.

63 Interview with Hugh White.

64 Interview with Michael Keating.

65 Interview with Michael Scrafton.

66 Interview with 014-05.

67 Interview with Aldo Borgu.

68 Interview with Ashton Calvert.

key officials learned quickly (or knew from experience) about the potential disconnects that could occur in the existing structures and the weaknesses in those mechanisms, so they made changes. In one interpretation, this shows that a highly adaptive mindset is necessary to keep the activities of a large number of agencies coordinated in a national security crisis. It also shows that involving ministers and senior officials in crisis simulations may help them to learn before an event, and so reduce the chance of mid-crisis change. In another interpretation, decisions to form new bodies in the midst of a crisis can be simply part of an ongoing conflict where agencies jockey for power.

One prescription for avoiding conflict over responsibilities (or turf) is role clarity. A lack of role clarity, should it exist, can have consequences including conflict, nugatory work at lower levels, and work at 'cross purposes with people running different agendas'.<sup>69</sup> While some activities needed active de-confliction and demarcation, Australian Government agencies seem to possess a good idea about what they were required to do during this crisis. For example, the coordination role played by DPM&C was understood and not disputed, as was DFAT's leading role in the pre-crisis meetings with external actors and Cabinet submissions. This is not to claim that the division of responsibilities was always clear, and some instances of where people are uncertain about processes or rules should be expected in any new situation. However, Alan Ryan's assessment that 'the issue of how departmental responsibilities were divided was never fully resolved' seems to overstate the difficulties faced in this case.<sup>70</sup>

Having a way to settle disputes over responsibility quickly, authoritatively and with minimal work is therefore essential to successful coordination. The method used in this crisis can best be likened to a series of courts. Small problems between departments, generally technical ones linked to different interpretations of policy or legislation, may get resolved in lower-level committees (like that chaired by Bill Paterson) or in discussions between officials. If not solved here, problems would be elevated to more senior committees including the SPCG and the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCNS). The final court was the NSCC, but the ministers would be displeased if a matter reached them that could have been resolved at lower levels.<sup>71</sup>

Agencies were very aware of their responsibilities, but still willing to cede some at different times. One example involved Defence conducting important diplomatic tasks instead of DFAT (as discussed in Chapter 3). Understanding what counterpart organisations actually do is another way of ameliorating

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69 Interview with Bob Treloar.

70 Ryan, *Primary responsibilities and primary risks: Australian Defence Force participation in the International Force East Timor*, p. 39.

71 In his interview, Tim Fischer recounted the prime minister's intolerance towards 'protecting fiefdoms' and airing interdepartmental conflicts in the NSCC.

conflict.<sup>72</sup> The less-formal interactions between DFAT and Defence's Strategic Command Division staff mentioned by Michael Keating were attempts to promote this understanding.

Providing a forum to reconcile issues is another way of inducing role clarity and reducing the problem of turf battles. According to Interviewee 052-06, the SCNS played an important role as it allowed a 'fairly robust discussion' between the departmental secretaries. Issues that could not be resolved here would be referred to the ministers. All were aware that such a move would provide additional, unwelcome work for the minister that could be viewed as a failure on their part.

The role of the central agencies of DPM&C and Treasury is interesting because this case provides an important distinction between the view of coordination presented by Bridgman and Davis, and this particular instance of crisis policymaking. According to Bridgman and Davis, the central agencies 'work to resist fragmentation by providing consistent rules and processes'.<sup>73</sup> Their view receives wide support in other literature, including work that ascribes a key role to the British Treasury.<sup>74</sup>

This case provides partial support for the usual interpretation of the roles played by central agencies. On balance, DPM&C played its established role throughout.<sup>75</sup> It was involved in developing the broad direction for policy (such as its involvement in drafting the Howard Letter), while performing its usual tasks of advising the prime minister and guiding Cabinet business. DPM&C's main new intervention in the process—forming Bill Paterson's group—was also a fairly normal response to this kind of matter. While no doubt useful, this committee played a relatively small part in coordination compared to others such as the SPCG (which included DPM&C representation), DFAT's East Timor Task Force and Defence's East Timor Working Group.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, DPM&C did not assume a leading position (and still an indirect leadership role) until the acute crisis. On the other hand, the other major central agency, the Treasury, was only a minor player. It limited its involvement mainly to matters of expenditure, although it would have played a key role in the question of the 'Timor Tax'.

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72 Interview with Adrien Whiddett.

73 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, p. 97.

74 These works include Hugh Hecho and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Private Government of Public Money: Community and Policy inside British Politics*, MacMillan, London, 1974; and Martin Smith, *The Core Executive in Britain*, MacMillan Press, Basingstoke, 1999.

75 Interviewee 052-06 noted how DPM&C handled their role 'as normal' though International Division and, later, the Taylor Committee.

76 Both DFAT's and Defence's coordinating committees met far more frequently than Paterson's group, and often included representatives from the same organisations.

Political leadership through the NSCC was another structural element of coordination with a deeper relevance. The view of the NSCC as the bridge for national security policy was mentioned in Chapter 1, as this is the place where authoritative commands were issued and, sometimes, where gaps between departments were closed. When asked about how coordination looked from the political level, Interviewee 048-06 commented that it was ‘better than normal’ because daily NSCC meetings during the acute crisis imposed discipline on the bureaucracy; there was less room for conflict because answers were needed the next day. But routine was not the only factor. The strong solidarity of the NSCC was important for preventing gaps opening between departments.<sup>77</sup> This also led to a strong distaste for conflict or competition between departments among the senior ministers and indeed senior leaders. As Tim Fischer noted, anything more than ‘a touch of light banter’ would have resulted in a censure from the prime minister and secretary of DPM&C.<sup>78</sup> The distinctive flow-on effect of this attitude will be discussed later in this section.

Ministerial staffs were also involved in coordination through their role in keeping their minister aligned with the prime minister and other ministers. This role extended to keeping ministers aware of departmental activities—whether by reading submissions, calling senior departmental officers or even sometimes attending senior departmental meetings. Advisers would also help to coordinate activity by describing ‘the minister’s thinking’ on various issues. Of these advisers, the prime minister’s international adviser played a crucial part as a conduit of information to, and from, the prime minister.<sup>79</sup>

Routines also help to coordinate activities by making actions consistent and predictable.<sup>80</sup> Thus DPM&C’s *Cabinet Handbook* outlines a number of routines that ensure coordination occurs before submissions are presented to Cabinet.<sup>81</sup> These processes are supported—in theory at least—by strong links between the norm of coordination, the concept of collective responsibility of Cabinet, and the strong desire to prevent surprises from emerging at the Cabinet table or in discussion between senior officials.<sup>82</sup>

While formal Cabinet submissions seem to have been infrequent in this case, it was usual for other documents and draft cables to be circulated to relevant

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77 While John Moore thought the relationships between key ministers were very good (Interview, 29 November 2006), other interviewees thought competition between the prime minister and Treasurer Peter Costello could be observed.

78 Interviewee 051-06 also said that the prime minister would not tolerate poor cooperation.

79 Interview with Aldo Borgu.

80 Glyn Davis, *A Government of Routines: Executive Coordination in an Australian State*, Centre for Australian Public Sector Management/MacMillan, South Melbourne, 1995, pp. 24–26.

81 B. Guy Peters, ‘Managing horizontal government: The politics of co-ordination’, *Public Administration*, vol. 76, no. 2, 1998, p. 41.

82 Interview with 052-06.

stakeholders before final submission. The small size of the policy community undoubtedly helped to make this process relatively smooth.<sup>83</sup> Of the major instruments used to support routines, it was the time-honoured methods of meetings, telephone calls and—although a relatively recent innovation at the time—email that helped make the processes work at the speed required.<sup>84</sup>

Despite this, and noting that uncertainty still exists over what was discussed at the 1 December 1998 NSCC meeting, the East Timor crisis appears to have begun with an instance of poor coordination. Paul Barratt recalled his words to the Secretary of DPM&C on 22 December:

I said to Max [Moore-Wilton] that I had just heard about the letter to Habibie and that we weren't consulted on that letter. I said that we had consultative processes coming out our ears, and they are rigorously enforced, insisted upon, except when it matters.<sup>85</sup>

The effect of this lack of coordination was felt deeply within Defence. On top of the frustration expressed by Hugh White at the 15 January 1999 SPCG meeting (as discussed in Chapter 2), Defence planners were forced into a situation where a range of practical options needed to be devised quickly. The ADF itself needed to conduct a crash program of resource redistribution and training to bring sufficient forces to readiness for deployment.

Other problems—many of which were discussed earlier in Chapters 2 and 3—continued to flow from the initial decision not to consult or coordinate on the policy shift concerning East Timor. In particular, it was clear that DFAT's preferred policy line of early 1999, which aimed to prevent a major rupture in Australian-Indonesian relations, could have been compromised by Defence's need to prepare forces for operations. The problem was further embodied in the different ways both departments viewed the possible course of the crisis, and their different concepts of 'worst case'.<sup>86</sup>

While a number of instances have been discussed already, communication between departments posed additional problems. On one hand, it might be difficult to find the person who could make a decision in a large place like Defence, and work-arounds or a range of entry points might be needed if difficulties were encountered with specific people.<sup>87</sup> There were also times where

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83 Interviews with 028-05 and 032-05.

84 Most interviewees spoke of the importance of direct communication to coordination. For example, Adrien Whiddett spoke of regular liaison meetings and telephone calls, Andrew Hughes spoke of the need for a central crisis room, and Allan Behm spoke of the way email could be used effectively when people asked themselves who really needed to know the information.

85 Interview with Paul Barratt.

86 Interviews with Allan Behm, Peter Briggs and 035-05.

87 Interviews with 014-05, 028-05, Andrew Hughes and Major General John Hartley (Canberra, 27 September 2005). Hartley was Land Commander Australia in 1999. As such, he was responsible for preparing

people found themselves talking in different languages: another interviewee thought a 'Babel Fish' was needed to interpret between the government and the ADF on some occasions.<sup>88</sup> But even if such a device existed, there would still be a range of other problems confronting coordination, such as secrecy, compartmentalisation, policy ambiguity and the turf battles associated with bureaucratic politics.

### Collegiality trumps turf

Structures and processes are clearly important to coordination, but they may not be sufficient. As the popularity of bureaucratic politics as an explanation for intra-governmental behaviour shows, there is a deep-seated view that government agencies act in their own self-interests and this creates competitive or even conflictual relationships.<sup>89</sup> While it is possible to observe instances of conflict and competition between departments in this case, these instances were relatively minor and immaterial to the outcome. Instead, this case provides support for the view that relationships between government departments in a crisis are more collegial and reliant upon informal aspects of coordination such as relationships and trust.<sup>90</sup>

Strong personal relationships, a willingness to approach the work with a collegial attitude, and the small size of the group involved in the case and their frequent experience of working together,<sup>91</sup> were cited as important factors for coordination in a number of interviews:

I think [relationships are] critical ... especially at the SES [Senior Executive Service] level in the Commonwealth, and even the states.<sup>92</sup>

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Australian land forces for deployment and providing advice to the Chief of Army and COMAST.

88 Interview with 009-05. A 'Babel Fish' is a mythical animal that instantly translates any language into another.

89 For a sample of the Australian literature on role of bureaucratic politics in foreign and defence policy, see Russell Trood, 'Bureaucratic politics and foreign policy', in F.A. Mediansky (ed.), *Australian Foreign Policy into the New Millennium*, MacMillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, 1997; Nancy Viviani, 'The Official Formulation of Foreign Policy', in F.A. Mediansky and A.C. Palfreeman (eds), *In pursuit of national interests: Australian Foreign Policy in the 1990s*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1998; Christopher Waters, 'The Great Debates: H.V. Evatt and the Department of External Affairs', in Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe and Gary Woodard (eds), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making 1941-1969*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 2003, pp. 54-58; Geoffrey Hawker, RFI Smith, and Patrick Weller, *Politics and Policy in Australia*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 1979, Chapter 7; Gary Smith, Dave Cox and Scott Burchill, *Australia in the world: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 45; and Des Ball, *The Politics of Australian Defence Decision Making*, Reference Paper No. 183, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, p. 46.

90 This view is also shared by Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 40-42 and p. 253.

91 Interviewees 020-05, 051-06 and 032-05 commented on the way the small group involved in national security policy was a particular advantage for Canberra.

92 Interview with Adrien Whiddett.

That our senior ministers, senior bureaucrats and senior military have worked with each other in the past means they can talk with each other on the phone and fix problems. That was a great advantage in 1999.<sup>93</sup>

[Relationships] were very important. Did I go about building them? No, I didn't. They came about through a process that I don't think exists any more. I went through a series of jobs that put me into professional contact with military officers who were coming up through the system ...<sup>94</sup>

I knew most of the people. One of the points I would make is that coordination in Australia is easier in the security area than in any other major country that I am aware of because ... [for example] all of the other heads of the intelligence agencies had been contemporaries, or near contemporaries in DFAT in the [19]60s and [19]70s. So we knew one another. We could just pick up the phone. We were around the lake. It was not difficult to coordinate at all.<sup>95</sup>

Trust also allowed action to occur faster, and the familiarity gained during ordinary times often bred confidence between people.<sup>96</sup> While relationships usually worked better where they had been established, newcomers were not excluded. This was most notable in departments or agencies that posted people into and away from Canberra—especially DFAT, the ADF and the AFP. In these instances, it was normal for people recently appointed to jobs in Canberra to either bring someone with established relationships with them to meetings, or seek to develop relationships quickly. On some occasions however, newly arrived or promoted senior officials would delegate (for a short period) the function of working with other stakeholders to a close subordinate who had been in position longer. When the time came to build one's own network, officials generally did so through the formal structure of meetings and committees. Beyond that, people grew their relationships through telephone calls, emails and informal discussions.<sup>97</sup>

In other situations, people with wide-ranging ties could be used as intermediaries, using the trust they had developed in different organisations to bridge gaps:

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93 Interview with 029-05.

94 Interview with Michael Scrafton.

95 Interview with 014-05.

96 Interview with 021-05 (Canberra, 12 August 2005). Interviewee 021-05 was a former senior Defence intelligence official.

97 Interviews with 012-05, Kerry Clarke, 020-05, Martin Brady, 024-05, Michael Keating and Andrew Hughes.

I think one role that I played was that I was seen to be a reasonably sensible player from both the bureaucratic and political side of the house, which was kind of to lend a bit of confidence in both areas that their concerns were being taken care of.<sup>98</sup>

The key [to understanding the positions of other ministers] was the Defence and Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister, Michael Thawley ... he understood defence, he understood foreign affairs ... and he was an enormous support to me when I started at Defence.<sup>99</sup>

Thus trust was clearly important to coordination in this case, and it seems to have been more widespread—to different degrees, but widespread nonetheless—at the more senior levels in government. Thus relationships within Cabinet, and between officials and ministers in the NSCC, were important to maintaining cooperation throughout.<sup>100</sup> At other times, strong relationships and trust had not been formed at lower levels and this could be a problem: ‘That level of relationship didn’t necessarily exist further down the chain—that it was more compartmentalised both within and between organisations.’<sup>101</sup>

It was not all plain sailing though, and a few interviewees reported minor instances of disagreement and even conflict between individuals.<sup>102</sup> Matthew Skoien went as far as to speak of animosity between Defence and DFAT at some levels, especially at first. However, the same interviewee also said that:

When people realised what needed to happen, they just got on and worked together ... and made things happen despite other issues and problems. So when the group was brought together and given some imprimatur to do something, I think, that even if the government structures and formalities weren’t there, individually we all got on and worked well together.<sup>103</sup>

This experience was echoed by Interviewee 033-06, who said that working together in a crisis soon overcame attitudes whereby people were departmental

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98 Interview with 009-05.

99 Interview with John Moore.

100 John Moore described his strong trust in one of his senior officials, and how this influenced his way of working. Daryl Williams identified the need to trust people because he, as a minister, did not have all the information. Hugh White observed the long way many officials had to come in 1996 to overcome the new government’s mistrust of their relationship with the previous government.

101 Interview with Andrew Hughes.

102 Interviews with Paul Barratt, 012-05, Michael Keating and Andrew Hughes all cited instances where disagreement or conflict occurred. However, none recalled this as a major impediment to policymaking.

103 Interview with Matthew Skoien. Interviewee 062-07 thought that some DFAT officials had a poor understanding of ADF officers and tended to underestimate their knowledge.

representatives first, and team members second.<sup>104</sup> This view of good working relationships was also seen in instances where parts of different organisations worked together. For example:

I don't recall any animosity. Strategic Command had been working extensively with relevant DFAT teams—joint briefings on what we did and why, and at social gatherings including dinners and drinks—before and after I arrived ... All this was to our favour after the crisis started.<sup>105</sup>

This kind of divergence in opinions about working relationships shows how perceptions of conflict can vary according to where you sit, and can be strongly influenced by personalities. In other words, conflict may occur as a result of institutional pressures, but conflict also occurs because individuals simply allow it.

### Observations about coordination

This case supports the importance placed upon structures and routines in coordination by Bridgman and Davis. However, the evidence of this case adds weight to the collegial interpretation of coordination over the competitive, bureaucratic politics view.

This case shows the importance being flexible enough to change structures and routines when the situation warrants. Such flexibility was shown in 1999 in the way different committees and staff organisations were formed to cope with the increased policy workload and the imperative of keeping activity aligned. The way some important committees, especially SCNS and the SPCG to a lesser extent, were sidelined during the acute phase also shows an instance where structures were adapted to the situation. Flexibility was also displayed in the way departments invited others to meetings, and generally used their input to improve policy advice. This shows the value of being pragmatic in times of crisis, and making changes where essential.

The extent of structural and process change does not mean that the policymaking process was entirely deficient, or that it was entirely unable to cope with the demands of the day. Some of the existing structures, particularly the NSCC, served the Australian Government well. It is also important to acknowledge that politicians and senior officials were able to change structures, while the people involved adapted to the situation quickly and made the new structures work under considerable pressure. As a result, the case shows that adaptation in crisis should not be feared if people are sufficiently flexible to cope with

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104 Interviewee 062-07 also noted the importance of establishing himself as part of the team when sent to work in another department.

105 Interview with Kerry Clarke.

new demands. However, relying upon continual adaptation as the method of structuring for crisis also contains risks which could be minimised if well-considered and practised alternative structures and processes are available to deal possible crises.

The East Timor crisis also points to other important factors for coordination. This case shows that big is not necessarily better: the relatively small size of the Canberra bureaucracy can help to improve policy responses to new situations. Even more importantly, this case highlights the importance of informal aspects such as relationships and trust to coordination.

Some authors place these informal aspects at the centre of coordination. For example, Donald Chisholm argues that informal bargaining, norms or networks based on friendship or technical expertise are powerful devices under some conditions.<sup>106</sup> However, these informal mechanisms are not given enough attention, often because they are considered as illegal, unhealthy or designed to achieve personal—rather than organisational—goals. Chisholm promotes a contrary view to the orthodoxy and instead describes informal networks as flexible, adaptive, coherent and problem-oriented.<sup>107</sup> The importance of informal aspects was reasonably well-understood by practitioners and often mentioned in interviews, but they are not mentioned by Bridgman and Davis. This case supports the need to encourage informal coordination methods, while noting the importance of formal structures that provide these methods with an overarching legitimacy.

The importance of established relationships does not mean that ‘newcomers’ find it difficult to break into the tight circle of national security policymakers. That the posting cycle for most Departments continued during the crisis meant that new people were continually being changed in the very senior echelons—particularly in DFAT and Defence—and these newcomers needed to adapt quickly to both the demands of their new jobs and the issues at hand. These factors show the need to develop a resilient personnel system, as Paul Barratt stressed in his interview:

It is also important that the organisation is not too personality dependent. Like a person could get run over by a bus on the way home from work, and you should never be in a situation where the organisation is going to fall over. It is a badly run organisation that would let that happen.<sup>108</sup>

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106 Donald Chisholm, *Coordination without Hierarchy: informal structures in multiorganisational systems*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 11–12 and p. 39.

107 Chisholm, *Coordination without Hierarchy: informal structures in multiorganisational systems*, p. 12 and pp. 27–28.

108 Interview with Paul Barratt.

The norm of ‘no surprises’, role clarity, interpersonal relationships and trust created an air of collegiality in national security policymaking in this case. This characteristic is generally omitted from the literature concerning policymaking, especially where bureaucratic politics is offered as an explanation for behaviour or outcomes.

Indeed, most of the comments about coordination in the interviews conducted for this study describe a far more collegial approach to policymaking than the theory of bureaucratic politics would allow. Differences—which certainly existed—occurred at the margins, and these should be expected. However, a number of factors may have worked to lessen conflict, such as the small size of the bureaucracy, the urgent nature of the crisis, the relatively clear division of responsibilities, political leadership and the significant interpersonal relationships between key players.

It is entirely possible that collegiality is a transitory phenomenon. The body of literature concerning the role of bureaucratic politics in foreign and defence policy means this view was widely held in Australia from the 1950s until the 1990s. In this case, however, a collegial attitude can be seen in the way officials emphasised the importance of respecting the roles of others, ‘getting on’ and maintaining relationships. These norms were backed by a strong political will to finish the task. However, it is possible that a future government may not be as cohesive as the NSCC of 1999, or as able to exert its will over interdepartmental rivalries. Future collegiality should not be assumed, and governments will need to take active steps to promote trust and cooperation, and reduce the rewards for destructively competitive behaviour.

There are clearly some differences between the ‘typical’ characteristics and those seen during crises. As a result, the characteristics of the Coordination phase in crisis policymaking will be thus changed:

- Governments describe structures and routines that suit their particular preferences and best thinking for the time, the task at hand, and external factors; and
- Coordination is basically collegial, but the potential for conflict should not be ignored.

Ministers have been involved in policymaking at various stages of the cycle; they have been important to identifying issues, have participated in analysis and even conducted consultation. Their influence has also been felt in coordination. The next chapter examines the point where ministers become central to policymaking, namely the Decision phase. But that point is not the

end of the story because decisions must be implemented and, in theory at least, evaluated. The task of examining these last three policy cycle phases is taken up in Chapter 5.