

Chapter 5

Decision and Beyond

This chapter completes the study of Australian policymaking during the 1999 East Timor crisis by examining the last three phases of the policy cycle: Decision, Implementation and Evaluation. This chapter follows the format of the previous two.

Decision

The Decision phase is the pivotal point of the cycle where the analysts' work is judged by the authoritative actors in the cycle—in this case, the prime minister and the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSCC). The characteristics proposed by Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis for the Decision phase are:

- Cabinet is dominant;
- Officials, when invited, answer questions of a technical nature and leave the room before decisions are taken; and
- Cabinet conventions are based on collective responsibility, secrecy, and recorded decisions.¹

This phase is pivotal; but it is also opaque. While anecdotal evidence is often provided in memoirs, the press and interviews such as those undertaken for this study, the vital documents that record cabinet decisions are secured from the public for thirty years. The revealing records of cabinet conversations, which are contained in cabinet notebooks, are withheld for fifty years. Further, the processes or factors considered in the day-to-day decisions of political leaders often go unrecorded. Together, this lack of good evidence makes it difficult for an outsider to understand decisions processes in this case (and others as well). As Paul Barratt remarked: 'Getting inside the minister-to-minister relationship is a hard veil for anyone to penetrate.'²

As a result, this section offers insights about the factors that led to specific decisions in the East Timor crisis. Further evidence, such as Cabinet notebooks and Cabinet submissions, will be needed to reconstruct the discussions between

¹ Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, 3rd edn, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004, pp. 106–109.

² Interview with Paul Barratt.

Australia's senior leaders. Meanwhile, the interviews collected for this case study provide some evidence to begin understanding the Decision phase's characteristics.

Dominant prime minister and involved committee

While Cabinet remained the final authority for decisions, it is more useful to focus on the dominant role of the prime minister and the main Cabinet committee, the NSCC. As noted earlier, the membership and processes of the NSCC are different to Cabinet and other committees in that officials are invited to sit with politicians. The NSCC also has considerable formal power because its decisions are recorded as Cabinet decisions (although that power is not absolute as the NSCC refers some matters to the full Cabinet). This power was used extensively in 1999 by the NSCC, and it seems that only decisions concerning the final or in-principle decisions regarding the deployment of police or military forces to East Timor were referred to Cabinet.³ This freedom to commit the government and direct activity allowed the prime minister and the NSCC to be the dominant decision-makers in this case.

There are three other reasons for this dominance. The first relates to then Prime Minister John Howard's personal authority. Electoral success clearly played a role in generating this authority, while being at the centre of the government meant that most key decisions were brokered through his office. These factors were enhanced by Howard's personality and his colleagues' trust. This was activated through his meticulous attention to process and inclusive pattern of consultation; he learned the value of carrying his colleagues with him from observing other prime ministers.⁴ But the prime minister was also his own man:

Anyone who takes the prime minister (Howard) to be a patsy for anyone else is seriously mistaken. He would make his own decisions, and he often went against other ministers or officials. ... No committee that Howard chairs runs by consensus. It runs by trying to get agreement—and that doesn't mean that Howard has made up his mind (beforehand)—but when he has made up his mind there is no doubt that he gets what he wants.⁵

3 John Moore also described the autonomy generally received in defence and national security matters from Cabinet, and neither Tim Fischer nor he could recall a situation where Cabinet overturned an NSCC decision.

4 Interviews with John Moore and 051-06. Interviewee 052-06 noted how the prime minister used NSCC as a tool to keep his key ministers involved. Other commentators noted John Howard's dominant and personalised role. For examples, see John Birmingham, 'A Time For War: The Re-birth of Australia's Military Culture', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 20, 2006, pp. 42–43; and Greg Sheridan, 'All the World's a Stage', in Nick Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor: A Decade that Changed the Nation*, The University of Melbourne Press, Carlton, 2006, p. 159.

5 Interview with Chris Barrie.

These factors of delegation, process and personality helped Howard to lead authoritatively during crisis, but another factor was also important. The second reason was that the grouping of Howard, Treasurer Peter Costello, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Deputy Prime Minister (and National Party leader) John Anderson meant that the NSCC contained Cabinet's key leaders.⁶ When Defence Minister John Moore—who had a reputation as an internal powerbroker—was added, it is not surprising that the NSCC was able to dominate national security decision-making at that time.

This group relied on precedent to operate as it did. Former deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer likened this to the authority given to the Expenditure Review Committee in the budget process, but there was also an intangible factor: 'I think there was a feeling of comfort [in Cabinet] that if the NSCC had looked at it in detail then it did not need to be unpicked.'⁷

This confidence was born partly from the status of the individual members, and partly from success in managing other major issues, such as the Asian Economic Crisis.⁸ When coupled with their access to information and close contact with senior officials, the NSCC had the means and authority to act within Cabinet's very broad guidelines and a degree of latitude to make new policy if needed.

Procedural factors were the third additional reason to explain the NSCC's dominance. One important contributor was the NSCC's ability to meet daily (and frequently twice daily) during the acute stage of this crisis.⁹ This meant that NSCC ministers were kept apprised of breaking issues and agencies raised matters for decision in a timely fashion.¹⁰ Other factors that promoted the NSCC's role included access to briefings, the ability to question senior officials in depth and together (noting ministers would not usually be able to quiz the senior officials from departments other than their own), and the ability to conduct consultative and coordination tasks themselves. Taken together, these procedural factors gave the national security ministers a high degree of awareness and involvement in the crisis. It also allowed them to move the NSCC from being a decision-making body alone towards being a body for decision and management.

Dominance has pitfalls though. It is also possible that a dominant group can suffer from a cognitive defect, such as bias or groupthink. While the

6 John Anderson replaced Tim Fischer in July 1999.

7 Interview with Tim Fischer.

8 Interviews with Chris Barrie and Aldo Borgu. The Asian Economic Crisis refers to the series of interconnected financial meltdowns that afflicted some Asian countries, including Indonesia, in 1997–98.

9 It is hard to determine the actual frequency of full Cabinet meetings during the acute phase of the crisis, but most interviewees could not recall meetings more frequently than weekly during September 1999.

10 Interview with 048-06.

methodology used in this study was not suited to identifying these types of problems, it is possible to see how the NSCC could get sidetracked on important, but nonetheless second-order issues. Hugh White provided an example:

Minister Downer made his 'coalition of the willing' remark on [the weekend]. NSCC met on Monday and did not discuss it—they focused on the safety of consular officials in Dili instead. They got to the coalition statement on Tuesday, [the same day] Habibie was in press saying it would not happen.¹¹

These remarks were widely reported,¹² and the notion was quickly and explicitly rejected by President B.J. Habibie.¹³ Yet this apparent diplomatic disagreement did not ultimately have a major impact on other important factors, such as international support for Australia's leadership role. In White's opinion, that was a close call. While consular official safety is important, the focus on this issue to the exclusion of major matters such as international relationships and national credibility prevented the NSCC from developing a unified view on coalition development at this delicate moment. It also prevented the NSCC from considering how best to clarify what might have been interpreted as a call to arms against Indonesia. 'It was lucky that we had the initiative,' said White.¹⁴

Howard also used other mechanisms for decision-making in this crisis. Of these, unilateral decisions were the least used and seem limited only to times where he was discussing fast-moving events with international leaders.¹⁵ More commonly, Howard would discuss important emerging issues with Downer and Moore.¹⁶ Other important consultations occurred between ministerial advisers, and between ministerial advisers and the prime minister's office. Interviewee 051-06 characterised such discussions as a normal way of doing business, especially in a system where ministers have substantial authority to act in their own right and direct control over principal instruments. Since these discussions tended to foreshadow subsequent NSCC discussions and decisions, the committee's central role was preserved.¹⁷

11 Interview with Hugh White, who was referring to Alexander Downer's doorstep interview on 4 September 1999 (see Geoffrey Barker, 'Australian foreign minister on possible peacekeeping force', *Radio Australia*, 4 September 1999).

12 Paul Daley, 'Troops Could Go Within Days', *Sunday Age*, 5 September 1999.

13 Shaun Anthony, 'Jakarta blocks Canberra's call for armed intervention', *West Australian*, 6 September 1999.

14 Interview with Hugh White.

15 Hugh White recounts the interaction between John Howard and UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan as one instance, although Howard was probably working within the NSCC's agreed course at the time.

16 Defence Minister John Moore acknowledged that a 'sub group' of Ministers, not the full NSCC, would be meeting on the night of 6 September 1999 to discuss the Timor Crisis (see Defence Public Affairs, 'Transcript, Hon John Moore, MP & Hon Alexander Downer', Commonwealth Offices, Melbourne, 6 September 1999, available at <<http://www.minister.defence.gov.au>>, accessed 12 December 2007).

17 Interview with John Moore. Interviews with Tim Fischer, 051-06, 048-06 and 064-07 also described the important role of informal contact between ministers and the facilitating role of their advisory staff.

Closely involved officials

The emergent role for the NSCC was influenced by the growing trust between the political leaders and their senior officials during 1999. In 1998, it was common for officials to attend the NSCC, but to not always stay for the entire meeting; at times, they would be asked to leave when matters got ‘political’. There would also be occasions where officials were not invited at all.¹⁸

This situation changed in 1999, where senior officials, the prime minister’s international adviser and (frequently) less-senior officials and ministerial staff attended most, if not all, NSCC meetings and stayed throughout.¹⁹ According to one interviewee, this was indicative of the government learning that the bureaucracy was not full of ‘old Laborites’, but of seasoned public servants who were experienced in national security matters.²⁰ At other times, it was a reflection of fast-moving events.

The privilege of attending the complete NSCC meeting provided those senior officials with a better understanding of the reasons for decisions, and an opportunity to comment as the discussion progressed toward decision. It did not, however, mean that the officials participated in the decision, for ‘you always knew they were the decision-makers and we were the advisers’.²¹ The close involvement was reflected by Chris Barrie, Hugh White and Paul Barratt, who described the NSCC’s atmosphere as one of open discussion or even ‘collegiality’.²² These descriptions speak of a high degree of trust between the NSCC ministers and their senior officials during this crisis.

A conventional Cabinet?

While Cabinet’s conventions were observed, some were bent to fit the particular requirements of the events of 1999. Of these, secrecy and collective responsibility remained intact, although the latter was modified in that the NSCC—rather than the full Cabinet—took most major operational decisions.

Compromises were made in other areas as well. First, the NSCC took many briefs verbally, bypassing the normal process of written submissions and coordinating comments. This potential weakness was ameliorated by the Taylor Committee’s work, as it consulted across government relatively quickly when preparing its submissions. Another factor that ameliorated concerns about the lack of formal

18 Interview with John Moore.

19 Interviews with Hugh White and Paul Barratt.

20 Interview with Chris Barrie. This point was supported in interviews with Daryl Williams, Tim Fischer and John Moore.

21 Interview with Paul Barratt.

22 Interviews with Hugh White, Chris Barrie and Paul Barratt. Daryl Williams also described how the prime minister invited his international adviser to make policy contributions in the NSCC (Interview, 17 March 2007).

process was the members' willingness to accept an occasional surprise: 'No one was too precious about having uncleared matters (tabled), especially once the tempo of events increased.'²³ This was a particularly telling compromise, for it ran against the norm of 'no surprises', and adds support to the 'collegial' view expressed in earlier.

The close involvement of ministers and senior officials in the details of the crisis was another factor that modified normal processes and promoted faster decision-making. According to Hugh White:

One of the ways that people get crisis management machinery wrong is that they assume that, in a crisis, ministers still have limited time and limited attention because they are getting around a whole lot of other things. That's not what happens. ... In a crisis, the only people who understand the situation are the ministers. And the people lower down know less and less about what is going on.²⁴

This highly abbreviated and closed form of decision-making meant that normal processes—involving formal consultation, briefing papers and preliminary committee meetings—became less important as the crisis progressed. One factor enabling this was the tendency for ministers and officials effectively to stop work on most other tasks. They read cables (reports from overseas missions), intelligence briefings and other submissions more carefully and more often—and developed a deeper understanding of the situation. In this sense, most NSCC members became both the 'desk officer' and the decision-maker during this crisis.²⁵

It is one thing to make decisions; it is another to communicate decisions so people charged with implementation can do so faithfully. With the limited information contained in formal minutes, a short space of time between meetings and the hyper-busy schedules generated by crisis, officials rely upon understanding the decision-makers' intent.²⁶ The guidance provided by the NSCC was considered satisfactory by a number of interviewees—and, importantly, none complained about an inability to understand the NSCC's intent.²⁷ Scott Dawson from AusAID thought:

23 Interview with Chris Barrie.

24 Interview with Hugh White.

25 Interview with Hugh White.

26 Intent describes the outcomes desired by political leaders. Intent may be more encompassing in practice, for politicians may also choose to stipulate how the outcome is to be achieved, and not just what should be achieved. An understanding of intent enables subordinates to adjust their plans to the emerging situation, or to take action where guidance is incomplete or ambiguous.

27 Chris Barrie, Hugh White and Michael Scrafton made particular mention of the importance of intent in their interviews.

[A Cabinet decision was] a pretty clear statement ... after the ministers agreed it. So in that sense we had a clear statement of intent. ... I don't recall too much difficulty that he [our minister] had with anything that we sent to him, and [cabinet and ministerial submissions] were written in a way designed to give us a mandate to go ahead and do things.²⁸

However, many senior leaders had only a general understanding of their minister's detailed requirements and relied upon their understanding of the context of events to develop directives to their subordinates:

We had some very clear understandings of what a number of key objectives had to be. ... I think in these broad terms we had an understanding of the key challenges and particularly what to avoid.²⁹

... You might get word from the minister that this [issue] was being canvassed. You would also look for the Cabinet document to find things for [us]. You certainly had a hankering of what it was about before [NSCC decisions] came and you would know what was coming.³⁰

Other ministers, notably Downer, would have regular meetings with task force officials to hear their views directly:

Every two weeks we would brief Downer on how the ETTF [DFAT's East Timor Task Force] was tracking. This was an informal, fireside chat ... there was no agenda, it was very much a 'so what have you got for me.' ... Downer would say what he had to say, [and] offer guidance or not.³¹

These few comments show that while intent is transmitted in a number of ways, the most important factors for understanding intent was a knowledge of the minister's or senior official's long-term goals and preferences, an understanding of where others stood on an issue, some ability to extrapolate once new information came to hand, and a willingness to ask follow-up questions.³² But a clearly stated intent was not always easy to obtain, as Aldo Borgu noted:

The minister was under no illusions that he necessarily knew what he wanted, so he was fairly reliant upon the department for advice on issues. He would give broad parameters, but given Moore's style he was not the

28 Interview with Scott Dawson.

29 Interview with 009-05.

30 Interview with Adrien Whiddett.

31 Interview with 062-07.

32 Interviewee 051-06 described the value the prime minister and other ministers placed on knowing the opinions and preferences of other main actors before decisions were made.

sort of person who communicated by reams of paper. His style was to talk to people and talk through issues, and he would have someone from the office involved. He would say 'you tell me what'.³³

Consequently, subordinates still worked hard to identify the intent of a decision before they passed instructions to others. However, this management approach may be a blessing: after all, it would be a poor minister who provided a misleading intent to their officials.

Observations about decision

While making definitive observations about the substance of decisions during the East Timor crisis remains difficult, it is possible to discuss the way the Decision phase worked. For one, the prime minister's dominance is clear. Howard's chairmanship of the NSCC gave him the final say in decisions, but his style was not unilateral: he preferred to operate with and through his key committee. As a result, the existence of a strong leader, and indeed a strong leadership core, meant most decisions were made through the NSCC without constant or even frequent reference to Cabinet. When the focus of ministers upon the issue is added, the NSCC acted as a highly responsive committee that managed the crisis—particularly the acute stage—to achieve the main objectives of the day (see p. 58).

The NSCC's effectiveness was shown by the way their intent was grasped by those officials responsible for implementing policy. For example, the NSCC's position on a number of critical issues was well understood, such as the conditions for Australian involvement and the desire to avoid war with Indonesia. In addition, the close interaction between senior officials and political leaders ensured that if the NSCC did not provide all of the necessary direction, the officials could follow their intent. This need for officials to interpret guidance, understand the broader context of issues, and make changes as the situation demands is clearly an essential aspect of crisis policymaking.

While these changes involved some temporary bending of particular Cabinet conventions, one important convention concerning the separation of political decision-makers and their official advisers was applied less stringently in 1999.³⁴ That the nation's political leaders overcame the real (or perceived) suspicion of their senior public servants, and trusted their officials to remain throughout the NSCC meetings, was important to making decision-making faster and more

33 Interview with Aldo Borgu.

34 Allowing officials to sit through NSCC meetings might be interpreted as a reversion to Australian practice during the Second World War, where officials frequently sat with Cabinet ministers on important war-related committees. See Martin Painter and Bernard Carey, *Politics Between Departments: The fragmentation of executive control in Australian government*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1979, pp. 100–104.

responsive than might otherwise have been possible. This shows a highly pragmatic streak at play, which means that a Decision phase like the one used in 1999 may not be repeatable under other conditions and leaders.

As a result, the Decision phase in crisis is slightly different to the typical. It is therefore worth characterising this phase in terms of:

- The prime minister is dominant.
- Cabinet conventions are based on collective responsibility, secrecy, and recorded decisions; and
- Officials, when invited, may remain during all discussion; but in general they answer questions of a technical nature and leave the Cabinet room before decisions are taken.

Implementation

Implementation is the penultimate phase of the policy cycle, where ‘the machinery of government smoothly implements the Cabinet’s wish—in theory’.³⁵ The two main characteristics of implementation identified by Bridgman and Davis were:

- Implementation is considered throughout the policy cycle; and
- The more agencies involved, the more difficult implementation becomes.³⁶

Since this study takes a Canberra-centric view of national security policymaking, there is no intention to discuss here the activities of the diplomats, election officials, police, military personnel or aid workers who actually served in East Timor or elsewhere.³⁷ However, issues such as the way forces were assigned to the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), how aid was organised and how the media was managed from Canberra are germane to this discussion.

Considered throughout the policy cycle

Implementation occurred throughout 1999, often in parallel with earlier parts of the policy cycle. One particularly good example of this was the Australian

35 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, p. 119.

36 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 119–21.

37 A number of other authors have undertaken this task, including Bob Breen, *Mission Accomplished—East Timor*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2000, for an ADF perspective; Neil Sugget, *See the Road Well: Shaping East Timor’s Frontier*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005, for the perspective of Customs officials after early 2000; Lansell Taudevin, *East Timor: Too Little Too Late*, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 1999, for an aid worker’s perspective; and Richard Tanter, Mark Selden and Stephen Shalom (eds), *Bitter flowers, sweet flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the world community*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Boulder, CO, 2001, for a number of papers about UNAMET’s activities.

preparation for dealing with an independent East Timor, which included establishing a direct connection between humanitarian aid and East Timor, and by establishing a consulate in Dili.³⁸ A second instance displaying simultaneity between consultation and implementation can be seen in the way Australia prepared forces for peace operations—widely interpreted as peace operations in East Timor—while the Australian Government insisted that Indonesia remained responsible for security. These examples show how considerable amounts of policy may need to be developed after implementation begins.

In another respect, those implementing policy may be writing aspects of that policy at the same time. This situation was evident during the period when the INTERFET coalition was formed. Officials exercised a significant deal of discretion at this time, offering carrots and some small sticks in order to entice decisions from potential contributors. On one occasion, INTERFET Branch made it known that attachés from non-contributing nations accredited to Canberra would soon be excluded from the classified operational briefs. As one foreign government, in particular, was horrified at the thought of being excluded from the ‘inner circle’, INTERFET Branch and their attaché kept the conversation open and this eventually led to a contribution of forces to INTERFET.³⁹

Structures and processes need to be in place to support implementation. One example is the need for appropriate financial arrangements to support novel solutions to policy problems. As AusAID found in this case, budgets and annual allocations can actually work against implementation by delaying activity or by precluding certain options. Despite these impediments, the agency juggled rules and realities—sometimes by using ‘creative accounting’ measures such as trust funds or moving funds between appropriations—to ensure that the desired policy was implemented.⁴⁰ These points highlight the importance of legitimate and understood financial processes that are flexible enough to make funds available when they are needed to support implementation.

One interesting aspect of implementation in this case was the way the strong political imperative behind INTERFET allowed, or perhaps forced, officials to take risks that might have been unacceptable under other circumstances. This was especially noticeable in the way officials accepted a large degree of

38 For example, DFAT listed a range of implementation activities and aid programs in relation to East Timor in their March 1999 submission (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AusAID, *Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into East Timor*, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Additional Information, Volume 5*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1999, pp. 047–048 and pp. 056–062).

39 Interview with Steve Ayling.

40 Steve Darvill described how one agency wrote a contract for helicopters to support UNTAET from June to August 1999 (Interview, 5 July 2005). While sufficient funds were available for the full contract, this money would be ‘lost’ at the end of the financial year—and they were not permitted to commit the Commonwealth unless they had an approved budget. At this stage, AusAID created a new ‘trust fund’ so that the money could be held beyond the formal financial year.

financial risk in order to facilitate (or entice) non-Anglo-Saxon contributors to INTERFET.⁴¹ In some instances, Australian officials showed significant initiative by agreeing to pay for capital equipment items and to underwrite compensation benefits for a number of contributors as a way of getting their rapid agreement to make a contribution.⁴²

Implementation was also essential to supporting the political message in other ways. Early in the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) deployment, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and AusAID recognised the importance of getting UN humanitarian agencies involved, and showing the people of East Timor that Australia was supporting them. This required some novel and risky implementation measures according to Steve Darvill of AusAID:

Again, it was that kind of practical stuff [that was needed]. ... I was phoning around trying to get rice. And Ralph [an AusAID official] essentially went to Woolies and emptied their warehouse of rice, so that day there was stuff to drop. Back here I was phoning rice growers, and working out how to get it there. So I was on the bus on the way home, negotiating for a 747 [aircraft]. It was expensive, but we had to make things happen. There was a political message that we had to get out there.⁴³

Desperate times often call for creative thinking and unusual measures.

The use of the media during crisis is another aspect of implementation, and one that attracted criticism from a number of interviewees. One important use was the way Australian leaders employed the media to make sense of the crisis for the Australian public.⁴⁴ During September 1999 alone, Prime Minister John Howard gave 53 separate media interviews and speeches that helped him to explain the situation to domestic (and sometimes international) audiences. He used these opportunities to explain the events in East Timor, outline the reasons for Australia's commitment, stress Australia's role as being both in-line with the international community and in-line with Australia's responsibilities, and to reduce growing domestic animosity against Indonesia. He did not, however, miss the opportunity to highlight the government's political achievements and how these contributed to the operation's success.⁴⁵ Other ministers also

41 Interview with Steve Ayling.

42 This example financial risk was discussed in the earlier discussion of policy instruments in Chapter 5.

43 Interview with Steve Darvill. The risk of this hurried activity was shown when a food airdrop injured a small boy (see 'Refugee boy crushed by East Timor airdrop', *Birmingham Post*, 30 September 1999, p. 9).

44 See Paul 't Hart, K Tindall and C Brown, 'Success and failure in crisis leadership: Advisory capacity and presidential performance in the 9/11 and Katrina crises', unpublished paper, 2007, pp. 7–8.

45 For example, Howard linked the government's economic management to the operation in East Timor (John Howard, 'Address to the ACT Division of the Liberal Party', 29 September 1999, available at <<http://www.pm.gov.au>>, accessed 10 April 2006).

provided press briefings or spoke to other audiences; the Defence minister made 23 announcements about the East Timor operation and the Foreign minister made at least 31 announcements—the majority of these in the period 6–10 September 1999.⁴⁶ The Australian commander in East Timor, Major General Peter Cosgrove, also played an important part in developing the narrative and providing a reassuring message to people in Australia and internationally.⁴⁷ However, it was the prime minister who carried the bulk of the message to the Australian people and presented the government's preferred view of this crisis.

Getting this message out is not simple, and there are significant limitations in using the media as a tool to support policy implementation. First, having an independent media reflect the government's preferred view is no easy task. This difficulty is magnified when the target of influence is a foreign population, and their domestic media is the only viable way of reaching them. One interviewee, who was involved in Defence's public affairs organisation in 1999, recounted the analysis undertaken to identify how to get messages to the Indonesian people in particular, and the Southeast Asian public more generally. He cited the real challenge with getting balancing messages through media outlets that were either controlled by foreign governments, or highly sympathetic to their government's position.⁴⁸ He also noted the decline of funding for Radio Australia and Australia Television International during this period, but added the audience for this type of media was relatively small. He thought suggestions that foreign media could be manipulated were fanciful, but recounted the way positive messages were sent to specific audiences in Japan to encourage their support.⁴⁹

The second difficulty relates to the tools available to an organisation such as Defence public affairs. The formal tools—press releases and media alerts—often provide the news 'filling' for the daily newspapers. However, they have limited utility if the media wants other stories or is simply unwilling to accept the view presented to it. Also, public statements need to be carefully managed to ensure all remain 'on message'. Transcripts of media interviews and speeches by Prime Minister Howard, Foreign Minister Downer and Defence Minister Moore all showed high degrees of consistency in their messages about the international mandate, relationship with Indonesia, and will of the East Timorese people when discussing the intervention. Keeping these messages coordinated was a major

46 This workload compelled the minister of defence to assign a second adviser to the media liaison role to keep track of the requests and allow the primary media adviser to maintain close contact with the prime minister's office (Interview with 048-06).

47 Interview with Chris Barrie.

48 A problem noted in James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order: intervention and its aftermath in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, London, 2004, pp. 121–22; and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998-2000: An Australian Policy Challenge*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p. 145.

49 Interview with 066-07, who has knowledge of Defence public affairs planning in 1999.

task that required real ingenuity given the technology of 1999. In one instance, the system of synchronising near simultaneous briefings in Dili, Darwin and Canberra involved taping conferences and then playing them down the satellite phone line to the next conference location.⁵⁰

Third, it was also difficult to be 'proactive' due to political sensitivities (as discussed earlier) and the complexity of engaging with a sceptical media. Interviewee 066-07 recounted one attempt where Defence arranged for a very senior ADF officer to speak to an influential Indonesian journalist about a range of topics, with the aim of showing Australia's benign intentions and friendly attitude towards Indonesia. By his recollection, this attempt was only marginally successful and almost back-fired as the journalist interpreted a casual remark in a negative way. On other occasions, the desire to get fresh news footage from East Timor to the international media could have resulted in negative images of the Australian intervention being sent into the public domain. This led to some photographs being confiscated to protect operational security and Australia's image. Engaging with the media to implement policy is clearly an important, but complex, aspect of implementation.

Other interviewees criticised the Australian Government for being less than effective in using the media to further their interests. The attempts to influence regional perceptions about Australia, as mentioned in Chapter 4, are one example. However, the broader problem concerned the difficulty with using information as a policy instrument. For example, Allan Behm said:

My view was that you should use the international media, among other things, to present your position and the operational character of your deployment in the best possible light, and the opposition's in the worst possible light. But we did none of that. We didn't engage anybody to work over the *New Straits Times* or the Jakarta newspapers, we didn't seed stories about the Indonesian generals—and we could have run terrible smear campaigns because we knew all about them and how corrupt they were. We could have had that stuff flashed all round the world, and undermined the credibility of the Indonesian military and Kopassus. I think this was a great lacuna in respect out of our IW [Information Warfare] policy toward East Timor.⁵¹

50 Interview with 066-07.

51 Interview with Allan Behm. Michael Scrafton (Interview, 5 August 2005) also described the difficulties of implementing an 'information operations campaign' at the strategic level. There was more success at the operational level: see Kent Beasley, *Information Operations during Operation Stabilise in East Timor*, Working Paper no. 120, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, Canberra 2002; and John Blaxland, *Information-era Manoeuvre: The Australian-led Mission to East Timor*, Working Paper no. 118, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, Canberra, 2002.

Matthew Skoien also pointed to tactical reasons for not using the media to explain Australia's position:

If only the media knew that in fact we were doing more than anyone else in the world to prepare and be ready to guide consideration in the UN and US; but we wouldn't, couldn't speak out about it ... [if] it had looked that we were preparing an Australian peacekeeping force before the ballot or anything like that, we feared that Indonesia would say they would only go ahead with this if Australia took no part. That would have been our worst outcome.⁵²

These conflicting views of whether or how to use the media highlight a profoundly difficult choice faced by policymakers. In these situations, they must confront the need to gather support for initiatives and remain accountable, while balancing the need to restrict information for the purposes of achieving policy objectives.

Cooks and broth?

It is not surprising to find that implementation becomes more complex and complicated as the number of participants increase. For example, Steve Darvill recalled how the relatively straightforward task of organising helicopters for UNAMET using a commercial provider was soon complicated as other departments became involved:

When we hired the helicopters, there was a period where they couldn't go ... from our point of view it was being treated a logistical thing—get them on contract, painted the right colour. ... But having done that, [attention] shifted to the political arena and DFAT went to Jakarta and took this up in the UN with Indonesia.⁵³

And:

The ADF had duty of care for their people, if they fell ill on deployments. They would normally have their hospital go with them, but the Indonesians were not going to have a bar of that, and it fell back onto us to hire a medevac [medical evacuation] facility to sit on the tarmac in Darwin—at great expense—just in case there was a need. I don't know whether it got used much. But that became a kind of political issue with Defence, and DFAT had to play the political dialogue [with Indonesia] to make this happen.⁵⁴

52 Interview with Matthew Skoien.

53 Interview with Steve Darvill.

54 Interview with Steve Darvill.

However, the limited capacity of some organisations actually increases the need to involve more players. This was especially seen in the difficulties experienced by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) when deploying overseas. This went beyond having insufficient numbers of police officers, as the AFP also needed support for communication, transport and logistics.⁵⁵ It is also important to recognise that civilian firms and charities become critical to implementation when the government either lacks their own capabilities, or needs help to surge for a crisis.⁵⁶

Implementation also influences the way people think about coordination. On the one hand, the act of executing a policy decision can have a unifying effect within large organisations. Some interviewees commented on how people got behind each other during this crisis, while another commented on how single-minded Canberra became once forces were deployed.⁵⁷ On the other hand, some had the impression that, once the decision was made, politicians would just leave the departments and agencies to get on with the job; both Major General John Hartley and Interviewee 009-05 cited instances of this:

On one occasion, [Defence Minister] Moore called General Cosgrove and directed him to call a fresh press conference to announce that INTERFET would conduct operations across the Indonesian border if needed [in 'hot pursuit'⁵⁸]. Moore then called back five minutes later to check to see that the arrangements had been made.⁵⁹

I think there was still quite a strong entrenched feeling within the military element of the structure—to Dili and beyond quite frankly—that it wasn't appropriate for civilian advisers to be urging them to provide information quickly, and a view that some of this stuff needs to be sat on so that the minister doesn't bugger up 'our operation'.⁶⁰

The complexity involved in implementation was also shown through issues such as the 'hot pursuit' remarks and the shooting at Mota'ain.⁶¹ In both cases, the

55 The need for state police was especially acute as the AFP prepared for the second rotation of UNAMET.

56 Some of the specific shortfalls for INTERFET were discussed in 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. 39.

57 Interview with Kerry Clarke. In interview, Adrien Whiddett and Matthew Skoien also expressed similar views.

58 For descriptions of this incident, see Ellen Knickmeyer, 'Australia: peacekeepers allowed to cross border in hot pursuit', Associated Press Newswires, 30 September 1999; and Dennis Shannahan, 'Muzzling Moore the hottest pursuit—Australia cannot afford to send any more mixed messages', *Australian*, 2 October 1999, p. 10.

59 Interview with John Hartley.

60 Interview with 009-05.

61 Australian forces exchanged fire with Indonesian border police and troops on 11 October near the border crossing at Mota'ain (see Raphael Epstein, 'Australians and Indonesian forces clash in East Timor', AM (ABC Radio), 11 October 1999, available at <<http://www.abc.net.au>>, accessed 2 January 2008).

wider range of players and heightened political sensitivity added another layer to considerations that may not have been grasped immediately. As Interviewee 009-05 noted:

For me, that [problem] will always crystallise around the shooting incident that happened at [Mota'ain] on the border, which we found out about through CNN. ... You know, we had the minister screaming down the phone trying to find out what had gone on. ... I tried COMAST [Commander Australian Theatre, in Sydney] and then I actually rang Dili to find out what was going on. I got some Captain who was quite aghast, and probably rightly so in a sense that here was this wally from headquarters trying to get some information. But what the doctrine manuals said was a fairly trivial tactical incident had the potential to be a serious strategic impediment in the government's policy. It could have brought us frankly to a shooting war with Indonesia. I don't think the Defence system, then or now, has really engaged its mind on how to deal with that issue.⁶²

These difficulties also extended to a range of other problems that had a lesser impact on the overall mission. However, it is important to note that the implementation of INTERFET went well, to the point where it was described as successful and a significant achievement by Australia's leaders and by some foreign observers.⁶³

Observations about implementation

Asked whether Australia achieved its policy objectives, Hugh White started his answer by listing what he thought were the key four at the start of 1999: East Timor would remain a part of Indonesia, there would be no disruption to Australian-Indonesian relations as a result of East Timor, East Timor would not disrupt TNI-ADF relations, and Australia would not have large parts of the ADF deployed in East Timor. He concluded: 'We got none from four'.⁶⁴

However, the effective implementation of INTERFET in the period of acute crisis ultimately saved the 'strategic bacon'. First, it was the beginning of the end of the humanitarian crisis that had been occurring since 4 September 1999. Second, INTERFET's deployment kept global attention focused on the East

62 Interview with 009-05.

63 For examples, see Alexander Downer, 'Australia at Year's End—Retrospect and Prospect', Speech by the Hon. Alexander Downer MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the National Press Club, Canberra, 1 December 1999, available at <<http://www.foreignminister.gov.au>>, accessed 27 November 2007; Fred Brenchley, 'The Howard Defence Doctrine', *Bulletin*, 28 September 1999; John Howard, 'Statement on East Timor', 23 November 1999, available at <<http://www.australianpolitics.com>>, accessed 16 April 2006; and Maxine McKew, 'Clinton advisor praises Australian leadership on East Timor', *7.30 Report*, ABC Television, 13 January 2000.

64 Interview with Hugh White.

Timor problem, which gave legitimacy to the cause and additional exposure to encourage more support for it. Third, INTERFET initially operated amid TNI forces, and then maintained a separation between themselves and the Indonesians across a difficult border and so averted major clashes—and perhaps war. Fourth, INTERFET provided enough stability for the UN transitional administration to begin work on creating an independent East Timor. Thus, successful implementation led to an objective desired by many—although not enjoyed by everyone who should have shared in it. The successful mission also allowed the Australian Government to weather significant media and political criticism over its handling of the crisis. Although the critics were fast to point out the shortcomings and the lives lost in the crisis, the Australian Government was able to respond by acknowledging some faults while pointing to the world's newest free nation. It was the Australian Government's position that resonated most with Australian voters.⁶⁵

Unlike the impression provided by the policy cycle, policy in a crisis is unlikely to be a single decision followed by a single action. Instead, a range of decisions are made and implemented over time, with later decisions being influenced by the impact of measures implemented earlier. In this case, formal Cabinet or NSCC decisions were not the only progenitor of actions; even routine cables from DFAT posts elicited some form of action in Canberra that contributed to policy implementation.

The importance of structures and processes, intent, creative thinking and risk all came though in this case. Structures and processes are generally considered essential to spending money; public servants in Australia cannot, in layman's terms, commit public funds without an approved budget and the authority to spend that money. However, some impediments can be overcome (legally) if political support is present and if the officials have a clear understanding of what is needed to meet the intent of the decision-makers. Armed with some confidence, officials can then devise alternatives and even accept risk in areas ranging from funding to media engagement.

Given the wide range of problems that arise in any crisis, a variety of players must be involved in implementation and they need to be consulted early. This case showed how the agencies traditionally responsible for national security policy in Australia—DFAT, Defence and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPM&C)—needed important support from those normally associated with domestic aspects of security, particularly the AFP. It also identifies that some agencies, such as AusAID and the Australian Electoral Commission, were

65 See the polling on attitudes to the Timor crisis in Ian McAllister, *Attitude Matters: Public opinion in Australia towards defence and security*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2004, pp. 23–24. The Howard Government would be returned twice more in 2001 and 2004.

only partially aware of their role in national security at all. This crisis also reinforces the need to consult operational agencies at the start of planning, and to practise responses before crises occur.

This case has not provided strong evidence to alter the typical characteristics of the policy cycle to account for crisis conditions. Consequently, the characteristics of the Implementation phase of crisis policymaking remain as:

- Implementation is considered throughout the policy cycle; and
- The more agencies involved, the more difficult implementation becomes.

Evaluation

The Evaluation phase provides the nominal end of the policy cycle, where the utility of policy is questioned and a new cycle of analysis begins. Two characteristics of evaluation are:

- If conducted at all, evaluation typically occurs after the policy has been implemented in full; and
- Policy advice is not systemically evaluated.⁶⁶

An examination of these sources finds that the characteristics of policymaking described by Bridgman and Davis generally hold true for this crisis, although there are some small differences. This section also shows that if evaluation is difficult, then a spirit of self-criticism is essential.

Evaluation only after implementation is complete

Of the clearly identifiable evaluation efforts that took place around the East Timor crisis, most occurred afterwards. Of these, two formal evaluations were conducted after the event, but these covered only limited aspects of the crisis and the government's response. The first, an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report about the ADF's deployment into East Timor, was unusual.⁶⁷ While a broad range of Defence activities have been subjected to ANAO scrutiny over time (64 Defence-specific reports were delivered in the period 1996–2007), the vast majority of these focused on procurement or other management functions. In this case, the ANAO chose to look at an operational activity and made recommendations on issues that included training standards, public affairs planning and preparedness issues. AusAID also participated in a

66 Bridgman and Davis, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, pp. 131–33.

67 Australian National Audit Office, *Management of Australian Defence Force Deployments to East Timor*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

formal UN evaluation of the humanitarian response, and regular assessments of transitional administration programs. These evaluations were conducted on a six-monthly basis and provided to donor countries before major meetings.⁶⁸

Defence conducted internal evaluations of its policy processes during the crisis. Allan Behm's report into Defence command arrangements is still classified, but he recounted some aspects of the report for this study. His report was developed after interviews with key members of Defence, some outsiders, and his own observations of Defence during the crisis. Interestingly, he developed two versions of the report: a 'vanilla' draft for external (government) readers and a more candid version for an internal audience. The internal version was reputedly a very blunt assessment of Defence's organisational deficiencies, and it included recommendations to change the structure of Defence headquarters. However, even supposedly objective assessments can be controversial and may not lead to any action: according to Behm, no recommendations to improve coordination were implemented as of early 2005 (although the results of others, such as a separate review of ADF command and control in 2003, did result in some change).⁶⁹ According to another source, some of the data captured by Behm was different to what people were saying at the time and resulted in a mismatch between feedback then and criticism later.⁷⁰

On top of Behm's formal evaluation, Defence's Strategic Command Group conducted an informal yet frank evaluation of its own performance. In this, the Service chiefs reportedly expressed their concern about the way command and control was effected, especially the limited role given to Commander Australian Theatre and his headquarters.⁷¹ Other interviewees from within and outside Defence spoke of learning lessons from previous events and operations and how these were applied during the East Timor crisis. This shows, at least, a willingness among officials to test current or likely events against experience.⁷²

Three other modes of evaluation were certainly ongoing throughout the crisis, but it is difficult to pinpoint their influence on policymaking. The first, and most important, was the way politicians and officials evaluate events themselves. While evidence to prove self-criticism is very scarce (aside from personal accounts), some hints of criticism and reflection may be found in the way structures were changed mid-crisis. While other reasons may have been influential, the decision

68 Interview with Scott Dawson. These reports can be read at World Bank, 'Trust Fund for East Timor', available at <<http://web.worldbank.org>>, accessed 12 July 2007. For the United Nations' evaluation of the 1999 humanitarian program see Chris Hurford and Margareta Wahlstrom, *OCHA and the East Timor Crisis*, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, November 20001, available at <<http://ochaonline.un.org>>, accessed 12 July 2007.

69 Interview with Kerry Clarke.

70 Interview with Frank Lewincamp.

71 Interview with Frank Lewincamp.

72 Interviews with Scott Dawson, Frank Lewincamp and John Hartley.

to create new organisations within DPM&C and Defence to manage different aspects of the crisis can be interpreted as learning, and perhaps contemporary criticism of the policymaking process.⁷³

One group that did not have a formal review of their performance was the NSCC. Former Attorney-General Daryl Williams noted that ministers are ‘constantly reassessing as things move on’, but ‘there’s not that much time available to sit down and do an academic review of what’s gone on before. But in the moving forward exercise, you are reassessing as you go’.⁷⁴

This seems unlikely to change because ministers will always be confronted with new issues. It is also unlikely to change because it would require a willingness on the part of ministers to initiate reviews of their own performance voluntarily—and there’s no evidence to show that ministers would expose their collective or individual performances to what would become politically-charged scrutiny. But while internal review and ‘lessons learnt’ processes can be difficult to conduct when time is short, they offer at least one way of learning from experience.

Parliamentary committees can play a role in evaluation—but none had a measurable effect on policymaking in 1999. Of the two parliamentary bodies operating in 1999, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee (FADTRC) was the most focused on this crisis through its hearings on the social, political and economic conditions in East Timor. FADTRC often probed officials with questions about government policy, the history of the case, the facts of the emerging crisis, and details of Australia’s assistance to East Timor. However, its interim report, tabled soon after INTERFET deployed, only contained recommendations concerning the future of Radio Australia and a request for a committee visit to the territory.⁷⁵ FADTRC’s final recommendations were similarly slim. Aside from another request to visit Indonesia, the only policy-relevant recommendation concerned East Timorese access to oil from the Timor Gap.⁷⁶ None of these recommendations can be interpreted as offering an evaluation of policymaking.

The Senate Estimates process is another forum where evaluation can occur. The purpose of this process is to examine the operations of government by considering ‘estimates of government expenditure referred to Senate legislation

73 Interviewee 051-06 mentioned the concerns being reflected about coordination and their role in the decision to establish the Taylor Committee.

74 Interview with Daryl Williams.

75 Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee, *Interim Report on East Timor*, Senator John Hogg (Chair), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1999, paragraphs 3.54 and 3.57.

76 Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee, *Final Report into the Inquiry into East Timor*, Senator J Hogg (Chair), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2000, p. 74 and p. 200.

committees as part of the annual budget cycle'.⁷⁷ This mechanism provided an opportunity for senators to ask detailed questions of public servants and, in so doing, scrutinise the government and its performance. In 1999–2000, most of the issues raised in this committee related to the costs of the Timor campaign, the effects of the campaign on other areas of Defence, and questions about issues such as reserve forces and equipment.⁷⁸ There were some questions about readiness, as well as Indonesian activities and the TNI-ADF relationship.

That neither committee—FADTRC or Senate Estimates—appeared to contribute to evaluation highlights the difficulties faced by Parliament. While committees can have access to departmental officers and ask questions of them, the depth of questioning generally depends upon the expertise of the individual senator and their staff. This format also creates a competitive atmosphere where officials aim to provide complete answers, while providing only enough information to answer the specific question. Nor can officials discuss classified information in this forum or offer personal opinions about events or policy. These shortcomings make Parliamentary committees unsuitable for the type of reflection or self-criticism that aids evaluation.

Policy advice not systematically evaluated

There are four likely ways to systematically evaluate crisis policymaking in Australia: a formal (perhaps judicial) evaluation by an external agency on the performance of the system and people within it; internal departmental evaluations; special or periodic inquiries by Parliament; or 'whole-of-government' evaluations by a central agency. It is also possible that a deep, individual evaluation by a well-placed minister or senior official—which could be described as 'self-critique'—might also act as an informal evaluation method.

Despite the different types of evaluation listed above, there was no evidence of a systematic evaluation of policymaking during or after the East Timor crisis. Of the identified evaluation efforts, Behm's report on defence command arrangements provides one instance of systemic evaluation, albeit one focused on a single department. The other major evaluation by the ANAO crossed departmental lines to a small extent, but it was focused on the management of the deployment.⁷⁹ While both are examples of evaluation, they fall well short of a government-wide process that would be useful for evaluating policymaking

77 Australian Senate, 'Consideration of Estimates by the Senate's Legislation Committees,' *Senate Brief No. 5*, September 2006, available at <<http://www.aph.gov.au>>, accessed 25 February 2006.

78 For example, see Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, *Consideration of Additional Estimates (Department of Defence)*, 10 February 1999. At least six meetings of this committee discussed East Timor issues in 1999–2000.

79 It should be noted that the ANAO is mandated to examine government agencies, not Cabinet (see Commonwealth of Australia, *Auditor-General Act 1997 (Commonwealth)*, available at <<http://www.comlaw.gov.au>>, accessed 18 October 2007).

processes and structures. There was also a call for a commission of inquiry was also made by the Opposition spokesperson on foreign affairs, Laurie Brereton, which was unsuccessful.⁸⁰

This should not be surprising. Michael Di Francesco noted that Australian policy departments of the 1990s 'commonly protested that evaluating policy advising activities was impractical since it presented what they saw as insurmountable problems of definition ... and fuelled concerns that, if pressed, assessment would invariably fall back on judgemental factors'.⁸¹ According to Di Francesco, that would reduce evaluation to a highly political activity in a sphere where policy advice was traditionally held to be non-political.

Indeed, the reticence to be open to any external evaluation—particularly in the highly partisan Senate—is well illustrated in this exchange between the FADTRC Chairman, Senator John Hogg of Queensland, and DFAT's John Dauth. According to Hansard, Hogg said:

Throughout this inquiry, there have been more brickbats than bouquets for DFAT. If you have read the Hansard that will show itself to be fairly true. There has been a claim—and these are my words trying to paraphrase a number of people who have put evidence to us—that DFAT has failed in its advice to the government, in its advice to the Parliament... there have also been claims by some people appearing before us—rightly or wrongly; I am not siding with anyone on the evidence—that there should be an inquiry into DFAT and its shortcomings over a long period of time, whether it be 25 years ago or even today. Do you have a response to that?'

Dauth's response was short: 'No, Senator, I do not'.⁸²

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the lessons of East Timor informed planning for the next major national security issue, which involved the Sydney Olympics in 2000, and for national security policymaking in general.⁸³ This type of evaluation is, however, inherently personal and reliant upon a continuing role for key participants in future relevant activities.

Observations about evaluation

The two main characteristics of evaluation developed by Bridgman and Davis are very closely matched to the experience of this case. While the main evaluation

80 Laurie Brereton, MP, 'East Timor: Revelations on Four Corners', News Release, 15 February 2000.

81 Michael Di Francesco, 'An Evaluation Crucible: Evaluating Policy Advice in Australian Central Agencies', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2000, p. 37.

82 Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Economic, social and political conditions in East Timor*, 6 December 1999, p. 39.

83 Interviews with Chris Barrie, Frank Lewincamp, Steve Darvill, Aldo Borgu, 028-05, and 033-05.

efforts occurred after the crisis, none were systematic, cross-government evaluations of policymaking. However, this is not to say that evaluation did not occur at all—at a minimum, evaluation of some type can be inferred from structural change, such as the Paterson and Taylor Committees. These structural changes show that evaluation—at least in the minimal form of self-critique—occurs during the policy cycle.

Evaluation seems more likely to occur after failure, particularly when there is a strong public demand for answers.⁸⁴ In this case, voices for change to policymaking structures would likely have been hampered by the overall perception that INTERFET was a successful mission—indeed, about 99 per cent of Australians interviewed in one survey thought the ADF had performed well in East Timor.⁸⁵ Speaking against a strongly-held conventional wisdom and demanding a review can be difficult. These difficulties can continue even where well-researched and considered recommendations are provided after evaluation. As this case shows, not all recommendations are acted upon, no matter how prescient or logical they may be.

As a result, the characteristics of the Evaluation phase in a crisis will remain:

- If conducted at all, evaluation typically occurs after the policy has been implemented; and
- Policy advice is not systemically evaluated.

This chapter completes the examination of the East Timor case and its comparison against the proposed characteristics of crisis policymaking in Australia. This examination has shown some continuity between the ‘typical’ characteristics proposed by Bridgman and Davis, particularly in the role of the prime minister and his executive, in the importance of external actors, and in the complexity of coordination and implementation. But some differences were also identified, particularly in the roles of officials in decision-making and in significant collegiality between departments. Change was also observed in the policymaking structures during the crisis. The final chapter of this study recounts the East Timor crisis’ effect on the national security policymaking system in Australia, and identifies what this case tells us about the characteristics of Australian policymaking in national security crises.

84 A point made by Interviewee 052-06, and at least partially demonstrated by various formal inquiries since 1999 into the October 2002 Bali Bombings, the Australian Wheat Board’s activities in Iraq and that into Australia’s intelligence community.

85 Ian McAllister, *Attitude Matters: Public opinion in Australia towards defence and security*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2004, pp. 23–24.