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## From Childhood to Maturity: The SDSC, 1972–82

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Life at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) in the early 1970s was not for the faint-hearted. One morning I turned the doorknob of Seminar Room A on the ground floor of the H.C. Coombs Building to find a room full of agitated people, some of whom were brandishing placards that called for the visiting seminar speaker, who was right behind me, to be tried as a war criminal. To underline the seriousness of the case in the view of those with the placards, there was a stout rope noose hanging from the facing wall, presumably in the interests of a swift execution of sentence. I took in this scene in a split second, wheeled my speaker about and we returned to my office. As any novice strategist could detect, this was no time to persist in the hope of having a quiet hearing for the speaker followed by a robust but regulated debate.

Our intended speaker that morning was Douglas Pike, a well-known American analyst of Viet Cong organisation, leadership and methods of operation. Once in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), he had relocated to academia. That link in his past was sufficient to attract the radicals and vitiate the prospects for an informed discussion on one

of the most important issues of the Vietnam War — the nature of the communist movement there. I recount the episode as an illustration of the delicate way in which I had to conduct SDSC's activities while the Vietnam War was still a major issue on The Australian National University (ANU) campus. Despite having served in the Australian Army in Vietnam myself, and having a keen interest in seeing different methods applied by the Americans in that conflict to those conflicts they were following (to put it no more strongly), it was unwise to try to debate the war in an academic seminar room, at least until Australia's complete withdrawal was announced by the Labor Government of Gough Whitlam in late 1972.

Fortunately there were many other issues of a less inflammatory kind on which to focus, such as the changing balance of strategic interests and actors in the south-west Pacific. Unfortunately, the Centre by 1971 had very little by way of resources with which to sponsor research, publications and debate. I took it over from Tom Millar, the founding head of SDSC, in early 1971. Tom was appointed Director of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) a year or more previously and was overloaded. I had not been keen to take on the headship of SDSC because, having recently come out of military service and then teaching in the Faculty of Military Studies at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, I desperately wanted to press ahead with my own research and writing. At that early stage of my career, I did not want to be saddled with the responsibilities of administration, the battle for financial support, and the planning and direction of conferences and seminar series that were part and parcel of the life of any head of an academic unit. Nor did I want to incur the opprobrium that would inevitably go with a public role in this field during the Vietnam War unless I turned into a radical opponent of the American and Australian part in that conflict.

When Hedley Bull, then head of the Department of International Relations in which I served, ran the question of my succeeding Millar by me in early 1970, I replied in the negative. Twenty-four hours later, after a good deal of soul searching and discussion with my wife Sally, I advised Bull that I would be willing to take on the SDSC headship. It would have been too selfish for me to have stuck to my initial preference, I thought, and the foundations of a serious analytical

capacity in the field of international security at ANU would have been weakened had I not been willing to take the burden of running SDSC off Millar's shoulders.

Thus the die encasing my academic career was cast. And not a bad cast it was, leading me on to 20 years of international service in positions of this kind after 11 and a half years as head of SDSC. Nonetheless, the decision cost me in that it was difficult to carve out the time in my schedule for research and writing on a personal project, especially as I had already agreed to write the official history of Australia's role in the Korean War, partly to break the logjam in Australian war history that was blocking the path to a full analysis of the Vietnam War and its lessons for the future. My view of my future career path was to return to writing the kind of book that had resulted from my doctoral thesis at Oxford, *The German Army and the Nazi Party*, and thereby become better known internationally, and maybe gain a significant position in a major university abroad. Leading SDSC seemed to take me in another direction altogether, which would make me better known in Australia but would probably lead me to being typecast as a regional rather than a global scholar.

When I took over the headship of SDSC from Millar, the Ford Foundation grant on which the Centre was founded was almost exhausted. SDSC had been established on one of the worst of bases for an academic research unit: it had no funding from ANU other than providing for my own salary, which was a charge on the Department of International Relations in which I had a tenured position as a senior fellow. The Ford Foundation grant provided for a secretary and a research assistant, but this would not continue for long. There were no research positions in SDSC and no administrative assistance other than the above two posts for running the conferences and seminar series that were essential to a centre's visibility. I felt for a while as though I was imprisoned inside a hollow pumpkin with a very thin shell.

Some welcome relief came from the Business Manager of the Research School of Pacific Studies (RSPacS), Peter Grimshaw, who believed strongly in the Centre's work. He found ways in which some unexpended funds in the RSPacS budget might be moved to support SDSC, provided that the Director of the School, Oskar Spate, and the School Faculty Board approved. It was partly my task to persuade Spate that this would be a wise use of School funds. He and the board

assented and the long-term consequence of that decision was that SDSC had an assurance that it would always have some secretarial and research assistance provided by ANU.

It was, of course, more difficult to obtain funding for academic research posts because these were far larger budgetary items. It did not help me that RSPacS had recently established a Contemporary China Centre because (despite being a later arrival than SDSC) it was seen as offering greater opportunities for RSPacS and ANU to raise their profiles, not least with the Whitlam government when it came into office in 1972. I never tried to use the argument of having stood longer in the queue to gain ANU financial support for SDSC: it would have been very counterproductive. Yet that did not stop me from feeling somewhat lonely and more than a little disappointed at the prospects I could see ahead for SDSC for 1973 and beyond; I wondered if it would fail on my watch. No research meant no scholarly impact. Without impact in the 'dog-eat-dog' world of academic departments and centres, SDSC would soon be 'dead meat'.

The fortunes of politics opened up an avenue of hope to me in late 1972. During 1971 and 1972 I had come to know Lance Barnard, the Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party and its Defence spokesman. He had spoken to a Centre seminar and privately I had been able to answer some of his questions concerning the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and its equipment needs. He certainly had my respect as an alternative minister for defence, and I felt that he saw SDSC as something that might be developed further in the interests of a more open and informed national debate on security issues. Furthermore, his principal assistant, Brian Toohey, later to become well-known as a journalist and editor, lived across the road from me. Once the electoral outcome was known in late 1972 and the two-man Whitlam–Barnard Government was installed in office, I began talking to Toohey about the possibility of the Defence Minister funding two non-tenured posts in SDSC — a research fellowship and a senior research fellowship.

I knew that there would be controversy within ANU about any direct government funding of defence research in academia, but as it was a Labor Government that would be providing the funds, the academic hubbub soon died away. Barnard, for his part, did not grant my request at once. In a normal bureaucratic way, the proposal was

looked at closely within the Defence Department and at a senior level in the armed services. It received more support than opposition, due also to help from Bruce Miller, Bull and Millar, both within ANU and in negotiations with the Defence Minister. The finance was granted and was accepted by ANU and RSPacS and, by 1974, SDSC had an entirely different prospect to the bleak outlook of 1972.

During 1971 and 1972 I had been developing a parallel track to SDSC. Because of the political and security sensitivity of their work, many people in the armed services and Defence (both civilians and military officers) were reluctant to participate in any kind of public discussion of their field. Yet they had much to contribute without infringing official regulations. The highly charged atmosphere of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s was a formidable disincentive to people within the defence establishment who might want to take part in SDSC seminars and conferences. Yet, I knew from experience in Canberra and London in the 1960s that there were some very bright minds in government service who had much to offer our work in SDSC, not least by criticism of the ideas we were beginning to develop. Indeed, without their participation, we stood to suffer in terms of focusing on the right issues and having access to relevant unclassified information and experience.

Each of the six states of Australia had a United Services Institute (USI) that fostered professional debate, largely by persons inside the defence establishment or those who had retired from it. This was a true colonial legacy: the Australian states may have federated, but the USIs had not. So I set about enlisting support from some of the brighter military officers I knew at the level of colonel or thereabouts, together with civilian members of Defence around the grade of assistant secretary and below, for the establishment of a discussion group that would constitute the USI of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

The founding of the USI of the ACT broke the ice that previously shut in some of the better brains of the defence establishment and we soon had a flourishing new organisation holding lectures and conferences. We were fortunate in 1971 that Michael Howard, one of Britain's leading strategic thinkers, was visiting ANU and was able to contribute the opening lecture for the USI of the ACT. The group continued to build up momentum and finally fulfilled its long-intended role of being the keystone in the arch of a federated Royal United Services Institute

(RUSI) of Australia, under which all the state and territory USIs were brought together. RUSI of Australia is still functioning as a valuable forum for the development and criticism of defence thinking, and its establishment has further helped to reduce the barriers impeding the free exchange of ideas between the academic and government sectors of the defence community in Canberra.

Returning to the story of SDSC, substance was soon given to my hopes for its future research capacity because, in the first few months of 1974, using the Defence Minister's grant, we were able to appoint two persons who were to make major contributions to SDSC's reputation: distinguished journalist Peter Hastings, and recent doctoral graduate Desmond Ball. Hastings, a generation senior to Ball, was appointed to the senior research fellowship and Ball to the research fellowship. Ball had produced a bold and brilliantly prepared thesis under Bull's supervision on the strategic nuclear policies of the administration of US President John F. Kennedy only a decade after the decisions he was analysing had been made. He demonstrated amazing capacities to unearth crucial and sensitive evidence. He quickly established credibility with well-known American scholars and senior figures in the Kennedy administration and, indeed, had a far bigger reputation in the United States than in Australia.

At ANU, Ball's image was more that of a radical student activist, opposed to the Vietnam War and critical of many of the ways by which Australia had been governed by the coalition parties over the past generation. When Sir Arthur Tange, then secretary and permanent head of the Defence Department, discovered that Ball had been appointed to this post, he vented his displeasure on me. Tange believed, wrongly in my view, that Ball was a malicious troublemaker, who was more likely to damage Australian security than to strengthen it. Over the following three years, I sat in Tange's office on several occasions listening to his complaints about critical analyses that Ball had written of the way in which defence-policy decisions were made in Australia, and of the problems that some aspects of US nuclear weapons policies, and their installations in central Australia, posed for Australia. There is no doubt that Ball was arguing against the government's line of policy, but that is part of a scholar's job. He gave us insights, based on a huge body of research, that we needed to have. Fortunately, Ball, through his personal qualities and his standing in SDSC, was soon invited by the armed service staff colleges and similar institutions to lecture,

and he made his mark independently. His career took off, aided by the regard in which he was held by leading American scholars and by his remarkable access to persons in the defence establishment in the United States.

As a promising young scholar in a huge, complex and crucially important field — nuclear strategy — I thought ANU should try to keep Ball for a longer period than the 3–5 years normally associated with a research fellowship. This meant appointing him to a tenured fellowship, such as the post that I had within International Relations. For some of my colleagues, the idea of a tenured post being offered upon the establishment of a centre was unacceptable. Centres were meant to be able to be folded up and put away at short notice when the money or academic interest ran out. I believed that the work of SDSC was too fundamentally important as an academic endeavour for the collapsible model to govern its development forever, so I began a campaign for a tenured post in SDSC, specifically with Ball in mind as its first occupant.

Again Ball helped his own cause powerfully by going off as a research associate to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London for a year (1979–80). This was the pre-eminent international body in our field and it was a feather in Ball's cap to be invited there. While in London, he produced one of the best research papers that IISS has ever published — on the feasibility of successfully conducting a limited nuclear war. Ball's analysis argued that the network of sensors and communications on which control of a nuclear engagement depended was too vulnerable to survive long should hostilities occur. Therefore, the many attempts that had been made by politicians, officials, military leaders and other scholars to build public and professional confidence in the usability of certain kinds of nuclear weapon in a major conflict had little substance.

This paper hit the headlines — both globally and at ANU. It was thus easier for me to win the battle on tenured posts for centres once senior academics knew that there was a real danger of Ball being attracted away to a leading US university. Ball came back from London and was appointed to a fellowship in 1980. The continuing quality of his work led to his promotion through the two higher grades to become a full professor a few years later. SDSC has been splendidly strengthened by Des Ball for over 30 years since. He followed Millar as its head

in March 1984 but, realising that research rather than administration was his forte, was pleased to be able to pass the headship on to Paul Dibb in 1991. Ball has been wonderfully hard-working, perceptive, enthusiastic for his and the Centre's work and warm in his relations with colleagues, supporting staff and students. For most of his time in working with myself in SDSC, he was its deputy head and was splendid in that role. I could always count on him for loyal and energetic support, and a flow of fresh, high-quality ideas relating to the future work, development and financial support of SDSC. We have remained in regular contact since my departure from SDSC in 1982 and I have always regarded him as a personal friend.

Hastings also made a strong impact on the Centre, despite being with SDSC for only three years. He needed to return to his profession as a journalist and I had no hope of arguing successfully for a second tenured post for him. Yet, in the time that he was with the Centre, he taught us all much about the region to our north in which he was specialised. He wrote on the implications for the region of its rapid political, economic and social development, and on Australian policies for meeting the challenges coming in our direction. He was an immensely witty man, with a huge range of personal connections in government and beyond — in Canberra, Sydney, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. He was a connoisseur of many of the best things life has to offer and was great company on a field trip. We did two together — one over north-western Australia for several weeks and the other over north-eastern Australia. With his journalist's influence, he was able to get the use of a light aircraft, which made a huge difference to what we could see of the two regions. We were familiarising ourselves with the defence problems of northern Australia — issues that had been ignored since the dark days of the Japanese threat during World War II, but which were demanding fresh attention with the cessation of the time-honoured policy of 'forward defence' following the Vietnam War.

It was a rich personal experience to work closely with Hastings over these years. He shared my interest in modern history and we had much to talk about and learn from each other. One lasting legacy he left me was personal access to a whole range of senior people in both government and the diplomatic service who were his friends and contemporaries, but 15 years or so senior to myself. From those



contacts I learned much about the scepticism and detachment that senior bureaucrats have towards the political masters they serve every day.

In 1974 and 1975, the SDSC program of activities focused primarily on the strategic nuclear balance in the world at large. We held a conference on this theme in each of these two years. The first was conducted with the initial five-year review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in mind and, two months before the conference, the appositeness of our judgement was underlined by the Indian nuclear test on 18 May 1974. As with most conferences, it was a test not only of the speakers' abilities to produce good papers but also of the Centre's standing in terms of who accepted the invitation to attend and who else applied to participate. We had encouraging results on both scores. The authors (Arthur Burns, Ball, Harry Gelber, Geoff Jukes, Peter King and Jim Richardson) gave us good analyses from differing perspectives and we decided to publish the papers as a book. This aim was more difficult to achieve than it might have been because Australian publishers were not greatly interested in defence topics in 1974, so we had to use some of SDSC's small discretionary funds to produce the volume ourselves. The Centre's secretary Jenny Martyn typed up the whole volume, while our research assistant Jolika Tie (later Jolika Hastings after marrying Peter) checked all the footnotes and undertook the copyediting.

I was the overall editor and contributed an introduction that, having just re-read it after a break of 32 years, I am still happy to put my name to. Some thought it overly pessimistic at the time, but I was not wrong in pointing to the long-term significance of India's 'peaceful' nuclear explosion both for India and for those thinking of developing a nuclear option in other countries. The non-proliferation regime looks even weaker now than it did to me in 1974. The volume remains available for purchase second-hand on the Internet, so someone must think it is still worth the advertising space.

This experience of self-publication opened up a new avenue of opportunities. With highly productive colleagues and topical subjects under analysis, SDSC had real promise for developing its own publications program. Our publications developed gradually through the mid and late 1970s from a small series of Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence to a much larger series of SDSC Working

Papers, which were produced from typescripts, printed on an office printer, and then placed between identical stapled covers that differed only in a window displaying the title and author. While we retained the Canberra Papers series, we decreased the quality of the format, thereby saving us money, and put a major effort into marketing both these and the Working Papers. The production rate increased and print runs lengthened. We also began producing books at the rate of two or three a year, including a handbook of data and analysis, *Australia's Defence Capacity*, beginning in 1972. This volume underpinned the public debate with a basis of accurate information ranging from Australia's diplomatic assets and liabilities, such as treaties and other commitments, through to defence forces, bases and equipment. The publications program was largely self-sustaining, and it was led by a third newcomer to the Centre's staff, Colonel Jol Langtry.

Langtry arrived at SDSC in 1976 as a result of general agreement by the RSPacS Director, Wang Gungwu, and his colleagues that SDSC needed a staff member to relieve me of some of the burdens of conference and seminar series organisation and also direct the burgeoning publications program. Grimshaw, also played a major role in this appointment, both in finding the money needed for the new post and giving me some leads on how to play my hand in the internal competition for resources in RSPacS.

Langtry was a huge asset. He was one of those rare infantry officers who had both a university degree and had won the prized Distinguished Conduct Medal as a sergeant in the New Guinea campaign in World War II. He came to SDSC in an administrative capacity, but it was soon abundantly clear that he could conduct research and write at the standards required for a university centre, so he became a close colleague in every possible way. He made a huge difference to my workload and he opened up a presence for SDSC in many new ways. He was independently minded, strong, capable and humble. He fitted into a small, informal academic research unit with great ease and everyone in the Centre valued him highly. He soon teamed with Ball and Ross Babbage, then a doctoral student in International Relations (centres were not permitted to have students in the 1970s, so we supervised those who were specialising in strategic studies under the aegis of International Relations), to produce joint works with them, as well as publishing solely under his own name. Langtry also recruited a team of support staff to help in the publications process.

The computer (as we now know it) was just coming into vogue and he was able to have an office suitably equipped with terminals and staffed by proficient operators. SDSC's publishing capacity became formidable. Indeed, it was more advanced than that of IISS, as I was to discover when I arrived in London in August 1982. What I learned from Langtry's program stood me in good stead for initiating a major modernisation of IISS's capabilities in this direction.

Again, due to Langtry's administrative skills and initiative, we were able to mount more influential conferences that ran over two days and brought up to 300 specialists together. From 1974, SDSC held one major conference a year and sometimes two. We mounted a special effort to build up the Centre's mailing list, which linked security specialists in the Australian academic world, interested politicians, public servants, armed service personnel, journalists, business people and industrialists, increasing it to over 600. We produced a quarterly newsletter, which the Centre still finds useful to publish (another idea I took to IISS, where its version still appears regularly). Publication sales, and seminar and conference attendance all rose. SDSC became an obvious and very active hub for anyone in Australia interested in serious discussion on, and research into, national and international security issues.

The year 1976 was notable for launching research on our second area of specialisation: the defence of Australia. At the conclusion of our 1975 conference on the strategic nuclear balance, several of us adjourned to the bar in University House at ANU and the suggestion arose from Babbage that we might focus our next conference on how Australia, in the era after that of forward defence, might be secured against international pressures or aggression. The virtual collapse of forward defence after the US and allied defeat in Vietnam left Australia without any readily comprehensible strategic policy. This was a major opportunity for a group of academic specialists to open up the topic, try to identify the main questions and problems that needed to be addressed, and then begin to formulate some answers to the questions and solutions for the problems. It was clearly an ambitious undertaking to hold a conference on this theme, but we had an excellent team in place with which to tackle it.

Babbage developed some interesting ideas on this subject in his Master's thesis at the University of Sydney (which I examined). He built effectively on this foundation in his doctoral work at ANU and was in an excellent position to make an impact in public debate. Apart from Ball and Hastings, we were able to call on two international specialists with appropriate expertise: Sven Hellman from Stockholm, who was a specialist in defence planning with an emphasis on self-reliance; and James Digby from California, who was a specialist in new weapons technology and its impact for the strengthening of defensive capacities. By October 1976, when this conference was held, we also had the previous Australian defence minister, Bill Morrison, working as a visiting fellow in the Centre. He joined the team of speakers by offering some thoughts on the impact of the recent basic re-organisation of the Department of Defence in Canberra and the role of the minister in defence planning. Some 120 people came to hear the seven of us and join in debate, and the result was a path-breaking book published by SDSC the following year, *The Defence of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*. It helped to set the course for the policy debates on Australian defence by influencing the ideas put forward in the Australian Government's Defence White Paper of 1976 — the first to grapple with Australia's defence strategy after the withdrawal from Vietnam. The book, and the subsequent work of its authors, continued to have an impact over the next several years, leading up to the report prepared by Dibb (a former senior member of Defence and then a special ministerial advisor, later the fourth head of SDSC) in 1986 on Australia's defence policy in the broad, and then the Australian Government's Defence White Paper produced in 1987.

SDSC followed this conference with a second the following month, November 1976, on 'The Future of Tactical Airpower in the Defence of Australia'. The major procurement issue before the Australian Government then was what aircraft should be purchased to replace the Mirage III-0. As Ball wrote in the introduction to the resulting book, we were not attempting to 'pick a fighter for Australia' in this conference, but rather 'to discuss the general philosophical, technological, strategic and industrial questions relating to this decision'. Langtry joined the team as a speaker and paper author. Other members were Ball, Babbage, Kevin Foley, David Rees, Peter Smith and myself. Ball edited the book of the conference, *The Future of Tactical Airpower in the Defence of Australia* — another SDSC publication that

met a strong market demand. Although we did not attempt to choose a particular aircraft, when the government's final choice rested between the General Dynamics F-16 and the MacDonnell Douglas F/A-18, our arguments tended to favour the latter. We felt some satisfaction when the F/A-18 was selected because it fitted our criteria more closely.

I shall not expand on the work undertaken in SDSC relating to the defence of Australia in the late 1970s and early 1980s for reasons of space. Suffice it for me to say that research and discussion in this area remained a principal activity of the Centre. Its sustained high profile in the media, and the degree of interest shown by Defence, politicians with defence interests, the Canberra diplomatic corps and the academic community generally gave us the feeling that our work was playing an important role in facilitating the development of rational policy on major issues of Australian defence policy.

The Centre's work on regional security problems was a third major field of activity. During the Vietnam War, it was inviting trouble to attempt to work on either Vietnam or South-East Asia from a security perspective, so we focused on the newly independent states of the South Pacific, which, by 1975, included Papua New Guinea. Hastings was our principal expert in this field and, as the Vietnam War receded, we were able to focus more directly on South-East Asia — not least East Timor. José Ramos-Horta (later Foreign Minister of East Timor) visited a few times during the late 1970s and spoke at seminars on issues that were to become much more serious — even tragic — in the late 1990s. Our conference program in the late 1970s and early 1980s focused heavily on regional issues embracing South Asia, South-East Asia, and the Indian Ocean.

This work was strengthened considerably through the financial support of the Ford Foundation. After its initial grant (which was vital to the establishment of SDSC in 1966), the Ford Foundation focused on other areas of academic endeavour. During 1974, Enid Schoettle, head of the international security program at the foundation, contacted Bull and myself with a view to discuss a wide project of international academic cooperation in which International Relations and SDSC might play leading roles. She came to Canberra and the net result was funding for a Master's degree program within International Relations for outstanding students from South and South-East Asia and for a visiting fellows program in SDSC directed towards the promotion

of regional stability by arms control and sensible, non-provocative defence policies. The grant also supported a major international conference to be run by SDSC each year, and travel by ANU staff members both to select candidates for graduate scholarships and visiting fellowships and to give lectures at the universities we visited in South and South-East Asia.

The Ford program came into effect in 1975 and was extended for several years beyond 1978 — the initial period of the grant. It enabled us to bring to Canberra generally two visiting fellows a year, sometimes more, who stayed for six months, contributed their perspectives to our work, learned what they could from us and contributed a major piece of research for inclusion in our publications program, generally as a Canberra Paper. The Ford program also gave us an opportunity to extend our network of contacts, inputs and influence from Australia to the wider region. SDSC became known as a regional rather than a national centre and this helped further in gaining us attention in Europe, North America, Russia and even in the People's Republic of China. The Ford Foundation, in addition to its grant to ANU, sponsored annual gatherings of the institutions it supported around the world in the field of international security, and these meetings were another great opportunity for discussing our work with our peers in other parts of the world and leaders in the field from universities such as Harvard, UCLA, Columbia, Tokyo, and Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Graduate Institute of International Studies at Geneva. For the next 20 years and beyond, senior scholars and some government officials in our field who had been through the Ford program in SDSC were to be found in important positions in South and South-East Asia. I am still in touch with several of them.

The nature of the work undertaken in SDSC, especially but not only that of the regional security program, attracted the attention of many members of the Canberra diplomatic corps. In the mid-1970s, there were some 70 foreign diplomatic missions in Canberra, ranging from those of Australia's closest friends and partners — such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and New Zealand — through to those of states that were far from close friends of Australia in those days of the Cold War — such as the Soviet Union, China, East Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe. SDSC developed close links with other embassies such as those of Sweden, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy,

Israel, Egypt, Japan, South Korea, and those of nations from South-East Asia. We had little time to be charitable and our relations with diplomatic missions turned on their utility to SDSC. Many of them were helpful in facilitating the travel arrangements of SDSC members to their countries, fostering relations with their relevant academic and governmental institutions, funding visits from their scholars as conference speakers in Canberra, and keeping us informed of their government's policies, their internal national debates and their views on the wider issues that concerned us all.

Interesting social interactions often went hand in hand with these professional diplomatic connections — these were not always pleasant or easy, especially when one knew that one was being entertained by, for example, the head of the East German intelligence cell in Canberra. Generally we had a vigorous relationship with the members of the Soviet Embassy, who not only contested our views on many international issues but also directed a major intelligence gathering effort in our direction. Yet, in the cause of international peace and brotherhood, we gave as good as we received by way of debate and it was a relief to discover that many of our challengers had an excellent sense of humour and profound scepticism towards their own governments and systems of political organisation.

We thought it particularly valuable to have (as a visiting fellow in RSPacS) the occasional Soviet specialist on Asia and the Pacific. They tested our thinking and gave us a deeper understanding into the reasons for policy differences, and perhaps our free-wheeling *modus operandi* had a subversive effect on the power of the Communist system over them. We had to be on our guard of course.

One morning in the late 1970s the *Canberra Times* ran an article on its front page stating that the space tracking station at Tidbinbilla, just outside Canberra, had acquired a new defence function. Not long after I sat down at my desk that morning, in bustled a Russian visitor in a state of excitement about the report. It seemed to confirm his view of America's power over Australia. I thought the report was wrong. There would have been much more evident security barriers around Tidbinbilla had it been true. As it was still possible for visitors to be guided over the tracking station, I suggested that next Sunday our guest might accompany my wife Sally, our daughters and myself on a picnic in the vicinity of the tracking station, after which we could

visit it. Our Russian visitor accepted the invitation; we had a pleasant lunch on a creek bank nearby in beautiful weather and then walked up to the tracking station itself. We had ready admission, and took a guided tour. My guest remained silent. He had brought his camera with him and when we were out in the grounds again after visiting every building on the site, he asked if he could take some photographs. I said, 'Certainly — photograph everything you want!' A look of puzzlement and disappointment came over his face. He collected his thoughts for a minute, looked hard at me and then said, 'Oh, I don't think I will bother thank you.' The power of Washington seemed to have receded in his thinking that day.

The staff of the Soviet embassy in Canberra often included some lively people — none more so than Counsellor Igor Saprykin. I met him at a diplomatic reception shortly after his arrival, which coincided with a debate in the national media about the imperilled future of the red kangaroo. Saprykin wore a fine, dark-blue, pinstriped suit and a dark-blue silk tie with a red kangaroo embroidered centrally on it. I made an opening remark about the tie and he replied, 'Yes, don't you know this is my "save the kangaroo" tie — better red than dead!' In view of the then current controversy about the mortality rate of the red kangaroo in Western Australia, I gave him four runs off my opening ball. For the next three years we were to have some lively conversations. A little later, when one of the parliamentary committees produced a report strongly critical of human rights for those in the Soviet Union who were active in the arts, he was asked by a journalist for his comment on the committee's report: 'A pain in the arts!' was his verdict of dismissal.

For most of the 1970s and early 1980s, the Centre's small support staff carried a major workload. We had a research assistant who was in effect also the SDSC librarian, and a secretary who took all the dictation of correspondence in that pre-computer era, typed all the academic and administrative papers, answered the phone and received visitors. Our secretaries, in order of their tenure of the post during the 1970s, were Margaret Kewley, Jennifer Martyn, Anne Buller and Billie Dalrymple. The research assistants were Robyn MacLean, Jolika Tie, Anna Booth and Jann Little. They always had more to do than could be covered in an eight-hour working day and when the pace was particularly hectic — because of the coming of a major conference, the imminence of a publication deadline or an international crisis



that required Centre academic staff to figure prominently in media commentary — they could always be counted on to put in a special effort whether they were paid for it or not — and usually they were not. With Langtry assisting, from 1976 the Centre had a very strong and well-knit team. They were highly intelligent and made sure that Hastings, Ball and I were well-equipped with information and recent commentary — especially when we were about to intervene in a media debate or appear before a parliamentary committee. They kept our publications up to standard in terms of readability, proofreading and accuracy of sources. They coped with a wide range of duties, ranging from showing visiting fellows to their living accommodation and how to use SDSC facilities through to arranging international air travel for Centre staff and conference speakers.

SDSC office accommodation was made by an allocation from International Relations of rooms on the middle floor of the H.C. Coombs Building. Bruce Miller, the department head, made available a consecutive run of rooms, including a large reading room for the research collection and in which visitors could work on our collection of books, journals, news clippings and other materials. Because of the pressure on accommodation in the Coombs, SDSC had just sufficient rooms for the academic and support staff to have one each, except for the research assistant who had to endure the lack of privacy associated with a desk in the reading room. My own office, as head of SDSC, was never more than the standard room designed for graduate students, support staff or junior academic staff; but at least our accommodation was in the heart of the building, right alongside International Relations. We could have moved away to more spacious premises in the further reaches of the campus, but I chose to stay close to the centre of things for a host of reasons, including avoiding marginalisation, demonstrating our closeness to International Relations in more ways than one, and remaining abreast of the scraps of useful political and administrative intelligence that floated around the busy corridors of the Coombs.

Once Hastings had completed his tenure as the Department of Defence-sponsored senior research fellow, his post was held by Philip Towle, a British political scientist who had a background in arms control and the Foreign Office. Towle was with SDSC until the early 1980s, when he was awarded a fellowship at Cambridge. With Ian Clark, a former graduate student in International Relations, Towle was to head the

international relations program at Cambridge for some 20 years. Cambridge did not receive its first chair in this field until the late 1990s and, until then, Towle and Clark did virtually the whole of the teaching in this field there — a heavy workload due to the success of their Master's degree course.

SDSC junior posts were then occupied by persons who came for shorter periods. They included Ron Huiskens in 1976–77 and Don McMillen and Paul Keal in 1981–83. Defence Minister Jim Killen responded favourably to suggestions from several quarters that the armed services should be able to give outstandingly able officers in mid-career an opportunity to conduct some professionally related research in an academic environment. Thus was founded the Australian Defence Fellowships program, which supported usually one or two officers in research projects at the Centre. As these fellowships were tenable in any Australian university, not all those selected came to SDSC. Nonetheless, by the time of my departure from the Centre in 1982, there were sometimes a dozen persons working there — a far cry from what had been the case a decade earlier. My successors have been able to build on this foundation to create and sustain a major academic institution. I think it has been many years since any head of the Centre has needed to worry about whether it would be in existence in one or two years' time!

As SDSC developed a critical mass of expertise and became busily engaged in contact with many defence-related organisations (both in Australia and around the world), we needed to think more about our social life together. The mix of personalities in the Centre was generally a very compatible one, and we often held lunch gatherings in the gardens of University House, enabling someone, say, who had been abroad at a conference or on research fieldwork, to bring the rest of us up to date with what they had seen and heard. A noteworthy annual event was a long summer weekend in one of the ski lodges on Mount Kosciuszko. Langtry was able to reserve the army ski lodge there for a few days at a time, which gave us a great opportunity to enjoy some relaxed time together in a beautiful place. The blooming of wildflowers in early February was wonderful to see and families, especially children, had some memorable times in each other's company. The frequent presence of visiting fellows not only from South and South-East Asia but also from Europe, North America,

the Soviet Union and Japan, afforded many occasions for offering them some Australian hospitality in Canberra, leading to family connections that have lasted for several decades.

During the 1970s, there was an increase in the number of Australian journalists who took a serious interest in international security issues. Early in the decade, the predominant flavour of press comment on such matters was criticism either of the conduct of the Vietnam War or of American policies elsewhere. It was hard to get journalists interested in the wider aspects of regional security that were then our bread and butter. Ball was successful in finding media coverage for his work on decision-making in Defence and the higher reaches of government. Some of his writings were newsworthy in themselves and much of it offered unique perspectives of a kind that were readily available in the United States and Britain, while relative darkness reigned in Australia. Hastings maintained a high public profile by continuing to write for the *Sydney Morning Herald* while he was in SDSC. Gradually, more serious journalists from the print, radio and television media became interested in our work and, by the late 1970s, SDSC had become established as the first point of reference for journalists in Australia seeking comment on world events and government decisions of defence significance.

While many academics in the early 1970s tended to look askance at those few of their colleagues who made frequent media appearances, the climate of opinion was changing. Universities were finally beginning to feel the effects of government cuts in their funding, and alert vice-chancellors — such as Anthony Low of ANU — were keenly aware of the value of a significant media presence. During his years in office (1975–82), he gave me steady encouragement to sustain this activity and I think other benefits flowed to the Centre, enabling us to become less dependent on external funding and more reliant on ANU.

Another major part of our work was service to those parliamentary and other official committees and boards of inquiry that had oversight of international security issues. The body we came to know best was the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, and one or more SDSC members appeared as an expert witness in virtually every set of hearings that this committee held from the mid-1970s onwards. Appearance before a committee involved preparing an initial paper for submission, which was circulated to committee members and

especially to their staff and, on that basis, the formal exchanges of the hearings themselves began. It was pleasing to find in the work of these committees that the more combative side of political competition was cast aside and to see that committee members were interested much more in getting at the truth and weighting professional opinions than in putting down rivals from opposing parties. In these hearings one could feel sympathy for those carrying some of the burdens of government as they sought genuinely, and under pressure of time and other commitments, to find the best policy solutions to the problems that Australia was facing in our field.

One major commitment we undertook for Defence was improvement of the courses conducted at the Joint Services Staff College (JSSC). This institution was established in Canberra around 1971 for the higher professional education of officers from the three armed services at the stage in their careers when they would be working increasingly in operations involving two or three armed services than within the confines of a single-service environment. The initial curriculum made some useful strides in this direction, but it fell a long way short of what Tange wanted in officers who were going to serve in senior policy-related positions, both within his department and at higher headquarters in the armed services themselves. In 1975 he established a committee chaired by ANU Deputy Vice-Chancellor Noel Dunbar to overhaul the curriculum and methods of teaching at JSSC, and service on this body took a substantial amount of my time over the following year. I then became academic adviser to JSSC until my departure in 1982. Ball, Langtry and Babbage also made major contributions to the work of JSSC.

As SDSC became more widely known, Centre members — especially Ball and myself — had increasing opportunities to take part in conferences and joint projects conducted by other institutions around the world, especially IISS in London. Bull had been a member of its council since the 1960s when he was based in London. I followed him onto the council in 1977, and Ball became a research associate there in 1979. We were also engaged in work with leading American institutions and with a wide variety of regional centres of research in Japan, South Korea, India, Pakistan and South-East Asia. The Ford Foundation continued its support of our outreach work, enabling us both to bring scholars and graduate students to ANU and to make a direct contribution to the work of their parent universities abroad.

The Australian Government and foreign governments supported us by paying for conference participants to come to Canberra and by funding our travel to see something of the work conducted in our field in other countries. Attendance at the SDSC main annual conference climbed to 300 and we were able to interest commercial publishers in producing books based on these conferences, which I or another member of the Centre's staff would edit.

All this activity took a toll on the amount of time and effort I could put into my own research and writing. In some ways my concerns about the negative impact that the headship of SDSC would have on my personal output were confirmed. With major effort, however, I continued work on the history of Australia's role in the Korean War (1950–53) and completed the second and final volume in 1982. This work took more time than I had imagined at the outset, not because of the military operations of the war (which were complex enough) but rather because the conflict had resulted in a transformation of Australia's foreign policy. The main feature of this period was the conclusion of the ANZUS Alliance, which Foreign Minister Percy Spender achieved against the odds—including Secretary of State Dean Acheson's personal reluctance, the opposition of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and the scepticism of Prime Minister Robert Menzies. Other themes of the period were Australia's growing disengagement from Britain as a protector, the formation of regional links in South-East Asia, the delicate handling of China so that an enemy in limited war might be turned into a major partner in trade, the transformation of Japan from erstwhile enemy into Australia's principal trading partner, and the battles of Australian national politics of the early Cold War period. I had unrestricted access to government papers. It was a great challenge. I decided to address it by focusing one volume on the broad policy issues of the period and a second on the combat operations of the Korean War. I had hoped in 1969, when I took on the commitment, that I could write the history in four years. It took me 12. I had not, of course, reckoned on the other things that I would be doing, because SDSC was then not on my radar screen as a personal responsibility.

It was extremely fortunate for me that, by September 1981, I had completed the drafting of the second volume of the Korean War history (the first had been published earlier that year). The then director of IISS, Christoph Bertram, asked me that month if I would consider being a candidate for his position, which he planned to

vacate in August 1982. This was another great opportunity as well as a huge challenge. I said 'yes' and, after six months of a detailed international assessment process, I was offered the position out of a shortlist of four. I was the only non-European on the shortlist and all previous four directors of IISS had been Europeans. Clearly we had done something in SDSC to overcome the barrier of remoteness from the principal centres of debate in the field of strategic studies, but also I felt that the IISS council's confidence in offering me the directorship rested substantially on what everyone in SDSC had accomplished over the previous decade. I was not new to the game of running a research institute and my colleagues had produced notable work that was regarded as of international calibre.

I took some satisfaction from the way that the SDSC's reputation had been transformed during the 1970s. In 1971 it was seen as a potential source of trouble within RSPacS and ANU because of the controversy surrounding Australia's part in the Vietnam War. The Centre had scarcely any funds and few friends. By the early 1980s, it was a strong card in the hands of both RSPacS and ANU, attracting money, high-calibre academic members and visiting fellows. SDSC was a focal point of the national debate on security issues and a well-recognised entity within the international network of research institutions in the field of strategic studies.

A good slice of the credit for this result belongs to a number of key external friends of the Centre. Miller and Bull, as alternate heads of International Relations, were constant supporters in provision of advice, use of their contacts nationally and internationally, contributions to SDSC's substantive work and, above all, assistance in building good relations and a strong base in the shifting sands of politics at ANU. I owe a major debt to Wang Gungwu (Director of RSPacS from 1975) for his ready assistance, and to his successor Gerard Ward. Anthony Low, who preceded Wang Gungwu for two years before becoming Vice-Chancellor, was another strong supporter to whom my thanks are due. The affairs of SDSC were also overseen by an Advisory Committee (advisory to the director of RSPacS), which consisted of senior members of ANU who had relevant interests. They were drawn mostly from Pacific Studies, but other schools were also represented and the committee served to integrate SDSC more fully into ANU as a whole, rather than remaining purely an element of Pacific Studies. Grimshaw always gave SDSC his support — particularly through a

flow of suggestions for gaining the resources that were vital to the Centre's existence and growth throughout that decade. He did not have discretionary power over any RSPacS funds that were relevant to SDSC needs, but he could, and did, give me advice that led to successful approaches to the board of RSPacS at times that were likely to be successful.

When I departed from Canberra for London in late July 1982 I did so with some sadness, but I must confess also with a sense of excitement at the prospects ahead of me on the international scene. SDSC had reached a level of maturity at which it could not be stopped or stunted. I had done my bit there for the past 12 years.

It was now time for others to take it in the new directions that followed and to build its strength into what it is today, with four professors to lead it, an assured funding base and a sufficiently strong national and international reputation to compete with the best for financial support and the laurels of academic debate.

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