



Australia-Japan Defence and Security Relationship 1945-2021: Making a Friend of a Former Foe, by Peter McDermott. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Air Commodore Peter McDermott, a retired Australian aviator and diplomat cum defence attaché to the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, presents a master class on how Australia and Japan overcame their earlier antagonism warped by events surrounding their relationship between 1942–1945 during World War II, from 1960 onward, especially in 1992, and yet again from 2007 and beyond.

After a brutal war in which many Australians died or suffered as prisoners of war at the hands of the Japanese, the relationship has now moved from enmity to a friendship based on shared values, interests, and a desire to shape the world order. After the war, Australia was part of the occupying force. However, as Japan rose from the ashes, their relationship quickly turned to mutually advantageous trade and the development of cultural, societal, and security linkages.

The book draws on the experiences and judgments of 94 eminent people who have been closely engaged in the Australia-Japan Defence and Security relationship (A-JDSR)—people who have all worked to ensure Australia and Japan could build closer security ties and augment the role of the United States as an extraregional stabilizer.

Chapter after chapter, McDermott recalls how high-ranking practical and pragmatic defence and security practitioners were more than ready to engage the Japanese from 1960 onward, irrespective of whether Japan was under the absolute control of the United States or not, since the thuggish behavior of North Korea that constantly ties US policy makers in knots, either at sea, through missile diplomacy, or nuclear tests.

Since strategic patience was the underpinning on which to cultivate a sturdier defence relationship, what one has been able to see now, especially in the form of the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), and a series of Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreements (ACSA), as well as Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States trilateral defense pact, also known as AUKUS, must be regarded as nothing short of remarkable. Australia and Japan are now two of the closest alliances within the western alliance system, regionally managed by the US Indo-Pacific Command in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In this context, the RAA and the ACSA were not knee-jerk reactions at all. The ACSA series of agreements flowed from 2007, with the RAA evolving naturally from those. The RAA was first negotiated in 2014 and was given impetus by the 2015 Shinzō Abe-driven changes to the interpretation of the Japanese Constitution. Thus, had it not for the prior efforts of defense intellectuals such as McDermott and his countless Japanese counterparts, the RAA would not have had the antecedents required to conclude quickly.

In due course, should McDermott write another book, perhaps the focus can revolve on the extent to which Australia and Japan will, from this point onward, further entrench their future cooperation not merely at sea or in the air, but in space and cyberspace as well. That said, is this an anti-China book? When placed in the hand of a pro-China hawk, this book will definitely be read as a confirmation of China's worst fear that more and more countries seem bent on containing Beijing's growth in all dimensions of soft, hard, institutional, and sharp power.

However, there was a complete consensus from McDermott and all his interlocutors that China should not be contained. McDermott argues that there is a need to find ways to accommodate China's rise, but this should be done in the context of resisting excessive Chinese assertiveness and ideological undermining of the Western liberal order. In this sense, international relations is in the eye of the beholder, as Robert Jervis once encapsulated in his classic "Perception and Misperception in International Relations."

McDermott concludes that the A-JDSR and the trilateral security relationship with the US exemplify the building blocks that weld nations together in defense of the FOIP. His description of a triple-layered regional security architecture us-

ing such linkages is pragmatic and practical and can help address global security challenges.

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