

between the parties increased year by year since 1998. This finding is presented in part to inform the reader of the many uncontentious issues the Senate regularly considers. It is a shame the data did not go back further than 1996 to compare such data historically and between differing governments. However the fact it does not is hardly the fault of Bach. There are limits to all research projects.

This is not however a book to read for pure enjoyment, or even wider political interest without a specific purpose in mind. Outside of academic circles, I would safely predict, the book is not going to be a page-turner. It is essentially a reference book for anyone wanting a comprehensive guide to the Senate's machinations—a good book for anyone researching bicameralism to add to their shelves. In this respect the bibliography is also extremely valuable.

Whilst successfully collating the existing literature on the Senate into a single text, it is a pity that this book did not fill a gap in Australian political science by comparing institutional and partisan practices in a professional and permanent campaigning environment. It is nevertheless an outstanding and very learned institutional analysis.

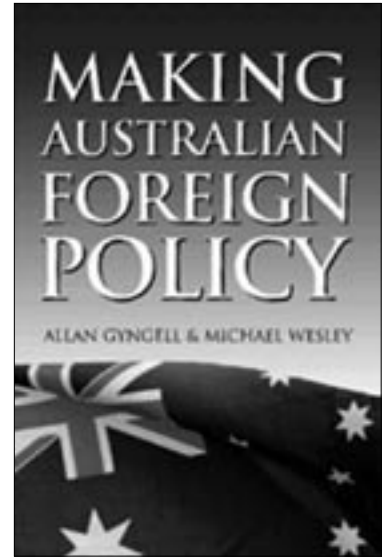
**Reviewed by
Peter van Onselen**

Making Australian Foreign Policy
by **Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley**
Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2003
\$46.95, ISBN 0521539978

Intended as a text book, the strength of *Making Australian Foreign Policy* is the factual information it presents for the benefit of students and other readers. Students lack of knowledge should not be underestimated. While they take foreign policy issues seriously—even passionately—knowledge of how foreign policy is produced is beyond the everyday experience of most 18-year olds. Putting them in the picture in a detailed way is commendable. An attitude survey of Foreign Affairs officers is especially useful.

The book's attempt to construct a theoretical framework to illuminate its factual presentation is disappointing. Others shared my impression that it was hard to understand. However, the rest of the book stands on its merits. To contend that the theory section was essential to credibility with international relations teachers underlines the irrelevance of what they teach. That there are grounds for criticism does not devalue the mass of factual information the book lays out. The main deficiencies are that it accords the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) too much attention and overlooks the way that political interest and values drive foreign policy.

Making Australian Foreign Policy concentrates on DFAT. It



is the first institution examined, the foreign policy bureaucracy preceding the political executive. While not quite saying that the foreign ministry is more important than the politburo, the treatment of DFAT has that flavour. And it seems to confuse the volume of DFAT's activity with the importance of its role. Sure, it is influential and handles much of the detail, but ministers ultimately decide and DFAT implements.

Statistics show DFAT's trucking in detail. It also thinks and plans in the long term, and draws on superior knowledge to influence decisions at the political level. Convincingly argued is the way that foreign policy decisions are becoming more important, frequent and pervasive. Although the book acknowledges the overriding nature of political decisions in respect of foreign policy, it risks persuading readers that DFAT's role and influence is more central than is the case.

High value is attached to the collegial attitudes that prevail

in DFAT. That almost 70% of officials surveyed found relations 'collegial but competitive at times' presumably means they tend to think alike but compete for promotion. The fact they think alike is less important than in what particulars. One such issue that puts officials at odds with the book's authors is the DFAT view that Australia's security and economic welfare should drive foreign policy, which the authors dismiss as out-of-date. They think foreign policy has become more diverse and complex in ways that devalue these traditional concerns. Whether it has is a matter of judgment. While differing from much DFAT staff on this point, the authors are well disposed towards them. Most other government officials find DFAT attitudes soft.

The politicisation of DFAT, indeed of the entire bureaucracy, is nothing new. Governments of all shades practise it because ministers prefer loyalty to disinterested advice. Changes intended to promote politicisation are typically represented as administrative reform, and public service careerists are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities available. Only oppositions resent it. Taxpayers meet the cost in every sense. Evidence of politicisation is the way that officials see assignment to the minister's office as the best guarantee of promotion.

Curiously in today's climate, intelligence is dismissed as a rather marginal influence. Such a judgment fails to differentiate among types of intelligence—

raw, departmental, national—the latter typically shaping Cabinet decisions (on which point Prime Minister Keating is quoted to good effect). It also neglects to point out the resources and effort that successive Cabinets have devoted to improving intelligence—especially national intelligence, which underlines how ministers appreciate the way it helps them decide, notably in matters of strategic security. True, questions of war and peace are particularly susceptible to intelligence judgement. But in the Prime Minister's view, committing Australian troops is the most testing decision he can face. The furore over Australia's involvement in the second Iraq war demonstrates the importance of Cabinet basing decisions on sound intelligence. The issue has become painfully partisan and is a warning against the politicisation of intelligence.

Distance from the centres of international tension tends to increase Australia's sense of security (even more so New Zealand's). This may explain the authors' apparent willingness to accept the mindless activism of much Australian foreign policy, where the number of initiatives undertaken is used to measure success. This ignores masterly inactivity, which is one of the most powerful diplomatic tools. The book attributes the more cautious attitude of regional neighbours to the constraints affecting them, failing to appreciate how alien they find fussy activity. This cultural difference pinpoints why neighbours don't accept us as 'fellow Asians'—and never will.

Ultimately, the pursuit of power drives political interest in foreign policy. In countries like North Korea this means developing weapons of mass destruction to scare others silly. In Australia where governments are elected, politicians aim to persuade majorities through the quality of their decisions, including in foreign policy. *Making Australian Foreign Policy* demonstrates how constitutional differences between Australia and the United States affect the way that foreign policy is decided. But for all such differences—as well as those of size, culture and so on—there is surprising similarity in the way political opinion groups around opposed poles find expression in foreign policy. US Republicans, like Coalition supporters in Australia, tend to emphasise security interests and 'realism'. American Democrats and the Labor Party here are disposed towards 'idealism' or 'liberal internationalism'.

Reviewed by A.D. McLennan

The Howard Years
edited by Robert Manne
 Melbourne, Black Inc.
 Agenda, 2004, 326pp
 \$29.95, ISBN 0 9750769

Robert Manne has attempted to create his public persona and reputation over the past eight years through his intellectual stalking of John Howard. By this I mean that Manne has sought to confirm