

Concept of states
having complete
autonomy over
foreign policies



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' Any nation-state that in the twenty-first century believes that their foreign policies are totally autonomous is not being honest with itself - or for that matter, with its people.' Discuss.

The notion of States having complete autonomy over their foreign policies in the 21st century is inconsistent. Australian History highlights that fact that Australia, although, now an independent nation state, has never had complete autonomy over their Foreign Policies. Even through Australia's evolving independence, the influence of ' Super-power' state (Allies), has led and continues to lead to our dependence and influence on these states, as Australia grows as a ' Middle-power' state on the World stage and furthering our National Interests. This essay will argue that; Australia's Autonomy is in fact growing in the context of the 21st century globalized world and our ability to form self-determined Foreign Policy, although still reliant and influenced by key Allies. Australia has grown to forge their own International standing and build relationships with other states without the influence of key Superpowers in Britain and United States of America. It is important to understand that ' Autonomy' is contextual, in the case of Foreign Policies and Foreign Relations as they are multifaceted and ever-changing, as the interests of Australia changes and events in the global world.

The Oxford Dictionary defines Autonomy as:

" A self-governing country or region", "(of a country or region) having the freedom to govern itself or control its own affairs", " The right or condition of self-government", " Freedom from external control or influence;

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independence” and “ Having the freedom to act independently” (Oxford Dictionaries: Autonomy 2018).

This definition highlights the fact that autonomy of ‘ A self-governing country or region’ is different from a state’s autonomy from ‘ Freedom from external control or influence; independence’ (Oxford Dictionaries: Autonomy 2018).

Australia has autonomy as a self-governing country however at stages has had a lack of autonomy from outside influences or an external government in making Foreign Policies.

Foreign Policy is defined as “ governments strategy in dealing with other nations” (Oxford Dictionaries: Foreign Policy 2018), Foreign policy aims to further a state’s national interest and being a good global citizen. The Goals of a States Foreign Policy is based on many factors, it can change and focus on certain areas within Foreign Policy at any time, Australia’s Foreign Policy is focused on Multilateralism, Regionalism and Bilateral relations with allies, defense, trade, security, economics, current world events, and stated from the Coalition Government ‘ Opportunity, Security and Strength’ (White Papers 2017). Foreign Policy is a collaborative effort made by Australian Government Sectors include Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, DFAT, and Defense.

Australia’s History is and was a significant influence and reasoning for our lack of autonomy, as a nation state and as a governing nation state. On the 1st of January 1901, British Parliament passed legislation, which allowed six Australian colonies, and parliament with Federal and state legislative power provided by The Commonwealth Constitution. This was the Birth of Australia.

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Before 1945 and the Statute of Westminster (1931), legislation and Policy was dictated by and influenced by the British and their government. Alfred Deakin stated that Australia and its countrymen were “ independent Australian Britons” (Bridge 2013), independent in will however dependent and servant on security issues and economics. Growing unrest and protest amongst the Australian people on the ‘ reliance’ of Britain and acting in Australia best interest, led to and growing independent Australia. With Australis growing autonomy during and post WW1, the evolution of Australia’s own foreign relations start to take hold and begin the foundations of how Australia as a country wants to evolve; Asia pacific, the America’s, ‘ White Australia Policy’. WW2 showcased the growing pains of Australia’s newly independent Foreign Policies; this saw Australia build an alliance with the United states and through years to come and a dependence and influence of a new superpower which is ever present throughout 20th and 21st century.

Governments play an extremely important role in Australia’s Foreign Policy, each government party in Australia has differing Ideologies and that translates into how our Foreign Policy is formed, areas of importance with Foreign Policy, importance of Allies opinions or influence, international organizations and their response to world events. Australian Government has evolved throughout the generations and with that so has our autonomy; which ebbs and flows with each coalition government, The Australian Liberal Party has generally held more of a realist stance to their foreign policy approach. Currently the Liberal Party focuses on security and economic prosperity, broadening bilateral relationships with key strategic partners; US, <https://assignbuster.com/concept-of-states-having-complete-autonomy-over-foreign-policies/>

Asia Pacific and with expansion of Australia overseas diplomatic presence (Liberal Party of Australia 2018). Alike of previous Liberal governments, Security and Economic areas of Foreign Policy still are a forefront of Liberal Foreign Policy. The John Howard and Alexander Downer (Foreign Affairs Minister) formally enacted the ANZUS Treaty to follow the United States into 'the war on terror' Iraq after 9/11. The Australia Labor Party believes in a foundational difference to the Liberal Party, " Labor believes that good international citizenship is a critical driver to achieving a secure and prosperous Australia, while there is a tendency from the conservative parties towards isolation and insularity" (Plibersek 2016). Labor advocated for international law and organizations and institutions, The Gough Whitlam Government fostered an independent Australian stance, becoming less military orientated, built relationship with China and the Asia Pacific and the non-proliferation treaty. The Hawke/Keating Government saw Australia's role in the Asia Pacific, APEC and trade with Asia and the ' Republic Referendum'. Even with the difference on foundational beliefs of Australia's stance on Foreign Policy, Australia's government has a broad agreement on Foreign policy, the goal of continuity and national interests is at the forefront.

The relationship of the people with the Australian Government in Foreign Policy does not impact the governments decisions in most situations regarding Foreign Policy. Kevin Rudd rightly highlights the fact that the Australian Government is not honest with its people. However, the notion of Australian autonomy in making foreign policies would be dependent on characteristics of individuals within the public. History has highlighted public rebellion of

Australian Foreign Policy choices, the Vietnam and Iraq wars, currently the rights of asylum seekers and refugees and the governments detainment of them at Nauru and Manus Island (off-shore detention centers), Pine Gap. Foreign Policy is an extremely important issue, although the public should be informed on our current future policies, Author Stewart Firth clearly highlights the reasons why the public doesn't play an important role in deciding our Foreign Policy, " The making of Foreign Policy is far from being a democratic process. Foreign policy context, intelligence means ' information', a vital resource in formulating foreign policy. Information is what the public lacks and the government has" (Firth 2011).

Kevin Rudd's Speech highlights his belief that " Any nation-state that in the twenty-first century believes that their foreign policies are totally autonomous is not being honest with itself - or for that matter, with its people" (Rudd 2012). As Prime Minister of Australia, Labor leader Kevin Rudd had a substantial influence and say on foreign Policy then many of his predecessors. He sought active diplomacy, advocated for global and regional institutions, building coalitions and the " Asia Pacific Century" (Gyngell 2008). Rudd advocated of Australia's partnership with the Pacific Islands, he did so through labour Work Schemes. Rudd had strong views on defense, he withdrew troops from Iraq however he continued to support the Afghanistan War involvement, increasing the number of troops and provided over 50 million in Foreign aid and with the WikiLeaks ' Contents of the United States diplomatic cables leak (Australia)' 2010, heavily criticized Australia's European Allies in the Afghanistan Campaign and furthered tension with China over comments of ' use of force' to then American Secretary of State

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Hilary Clinton (Flitton 2010). Rudd's Speech was presented to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs in 2012, a period where he was a backbencher in the Labor Government. He speech showcased Australia's international co-operation between Australia and Canada, highlighting the fact that they are involved in every multilateral agency across the UN, and their positions in Asia and the Pacific; especially as Pacific ' Power States'. He showcases the effects of Global Governance and Challenges that it faces " The core principle is this: effective responses to these great globalization challenges of our age now make international collaboration not optional but mandatory" (Rudd 2012), he indicates the need for middle powers to join together to protect their interest, " whereas greater powers have greater capacity to act independently to protect their own interests" (Rudd 2012). Rudd's speech fostered the need for democracy and diplomacy however he also states the need to continue to work and advance these notions of a global scale. Democracy is also the biggest dilemma in the 21st century for States to have full autonomy (Rudd 2012).

Australian Foreign Policies have had components of Realism and Liberalism, changes in government, world events, the current political climate all influences the realist or liberal perspective, as well as relationships between states, allies, international organizations and institutions all impact the directions of our foreign policies.

The Realist approach to Foreign Policy emphasis the use of ' power politics', asserting and emphasizing self-interest of the nation state. Realism in Foreign Policy ' is not bound by ideology, it provides a method rather than a

route to an end goal' (Wivel 2017). Realism is mainly apparent in Security issues. International politics revolves around and in turn power struggles. The Howard Government provided a realist response to the Iraq War. The Iraq war was a decision made by the United States, Howard believed that because of our alliance and treaties with the US and in turn our dependence on the US, the threat of Australia being negatively impacted in our states security or defense and our relationship with the US, Howard followed the United States into the Iraq War.

A Liberalistic approach to Foreign policy emphasis the use of democratic process and liberal response. This is both a positive a negative. Liberal democracies respect and favor one another, this is shown through alliances, treaties, bilateral and multilateral agreements between states. However, Liberalism can aggravate and create tension with non-liberal states (Doyle 2017). Western Liberal nations including Australia have seen results of enforcement of Liberal ideology on the International stage. Australia has played an actively embraced The United Nations, NATO, signatories on multiple treaties, and has been a part of the Security Council, of which, Australia has championed global interests.

Australia's autonomy is growing, Australia is continually forming and utilizing Self-determined Foreign Policies in the 21st century. There is still a need for full autonomy in all facets of Australian Governmental actions in forming and deciding Foreign Policies; using Superpowers such as The United States of America as a final reasoning for deciding foreign policies or actions, with Australian independency being at the forefront. However Australian

Autonomy will always be contextual and dependent on certain situations, world events and the current political climates. Full autonomy in every avenue of Foreign policy will not always be achievable, and as shown throughout the essay, Foreign Policy and autonomy is not always compatible. Australia's foundation of independence has led to being strongly aligned with allies of Britain and then the US. Our role in furthering world democracy has also been the biggest hurdle of Australia's full autonomy; Australia's beliefs in International organizations, multilateral and bilateral relations with allies, and the unstable current global climate has all played roles in dictating Australia's Foreign Policies. The notion that " Any nation-state that in the twenty-first century believes that their foreign policies are totally autonomous is not being honest with itself - or for that matter, with its people" as stated by Kevin Rudd, is a realistic statement however in the current political climate, Australia has to strive for more autonomy on self-forming their Foreign Relations, as a middle power, the best interests of the nation has to be achieved before being a good global citizen.

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