

Australian International Thought and Asia, Then and Now

A Public Lecture presented by Professor James Cotton,
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The present American financial crisis has underlined the trend clear for more than a decade, that the era of US hegemony has waned. In Australia the chief preoccupation with the changing strategic environment has become the issue of dealing with the rising Asian powers, China and India, and the extent (if at all) that the future regional order will exhibit familiar liberal values. The argument is generally made that Australia was situated, until the Pacific War, in an imperial strategic system; this system was then reconstructed with the United States at its centre. Australian loyalties towards Britain and the subsequent transfer of affiliation to the United States was essentially the result of a calculation based upon hegemonic power, a calculation reflected in the discourse of intellectual and political elites. This lecture will examine some episodes in the development of Australian international thought between the wars to show that the current re-evaluation of Australia's strategic environment incorporates a distorted and over-simplified view of the past. It will argue that the construction of the region and the world was not always in accordance with a conception of power simply conceived, and correspondingly that the appeals of soft power were recognised to a surprising extent; that Australian thinkers were more aware of the claims of international society than is now supposed; that the diversity in thinking found in that era on Asia as on global questions was more various than is depicted in the standard account. The claim is then made that the experience of this era suggests that current choices are less stark than might be supposed

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All Welcome

James Cotton (PhD, London School of Economics) is Professor of Politics, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. He is the author of over 200 publications on Asian politics and on political thought including articles in *Asian Survey*, *The Pacific Review*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Government and Opposition*, *Political Studies*, *Political Theory*, *Survival*, *the Journal of the History of Ideas*, and *Comparative Political Studies*. His most recent books are: *East Timor, Australia and regional order: intervention and its aftermath in Southeast Asia* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) and (edited with John Ravenhill), *Trading on Alliance Security: Australia in World Affairs 2001-2005* (Oxford University Press/AIIA, 2007). He was a graduate fellow at Princeton University and a student at the Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan; he has held academic positions in Western Australia, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Singapore, the Australian National University and Tasmania; in 2001 he was Centennial Professor in International Relations and in the Asia Research Centre, London School of Economics, and in 2004 he was Visiting Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Hong Kong. Between 1997 and 2003 he was a foundation member of the Foreign Minister's Advisory Council convened by the Foreign Minister of Australia.