

APPENDIX:  
Enduring Features in Decision Making  
(Vietnam pointing to Iraq)

‘The past is a foreign country’ (L P Hartley)

‘The past not merely is not fugitive, it remains present’ (Marcel Proust)

- 1) The Prime Minister is the key decision maker
- 2) He shows no doubt or inclination to reconsider
- 3) A small group of ministers are involved
- 4) There is no opposition or strong dissent within the group
- 5) No advice is heeded which ministers do not want to hear
- 6) Officials are cowed and frozen out
- 7) Cautionary advice is viewed as ‘appeasement’
- 8) The decision is taken in secret and kept secret for a long time
- 9) It is announced in emotive language instilling fear and conformity
- 10) Officials’ qualifying words are discarded
- 11) The right of the executive to decide to go to war is considered absolute
- 12) No attempt is made to obtain bipartisan support
- 13) There is no history-making parliamentary debate
- 14) Instead, the issue is approached as exploitable for political advantage

- 15) The opposition makes telling points, but to no avail
- 16) The government enjoys media support
- 17) The focus of the decision makers is on the US
- 18) Their first concern is to consolidate the security relationship with the US
- 19) They seek to extend the geographical ambit of the ANZUS treaty
- 20) Treaty obligations are invoked unilaterally
- 21) Ministers feel deeply insecure
- 22) There is an overwhelming sense of dependency
- 23) It is apparent that Australia can be taken for granted
- 24) The second concern is to encourage the US to accept its responsibilities as the leader of the West
- 25) US (and Anglo-Saxon) hegemony is viewed as desirable and possible
- 26) The threat is portrayed as global, and peace as indivisible
- 27) The 'domino theory' is given world-wide application (a version for Iraq is that if it is not disarmed others will acquire weapons of mass destruction)
- 28) Australia will be part of a coalition of the willing of two or three if necessary
- 29) Assessment of the US is personalised and reliance put on Presidential qualities
- 30) The President does not keep the Prime Minister fully informed
- 31) Nevertheless, the Prime Minister places implicit trust in the President privately as well as publicly
- 32) An image of intimacy is exploited
- 33) The President's inexperience in external affairs can be turned to advantage
- 34) There is heavy reliance on US intelligence
- 35) Unpalatable Australian intelligence assessments are ignored
- 36) The threat to Australia (and its treaty partners) is not clear and immediate
- 37) A more remote threat takes precedence over those closer to home
- 38) A military 'solution' is preferred to a non-military approach
- 39) Military victory is assumed
- 40) Australian troops are put under foreign command
- 41) There is no exit strategy
- 42) The use of nuclear weapons is not excluded

- 43) It is taken for granted that the political outcome of military victory will be benign
- 44) There is scant regard for the civilians in the war zone
- 45) The focus is on a military 'solution' and not on the infirmity of the political base
- 46) Cultural expertise is shallow, and in any event ignored by ministers
- 47) Evidence pointing against democratic values being salient in or transplantable to the country of intervention is ignored
- 48) There is no UN authority and US recourse to the UN is mishandled
- 49) Australia puts its standing in Asia at risk
- 50) Regional support is not sought, and tentative regional approaches to a solution of the conflict or accommodation between the warring parties are dismissed