

**From Neglected to Engaged?  
Australia's Relations with the Countries of Africa  
2006-10<sup>1</sup>**

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**Introduction**

“There are no votes in Africa”! That was how Richard Higgott (1983, p. 259) concluded his chapter on Australia and Africa covering the period 1976-1980, in an earlier volume of the book series on Australia in World Affairs, and indeed the last time Africa warranted a separate chapter, to examine Australia's relations with the vast continent.<sup>2</sup>

Compared to Asia, Australian engagement with the countries of the African continent was not extensive, and was defined by a “period of neglect” (Smith, 2010a; Smith, 2009b) in all sectors of government, diplomacy, trade, aid and defence. That said, increased communication and involvement has occurred in the period under review, as African immigration continued and the Australian government sought African support in its bid for a UN Security Council (UNSC) seat for 2013-14. Formal government ties between Australia and the nations of Africa continued to be limited. In the period 2006-10, there was little significant change from previous periods. In terms of any general analysis of Australian-African relations, since Higgott, there have been only rare published accounts, servicing an understanding of the major African issues facing Australia (see Ford, 2003). Thus, this paper will first examine historically the relations between Australia and Africa over these last three decades, before focusing on the period in question for this volume. In this paper Africa refers to all of the 53 nations on the African continent and thus includes both Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.<sup>3</sup>

**Diplomatic and Political Relations with Africa**

In 1976 the Foreign Affairs Minister Andrew Peacock argued for “a high level reappraisal” (Higgott, 1983, p.247) of Australia's relations with Africa. What transpired was very little, with an absence of policy on Africa in particular in relation to trade with South Africa. Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant wrote that “Australia's relations with Africa have tended to develop on a largely *ad hoc* basis, often as a

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on an early draft for a chapter on Australian Foreign Policy Toward Africa 2006-2010, to be published in the Australian Institute for International Affairs, book series “Australia in World Affairs” (edited by James Cotton and John Ravenhill, forthcoming 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Prior to Higgott's chapter, Africa only made an appearance in terms of the Suez Crisis (Norman Harper, 1957); and as part of the Indian Ocean community (J.D.B. Miller, 1968; and T. B. Millar, 1974; and Ian Clark, 1980). By the 1980s Africa was wrapped up into the Commonwealth (Deryck Schreuder, 1992), and was only mentioned in passing in the 1990s (James Cotton and John Ravenhill, 1997). The last volume in this series neglected Africa completely, with only two brief in passing mentions of Zimbabwe (James Cotton and John Ravenhill, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Often a distinction excludes the North African states and puts them squarely in the Middle East, and there are obvious strategic reasons for this, however, for this general discussion Australia's interests in the whole African continent need to be served.

consequence of policies on other issues, such as human rights, the Commonwealth and, especially, apartheid”. They warned us that

“it would be wrong for Australia to ignore Africa, or to allow our relations to drift without substance. African nations are able to exert considerable influence internationally; in the United Nations and its various agencies, and in the Commonwealth...” (Evans and Grant, 1995, p.285).

Under the leadership of Prime Minister (PM) Malcolm Fraser, in June 1977 during a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, Australia aligned itself with the anti-racist liberation movements in Rhodesia and the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa. Australia had to tread carefully internationally in this regard in order to avoid “political conflict” with Britain and the United States of America, who were less in favour of the black African cause. With Fraser at the helm, the main focus of Australia’s policy was the independence of Zimbabwe. Australia played a significant role in the transition period between the Lancaster House Agreement and final Zimbabwean Independence, with ‘strong support’ for Robert Mugabe (Higgott, 1983, pp. 250-259).

It is thus ironic that in the current period under review, the centerpiece of Australia’s relations with Africa was again Zimbabwe, but it has been focused instead on supporting the opposition movement to oust Mugabe, who was seen as an international pariah. What is similar however is the fact that despite all of Fraser’s diplomacy, Africa was not a ‘primary’ concern to Australia then (Higgott, 1983, p.253-254), nor was it the case between 2006-10.

In the early postcolonial period in Africa, Australia was represented by only four diplomatic missions – in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania, with an Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, all of which reported to 30 African states, reflecting “the political realities of Commonwealth relations ... and ... of African affairs to Australian foreign policy” (Higgott, 1983, p.256). In 2004 the Australian government realizing that it was under-represented in Africa re-opened the Australian High Commission in Ghana after it had closed in 1985 (Downer, 2010). This re-opening also “reflect[ed] the increased involvement of Australian companies in the mining sector and in oil and gas exploration across the region” (Hawker 2009b; and DFAT 2008). Yet, by 2009 there remained a “diplomatic deficit” (Broadbent, et al., 2009). Out of the 91 Australian overseas missions, only six were in Africa, with embassies both in Zimbabwe and Egypt, and four high commissions in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. This amounted to only seven percent of diplomatic missions and diplomatic staff being based in Africa, and corresponded with the small proportion, only three percent, of Overseas Development Aid (ODA) going to Africa. While more diplomatic posts were argued as necessary for Africa (Donnelly and Ford, 2008b) because of its increased significance to Australia’s diplomatic, economic and security interests, this deficit reflected the broader deficit in Australia’s overseas representations (Broadbent, et al., 2009, 12, 21).

Nonetheless, despite such criticisms, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith boasted in 2010 that Australia had “diplomatic relations with 51 of Africa’s 53 countries, excluding Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is compared to 41 in 2007” (Smith, 2010d). However, as seen in Table 1 Head of Mission Responsibilities, 43 of these relations were only supported by those six missions based in Africa, with a further eight diplomatic relations with African nations catered for by three posts located within Europe. A new Australian embassy for Ethiopia was announced on 25 May 2010 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Stephen Smith, and was expected to be fully functional by the end of 2010, to support Australia's relations with the African Union (AU) into the future (Smith, 2010g; and Smith, 2010h).

**Table 1 Australian Heads of African Missions' Responsibilities**

Head Of Mission	Responsibilities – (subject to change)*	Total countries
Abuja, Nigeria	Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe.	11
Accra, Ghana	Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.	9
Cairo, Egypt	Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia	4
Harare, Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia.	5
Nairobi, Kenya	Kenya, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia**, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda,	9
Pretoria, South Africa	South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland	5
<b>HOMs outside Africa.</b>		
Port Louis	Mauritius, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles	4
Lisbon	Cape Verde	1
Paris, France	Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco	3

Source: AusAID 2009a, p.20; DFAT, 2010b, p.52.

Notes: \*In 2010 there were no diplomatic links established with Democratic Republic of Congo (in the past from Harare) or Guinea Bissau (in the past from Lisbon).

\*\*A new Australian Embassy was opened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in late 2010 (announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith on Africa Day, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2010). The New Australian Defence Attache posted to the African Union was to be based there. See Stephen Smith (2010g and 2010h).

In 2010 there were only twelve African missions based in Canberra – Algeria, Kenya, Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, with at least 17 African nations extending their diplomatic ties to Australia through missions based overseas in Japan, China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and the United States. This suggested that diplomatic ties between Australia and the countries of Africa remained rather limited. The relationship had developed in an *ad hoc* fashion and had drifted in and out of periods of neglect.

However, the diplomatic, political, social and civil ties between Zimbabwe and Australia were much thicker, often strained, but nonetheless committed, and as we will see below, this relationship dominated our connections with the African continent.

## **Zimbabwe**

During the last few years of PM John Howard's Liberal-Coalition government, there was continued support to curtail Mugabe's blatant mismanagement of the Zimbabwean economy which was having detrimental effects on the people.

As the Chair of the Commonwealth in 2002 Howard's unenviable task was to convince the two African Heads of State members of the Commonwealth Troika, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki and Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo, to immediately and "fully suspend Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth" (Ford, 2003, p.27; Rudd, 2005;

and Hawker 2009a). The Troika's task was to deal with Mugabe's appalling record on election fraud and human rights abuses during the March 2002 Zimbabwean Presidential elections. Disappointingly however, for Howard, was that this came at a time when an African renaissance was being pushed by Mbeki, (which looked for 'African solutions to African problems'). At the time, Zimbabwe was only suspended for one year from the Commonwealth. Howard and even his Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer did not stand a chance in this African climate. Mugabe continued to hold onto power, despite the Howard government's implementation of "smart sanctions" against Zimbabwe's ruling elite in 2002 (Ford, 2003, p.27-28). It was not until December 2003 that commonsense prevailed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the suspension against Zimbabwe was renewed, whereupon Mugabe withdrew before he could be excluded from the Commonwealth (Downer, 2010).

In May 2007, on the eve of Howard's last few months as Australia's PM, and with his Foreign Minister in tow, they made one last stand against Mugabe - the man Howard called an "undemocratic bully" (*The Age*, 2007). This time Howard mainly drew criticism from the International Cricket Council, but not from Mugabe's rivals. At stake was the ban on the Australian cricket team from touring Zimbabwe in September 2007. When Howard and Downer met with the Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai in August he supported their sanction as a method to highlight the human rights abuses being meted out to many Zimbabwean citizens pleading for democratic rule. Downer did not consider taking these actions against Mugabe to win votes. Australia had few interests in Zimbabwe to protect and thus was well placed to make a stand (Downer, 2010).

Apart from that focus on Zimbabwe, mostly due to the cricket, 2006 and 2007 were relatively quiet in terms of Australian media and policy attention to Africa. With the election of a Labor government in November 2007 there was an expectation in Australia that the new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his successor Prime Minister Julia Gillard, would be able to continue to handle the crisis in Zimbabwe and attend to it diligently. Under the leadership of both Howard and then Rudd and then Gillard, Australia continued to support Zimbabweans diplomatically; they supported Tsvangirai's democratic efforts (Steinberg, 2009); they continued the smart sanctions (DFAT,2010a); and increased funding contributions to the World Food Program (WFP), specifically to assist Zimbabweans facing starvation. As Negin and Ford (2009, p.4) pointed out "there [was] no utility in standing by and watching the country fall apart." Nobody wanted another Somalia in Africa.

Zimbabwe was important to Australia for a number of reasons. Negin and Ford (2009, p.5) documented that at least 10,000 Zimbabweans had migrated to Australia since 2001, thus doubling the population of Zimbabwean expatriates to 20,157 in 2006 (ABS, 2006; Lucas, 2008, pp.110-111). Australia also provided sanctuary to "a number of high-profile Zimbabweans" escaping the brutality of Mugabe's regime (Negin and Ford, 2009, p.6). Since Fraser assisted Mugabe gain control in 1980, Australia remained committed to Zimbabwe's future, with or without Mugabe.

Howard and Downer engaged with Zimbabwe through multilateral institutions like the United Nations (UN) and WFP, and although they played a role in Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, they used this forum and others to apply pressure to Mugabe's regime. From November 2007, Rudd and Smith, essentially did the same, but notably with increased financial donations. There was no obvious

diversion to this existing trajectory of attention toward Africa by the subsequent Labor PM Julia Gillard and her Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd in late 2010.

While it may have seemed that Zimbabwe dominated Australia's relations with Africa for many years, there were other significant factors that influenced Australia's links and policies with other African countries. As will be shown below, these links and connections did not however boast of much breadth and or depth.

### **Connections**

Limited connections between the Australian and African continents across the Indian Ocean could be seen in terms of airlinks and the number of passengers. Qantas began its first airlinks to Johannesburg in 1952. Due to political sanctions (Higgott, 1983, p.255) these flights were cancelled in 1977 and not reinstated until 1982 when flights were operated weekly to Harare, and again to Johannesburg in 2001 (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, 2009). In 2009 "South Africa [was] Australia's 21<sup>st</sup> largest market in terms of total origin/destination traffic flows, and 17<sup>th</sup> in terms of inbound visitors [with approximately] ... 2,630 passengers each way each week" (Epstein, 2009). By 2010 there were daily direct flights from Sydney to Johannesburg with Qantas and also Virgin Airlines (which began a direct air service between Melbourne and Johannesburg), cashing in on the increased traffic to South Africa due to the 2010 World Cup Soccer.

On these flights into and out of Africa were the myriad of business, trade and aid officials managing the limited flows of bilateral, multilateral, and private foreign investment and trade, and development opportunities in Africa. These flights also transferred the many tourists and African expatriates returning to Africa for holidays and visits, and included the 27, 631 Humanitarian Arrivals to Australia from the African continent between 2001 and 2006, mostly from Sudan, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Sierra Leone (Lucas, 2006/7, pp. 158-159). Prior to an analysis of the commercial and aid links, it is to this cohort of African-Australians that we now examine.

### **Africans in Australia**

According to the 2006 Census there was a total of 248,699 African-born people living in Australia (see Table 2 African-Born Australians 2001-06). This number had increased by 68,748 persons since the 2001 census when there was a total of 179,951 African-born living in Australia. The top ten source countries from the African continent for African-born Australians were South Africa (104,128), Egypt (33,496), Zimbabwe (20,157), Sudan (19,049), Mauritius (18,775), Kenya (9,940), Ethiopia (5,633), Somalia (4,316), Zambia (4,082) and Ghana (2,771) (Lucas, 2008, pp.110-111; DFAT, 2010b, pp.18,29-30). Thus African-Australians accounted for less than one percent (0.79 percent) of the total Australian population in 2006, which was slightly decreased from 2001 when they were just over one percent (1.04 percent) of the Australian population. As Downer (2010) indicated this would have only "slightly influenced" government policy toward supporting African countries, however, as Negin and Denning (2008) argued, because of the increasing migration of Africans to Australia, a re-engagement with Africa was essential.

**Table 2 African-Born Australians 2001-2006**

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Angola	353	394	41
Algeria	na	1004	na
Benin	21	22	1
Botswana	709	863	154
Burkina Faso	14	24	10
Burundi	32	751	719
Cameroon	66	135	69
Cape Verde	22	18	-4
Central African Republic	N/A	18	na
Central and West Africa, nfd.	178	199	21
Chad	36	32	-4
Comoros	21	13	-8
Congo	134	523	389
Congo DR (Zaire)	267	618	351
Cote d'Ivoire	75	250	175
Djibouti	71	97	26
Eritrea	1599	2016	417
Ethiopia	3544	5633	2089
Egypt	33432	33497	65
Gabon	22	26	4
Gambia	59	132	73
Ghana	2040	2771	731
Guinea	31	10	-21
Guinea-Bissau	12	503	491
Kenya	6870	9940	3070
Lesotho	53	79	26
Liberia	124	1526	1402
Libya	na	1516	na
Madagascar	162	188	26
Malawi	486	684	198
Mali	26	60	34
Mauritania	13	14	1
Mauritius	16962	18175	1213
Morocco	na	1295	na
Mozambique	551	641	90
Namibia	437	702	265
Niger	17	12	-5
Nigeria	1738	2496	758
Rwanda	46	202	156
Sao Tome and Principe	11	9	-2
Senegal	185	196	11
Seychelles	2448	2508	60
Sierra Leone	363	1809	1446
Somalia	3713	4316	603
South Africa	79425	104128	24703
Sub-Saharan Africa nfd	na	38	na
Southern and East Africa nfd	727	598	-129
Sudan	4900	19049	14149
Swaziland	208	231	23
Tanzania	1714	2295	581
Togo	13	35	22
Tunisia	na	441	na
Uganda	1217	1713	496
Western Sahara	na	15	na
Zambia	3070	4082	1012
Zimbabwe	11734	20157	8423

<b>Total</b>	<b>179951</b>	<b>248699</b>	<b>68748</b>
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Source: 2006 Census Data [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

Note this table includes all 53 recognised African states, plus Western Sahara and regional area of Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern and East Africa (where no further detail of birthplace provided).

According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2009) approximately seven percent of all permanent settlers arriving in Australia between 2007-09 were from Africa (total of 31,051), mostly from South Africa (7949), Sudan (6296), Sub-Saharan Africa (5042) and Zimbabwe (2039) (See [Table 3 Permanent Arrivals and Departures From and To Africa July 2005-June 2009](#)). Furthermore, a total of 12,987 African students were studying in Australia in 2009, with most students originating from Mauritius, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya (DFAT, 2010b, pp.30-31).

**Table 3 Permanent Arrivals and Departures From and To Africa July 2005-June 2009**

	<b>2005-06 Arrivals</b>	<b>2006-07 Arrivals</b>	<b>2007-08 Arrivals</b>	<b>2008-09 Arrivals</b>	<b>2008-09 Departures</b>
North Africa and Middle East * (combined)	<b>11150</b> (41% from Africa)	<b>9690</b> (33% from Africa)	<b>8280</b> (approx 20% based on trend from Africa)	<b>11150</b> (15% from Africa)	
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>756</b>	700 (approx - based on trend)	782	137
<b>Sudan</b>	<b>3780</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>1030</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>51</b>
Sub-Saharan Africa not defined	3501	1541			
Eritrea	168	138		171	
Ethiopia	429	575		729	
Ghana	217	245			
Kenya	648	701		603	79
Liberia	564	539		287	
Mauritius	260	308			
Nigeria	160	187			
Sierra Leone	532	519			
Somalia	264	296		388	
South Africa	<b>3960</b>	<b>4000</b>	<b>5160</b>	<b>7210</b>	<b>635</b>
Tanzania	405	344			
Uganda	161	277			
Zambia	93	127			
Zimbabwe	<b>1130</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>1010</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Total Sub-Saharan Africa**</b>	<b>10070</b>	<b>10910</b>	<b>10630</b>	<b>13030</b>	
<b>Total Africa</b>	<b>17054</b>	<b>13997</b>	<b>12360***</b>	<b>14742</b>	<b>1023</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 34120DO0001 Migration, Australia 2006-07; ABS Stats. 3401.0 Overseas Arrivals and Departures Australia, Table 12, Permanent Movement Settlers, by Country of Birth; Department of Immigration and Citizenship Statistics Settler Arrival and Departure Data 2008-09 (DIAC 2009)

Notes: \*North Africa and the Middle East are conflated by ABS Statistics, and include Sudan and Egypt which are included in the figure, but also separated in brackets;

\*\* SSA includes others not defined and countries with smaller than 100 arrivals;  
\*\*\*Figures are based on estimates for Egypt arrivals as data not available.

Contributing to the so-called 'brain-drain' from Africa, there was a large disparity in permanent arrivals from Africa compared to departures. For example, in the period 2008-09 a total of 14,742 people arrived while only 1,023 departed on a permanent basis (See DIAC, 2009). Of the 552 General Medical Practitioners that came to Australia from Africa in 2008-09, only 193 departed (DEEWR, 2009). Therefore, assuming they all gained employment, Australia benefitted from the services of 459 trained GPs (which could have better benefited any African country if they were enabled to have careers there). The 2006 Census revealed that there were 3000 medical doctors and 4,100 nurses working in Australia who were African born. "This represent[ed] 5.4% of medical doctors working in Australia. Given that only 1.5% of all working people in Australia [we]re African-born, the over-representation in skilled positions [was] remarkable" (Negin and Denning, 2008, p.5). Nonetheless, African migrants to Australia generally had a higher unemployment rate (8.1 percent) compared to Australian born (5.9 percent), with Somali and Sudanese migrants having the lowest workforce participation rates among 15-44 year olds compared to migrants from other African countries (DEEWR, 2009).

However, the problems and issues associated with the 'settlement' of a number of refugees from Africa continued to exist despite numerous studies and reports written to address these problems (see Australian Human Rights Commission, 2009 and 2010; Lyons 2009; Lyons, 2010; Dhanji, 2010; Saffu, 2010; Hebbani, Obijiofor and Bristed, 2010; Wakholi, 2010).

Bob McMullan (2009) recognised anecdotally that the personal connections that developed from these arrivals and exchanges encouraged personal, political and bilateral connections between Africa and Australia. Community level relations between Australians and Africa were maintained if not strengthened during the past 30 years, and as I have argued previously "appear[ed] to be more consistent and deeply ingrained than at the government level, seen by the number of church and community groups raising money and awareness for various African charitable causes, not to mention sponsoring children" (Lyons 2009). Indeed, Australian private aid to Africa surpassed Official Development Assistance (ODA). In 2008 more than one third of all private funds donated by Australians went to Africa (34.65 percent compared to 29.62 percent to East Asia), whereas Ausaid directed only 18.96 percent of its aid funding to Africa, compared to 42.21 percent to East Asia (see ACFID, 2008; and Nsubuga-Kyobe, 2009).

Although the personal, political and bilateral connections remained limited (and as we will see below, so too the trade, aid and defence connections in global terms), Africa became increasingly important to Australian aspirations to secure a seat on the UNSC. More tangible however, were Australia's strategic strengths in the minerals and resources sector, and being able to capitalize on investments in a largely un-tapped sector in the African continent.

## **Trade**

Higgott predicted that "investment in black Africa [would be] negligible and unlikely to grow significantly given the discouraging effects on investors of the region's political instability and the fact that investment usually follow[ed] trading contacts" (Higgott, 1983, p.255). However, there were improvements to this trade performance over the last 30 years, particularly in the mining and resources sector, and especially



in the last decade. Up until 2003 “negligible” Australian investment in Africa, may have reflected the tensions in Zimbabwe, and Australia’s dealings within the Commonwealth. After then however, business opportunities in Africa had “bubbled” until they “boomed” and had yet to bust by the end of 2010 (Donnelly and Ford, 2008b, p.xix), evidenced by: the continued participation of Austrade and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the annual African Mining Indaba held in Cape Town (DFAT, 2009); also by the annual hosting of the Perth based Africa Down Under Conference (Australia Africa Mining Industry Group, 2010); and was also seen in DFAT’s 2003 report which outlined the business opportunities in the more stable countries of Botswana, Uganda, Mozambique and Kenya (DFAT-EAU, 2003).

These government supported business initiatives occurred under Howard and Downer, during the “new scramble for African resources” (O’Neill, 2007a; O’Neill, 2007b) when Australia’s investment into the mining and resources sector amounted to \$US15 billion (Austrade, 2007). The fact that Austrade and DFAT continued their involvement in this promotion indicated clearly that Rudd and Smith’s focus on Africa was a logical progression and extension of the relationships established previously, especially in terms of trade.

Between 2002 and 2006 total trade (imports and exports) with Sub-Saharan Africa had increased substantially from \$1.18 billion<sup>4</sup> to \$ 1.71 billion (DFAT, 2007). By 2008-09 merchandise trade with Africa amounted to \$ 5.97 billion which “represented 1.6 percent of Australia’s total exports and 0.8 percent of imports,” or “slightly” more than trade with “South and Central America combined” (DFAT, 2010b, p.18). While Smith (2010d) claimed a growth of six percent annually based on a ten year comparison, the figures from between 2005-09 indicated that the total exports and imports remained fairly stable. (See Table 4 Australia’s Merchandise Trade with Africa).

**Table 4 Australia’s Merchandise Trade with Africa**

	<b>Australia’s Merchandise Exports Total to Africa \$’000</b>	<b>Australia’s Merchandise Imports Total From Africa \$’000</b>
1988-89	720,280	186,585
1998-99	2,183,040	721,167
2005-06	4,012,164	1,917,487
2006-07	3,973,389	1,883,760
2007-08	4,054,340	1,909,408
2008-09	4,149,122	1,825,000
<b>Trend Growths:</b>		
20 years	11%	14.7%
10 years	6.7%	9.7%

Source: DFAT, STARS database consistent with ABST Cat. 5368.0, December 2009, cited in DFAT 2010b, p.19

Australia’s top five agricultural trading partners in Africa were Sudan, Egypt, South Africa, Mauritius and Algeria, and they “account[ed] for 87.4 percent of Australia’s total agricultural exports to Africa, [which included mainly] ... wheat, dairy products, meat and various processed foods” (DAFF, 2009) totaling \$810.2 million in 2008-09. The total of agricultural exports to Africa between 2006-09 equated to \$1.23 billion while imports totaled \$623 million. Table 5 Total Australian Agricultural Exports and

<sup>4</sup> All amounts are in Australian Dollars.

**Imports To African Countries 2006-09** demonstrates that overall exports to Africa steadily increased from 2006, while imports from Africa declined, indicating a balance of trade that benefited Australia more than Africa (DAFF, 2009).

**Table 5 Total Australian Agricultural Exports from and Imports To African Countries 2006-09**

Agricultural exports to Africa				Agricultural Imports from Africa			
<b>Total exports to Africa</b>	Total exports to Africa	Total exports to Africa	Total exports to Africa	Total imports from Africa	Total imports from Africa	Total imports from Africa	<b>Total imports from Africa</b>
<b>2006-09</b>	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	<b>2006-09</b>
<b>1,233,062,895</b>	401658275	367380331	464,024,289	238618535	197174978	188089770	<b>623,883,283</b>

Source: (DAFF, 2009) (excludes confidential items including wheat and most fish and seafood)

South Africa was by far the largest and most important African trading partner with Australia, with over \$2 billion of exports and \$1.5 billion imports documented in 2006. This had steadily increased from 2002, comparable to Australia’s overall trade with Saudi Arabia (DFAT, 2007), and amounted to 8.62 percent of Australia’s overall trade. South Africa dominated Australia’s trade focus in Africa and was “Australia’s 22<sup>nd</sup> largest trade partner in 2008-09 and our 18<sup>th</sup> largest export market” (DFAT, 2010b, p.23), similar to Germany. Between 2001 and 2008 Australian investment in Africa increased from \$602 million to \$1.17 billion, while in 2008 South African foreign investment in Australia totaled \$1.53 billion “just under 1 percent of total foreign investment” (DFAT, 2010b, p. 24).

What differed between the Coalition and Labor governments in this period under review however, was the support for these business activities. It was argued that before Rudd came to office, “Australian companies seeking opportunities in Africa receive[d] inadequate policy and trade support” (O’Neill, 2007a). Under Rudd, Austrade opened new offices in Kenya and Ghana “to assist businesses keen to operate in these developing markets” (Austrade, 2009), with offices also in Egypt, South Africa, Zambia, Morocco, Tunisia, Seychelles and Mauritius. In their influential report *Into Africa*, Donnelly and Ford (2008b) argued that the Australian government would need to ‘recalibrate’ its public policies in terms of how it dealt with African governments in the future, to assist and ensure Australian commercial interests in the African resource sector were supported in this “new great game” especially as China scaled up its investments in Africa. It was not clear if the number of Austrade offices in Africa was sufficient to meet this ‘recalibrated need’.

What was interesting and noteworthy was that Austrade promoted the importance of Australia’s resource sector in “Africa’s future” in terms of “environmental protection, corporate social responsibility and community development” (Greg Hull, cited in Austrade, 2009), thus putting a rather positive spin on what was essentially resource extraction from the African continent to benefit Australia. Donnelly and Ford (2008b, pp. 62-63) argued that Africa was just as important to Australian resource companies as they were to Sub-Saharan Africa’s resource sectors – that was, of “increasing” importance.

Amanda Stoltze an Australian Exploration Geologist working in Africa pointed out that,

“Australian mining and exploration companies see Africa as underexplored compared to Australia. There are a lot of underdeveloped sites in Africa, and with new technologies, the opportunities to extract more offers a lot of potential.

In some countries ‘nothing’ has happened since the end of colonialism” (Stoltze, 2010).

Broadman argued that Australian business could not only invest in the “untapped” potential of Africa, but by doing so it would “foster... the development of the Sub-Saharan continent” (Broadman, 2008).<sup>5</sup>

By 2008 Australian resource investment across Africa was worth approximately \$US20 billion (\$26 billion), which made Australia the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest investor in this African sector, after South Africa and Canada (Donnelly and Ford, 2008a; Donnelly and Ford, 2008b), and “Australian mineral and resource companies ha[d] more projects in Africa than in any other region in the world” (Smith, 2010d; DFAT, 2010b, p.28). Smith commented that “the Australian private sector had been quicker [than the previous government] to recognize the economic importance of Africa...” (Smith 2010d). Between 2004-08 figures indicate that there were 89 Australian resource companies operating in up to 29 African countries (Lucas, Kane and Lucas, 2010). By 2010 DFAT recognized that there were over 150 Australian mining and petroleum companies operating in most African countries and this totaled over 330 Australian companies when smaller support, supply and service companies were included (Smith, 2010d; DFAT, 2010b, p.25). Noteworthy, was that most of these companies were involved in the exploration stage of minerals extraction rather than operating mines or involved in the oil or gas industry (DFAT, 2010b, p.26).<sup>6</sup>

Thus in terms of trade, Australia’s business connections with Africa were heavily dominated by the mining and resources sector, and to a lesser extent the agricultural sector. Two-way trade was negligible apart from some South African investment in Australia, and the balance of trade benefited Australia more than it did Africa. As Hawker (2009b) argued, despite the rhetoric of development and apparent increases to foreign aid to Africa, overall any relationship that Australia had with Africa was going to benefit Australia more in terms of financial reward and Africa less in terms of development prospects. Australian trade with the 53 African states remained limited compared to the importance of other global trading partners.

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<sup>5</sup> This view is not widely shared however especially within the NGO sector. The Australian Conservation Foundation for example graphically criticized the Australian mining sector in Africa, for example – “transplanting the Australian uranium mining industry’s operating culture of underperformance, inadequate regulatory compliance and limited transparency to sub-saharan Africa where many countries suffer from poor governance, corruption and low levels of transparency and accountability [wa]s a passport for long term and large scale human dispossession and environmental contamination not prosperity” (Australian Conservation Foundation, 2009, p.5).

<sup>6</sup> Of benefit to Africa is the level of commitment to corporate social responsibility that Australian companies have a reputation for. For example, as Stoltze described “in this new scramble Australian companies are making the effort to train local staff, whereas for example the Chinese do not train or teach locals, but import their own workers” (Stoltze, 2010). Thus, Australian companies are well placed to fend off public criticism against mining companies and their vagaries because the Australian companies are actually better at training locals and capacity building in this industry (also see Donnelly and Ford, 2008b, pp.74-75). As the South African Minister for Mineral Resources told the Australian Minister for Trade at the 2010 Mining Indaba in Cape Town “Australian companies respond better to communities – they don’t bulldoze they consult” (Crean, 2010).

## Aid and Development Assistance

Between 1973 and 1978 ODA to Africa grew from one percent to eight percent, with the major focus being on 'educational support' and food aid. However, the acknowledgement and realization from Australia was that "the political significance of Australia's bilateral aid [was] often more important than its economic significance" (Higgott, 1983, p. 255-56). And as we shall see below, nothing had changed in terms of Australia's strategic policy towards Africa (where it existed). It was acknowledged that we will never be a big player in "Africa's crowded development community" (Negin and Denning, 2008), since Australia only contributes one percent of all global foreign development aid to Africa (AusAID, 2008). Since the 1970s Australian aid was channeled through various multilateral organizations and institutions, such as the UN and the Commonwealth. Downer (2002) reiterated a commitment to Africa through the Australian aid program, albeit selective and small, while the diplomatic and commercial links were acknowledged as "longstanding and significant" (AusAID, 2005).

Indeed during the Howard years, the focus on Africa was driven by Australia's involvement with the Commonwealth and UN and most assistance was channeled through existing multilateral agencies. Ausaid reported in 2005 that "Australia must be focused, strategic and streamlined in its interventions, and work as much as possible with and through organizations that have on-the-ground knowledge, skills and experience" (AuAID, 2005, pp. 6-13).<sup>7</sup>

Negin and Denning (2008) argued that "the [Howard] government's Africa strategy emphasized good governance and the 'delivery of basic services' focusing on HIV/AIDS and malaria" (Negin and Denning 2008, p.6) but that there was limited impact from Australia because of the crowded development sector. Indeed, by 2008 an AusAID report was critical of the overall strategic objectives of the aid program to Africa during the Howard and Downer years because they were not "clear, realistic [or] time-bound" (AusAID, 2008, p.5). For example, the overall objective to promote good governance at national and community levels was intended to be facilitated through the African Governance Facility, an initiative that began in 2004. However, on a budget of \$3 million a year the objectives were only partially achieved (AusAID, 2008, p.11).

The countries targeted during 2007-08 were mainly in Southern and Eastern Africa and included humanitarian assistance to Sudan and Zimbabwe. The government's humanitarian objectives *were* met during this period through the government's Regional Program Strategy, which supported Sudan (\$25 million in 2007-08) and Zimbabwe (\$13 million in 2007-08), mainly through multilateral institutions, but also by supporting Australian NGOs and Australians on the ground in those countries assisting in humanitarian relief operations. Thus while it would seem that the Howard government did not consider Africa to be totally relevant to Australia's trade, (and indeed to any military, security or strategic interests as will be discussed below), it did

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<sup>7</sup> In 2002 Jolyon Ford argued that "Africa exists ... only on the periphery of Australian consciousness ... given our inevitable Asia-Pacific focus. Yet, as he noted in 2002 Australia's "engagement with Africa" was focused on - aid (food security, health, capacity building, and governance), with a total of \$60 million to Africa (which rose from \$37 million in 2001). Ford argued that the main focus of the aid budget to Africa was on governance issues, for example "assisting African governments in ... trade negotiation techniques" (Ford, 2002; and see Downer, 2002). The focus was also on trade and the politics within Commonwealth issues, given that "most Commonwealth countries are African or, for whatever reason, identify strongly with African issues" (Ford, 2002).

at least provide relevant aid assistance – small but effective (if not tokenistic) - which “reflect[ed] [Australia’s] role as a good international citizen ... [responding to] humanitarian crises” (AusAID, 2008, p.19).

By 2010, firmly under the Rudd government, the engagement with Africa was still focused on aid and trade, especially mining, but with the addition of defence. Aid was still focused around issues of governance – for example AusAID reported that in 2008-09 that it “managed and monitored ongoing programs [many of them in their final year] enhancing the capacity of African governments and civil society to deliver basic services” (AusAID, 2010a). Rudd and Smith’s (and by default Gillard and Rudd’s) so-called ‘re-engagement’ with Africa was thus a continuation of Howard and Downer’s approach, and was simply built upon the previous successes of AusAID.

Yet, the Rudd government’s emphasis on the importance of Africa differed significantly from the general trend of declining Australian ODA from the late 1990s (See Table 6 - Australian ODA to Africa), (ACFOA, 1999). The Rudd government had indicated a willingness to increase the overall ODA budget to 0.5 percent of Australia’s GDP – approximately \$8 billion - by 2015.<sup>8</sup> As Negin and Denning (2008) pointed out the central principle of this increase was about achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). “This represent[ed] a significant change from the [Howard] government, whose support for the MDGs and multilateral efforts was lukewarm at best, and which largely focused on governance issues in its development program” (Negin and Denning, 2008, p.3). As discussed above they were not even wholly successful. Bob McMullan argued that it was “about the MDGs ... the development challenge ... the campaign to make poverty history” (McMullan, 2008b), and also because we share the Indian Ocean with East Africa and thus “need[ed] to have a sensible engagement in our long-term regional and diplomatic interest” (McMullan, 2008b). The Australia-Africa Partnerships Facility (AAPF) was established by the Rudd government in 2009 with these goals in mind. The AAPF also aimed to “promote an Australian identity across all forms of aid used” (Ausaid, 2009a, p.19). There was no point in being a silent-partner in the crowded African aid/donor sector, especially when local acknowledgement of Australia’s small but effective efforts may have assisted one Australian goal of securing a seat on the UNSC.

**Table 6 - Australian ODA to Africa** - indicates that between 2002-09 the percentage of Australian ODA spent on Africa hovered around 3.1 percent, until it was increased to 4.3 percent in 2009 (Broadbent, et al., 2009; Ausaid, 2009a, p.35). In 2007-08 nearly \$94 million was spent on 12 African countries with Sudan, Zimbabwe and Egypt receiving the most (See Table 7 ODA from Australia by country 2007-08). The 2009-10 total ODA budget to Africa was set at \$163.9 million with the understanding that most of this aid would be channeled through multilateral institutions<sup>9</sup> (See Table 8 – Australian Aid Through Multilateral Institutions 2008-10) to focus on issues that would support the MDGs, rather than committing to bilateral aid that would overstretch the Australian dollar (McMullan, 2008b; McMullan, 2009a; McMullan,

<sup>8</sup> Although the UN target is 0.7 percent for a country with Australia’s GDP.

<sup>9</sup> Australia supports Africa by supporting the World Bank, the World Health Organisation, the World Trade Organisation, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Australia also supports Africa through the UN Joint Program on AIDS (UNAIDS); UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF); UN Development Program (UNDP); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the UN’ WFP, and the UN for military assistance, air service and maritime arrangements (AusAID, 2010b, p.30-32).

2009b; AusAID, 2010a). High priority areas were “maternal and child health, food security and water and sanitation ... an increased number of scholarships ... [and] to help... rebuild a democratic Zimbabwe” (Smith, McMullan and Kerr, 2009). The 2010-11 Budget continued this trend upwards with 4.6 percent or \$200.9 million of Australian ODA channeled to Africa.

**Table 6 - Australian ODA to Africa**

years	\$ millions ODA to Africa	% of ODA to Africa	ODA budget as a % of GNI
1998-99	55.1	n/a	0.25
1999-00			0.27
2000-01			0.24
2001-02	76.0*	2.2	0.24
2002-03	60.1	3.01	0.23
2003-04	61.4*	3.08	0.23
2004-05	76.5	3.16	0.25
2005-06	77.0	3.09	0.28
2006-07	82.1	3.5	0.29
2007-08	94.4*	3.1	0.28
2008-09	153.0	3.1	0.32
2009-10	163.9	4.3	0.31
2010-11	200.9*	4.6	0.33
2015 (projection)			0.5

Sources: AusAID, 2005, p.4; AusAID, 2010b, p.5; Ford 2002; Broadbent, 2009; Negin and Denning, 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics Year Books, [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au); Australian Commonwealth Government Budget 2010, [http://www.budget.gov.au/2010-11/content/ministerial\\_statements/ausaid/html/index\\_ausaid.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2010-11/content/ministerial_statements/ausaid/html/index_ausaid.htm)

Note: \* Budget Estimates.

**Table 7: ODA from Australia by country 2007-08**

Country	2007-08 AUD\$
Sudan (Humanitarian)	30,380,955
Zimbabwe (Humanitarian)	13,635,589
Egypt (debt relief)	8,941,435
Kenya	7,439,619
Mozambique	7,016,912
Malawi	5,376,480
South Africa	5,081,051
Regional	4,398,143
Zambia	3,477,964
Uganda	3,339,275
Tanzania	2,802,148
Swaziland	1,187,237
Lesotho	805,348
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$93,882,956</b>

Source: AusAID, 2009a, p.35.

Note – The actual ODA budget for 2007-08 was \$101.0 million (Source: Ausaid, 2010b, p.5)

In terms of aid to Africa, Australia remained a small player in the busy development sector in Africa. However, under both the Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments Australia (through Ausaid) claimed a strategic importance in a small number of areas.

A long overdue increase in ODA to Africa as a percentage of the total, only occurred in 2009-10, almost double the rate from the early Howard years. It nonetheless remained limited compared to Australia's continued ODA support to other more strategic regions for Australia. The same policy equation was applied to Australia's defence and security connections with Africa.

**Table 8 Australian Aid Through Multilateral Institutions 2008-2010**

Date	Examples of Aid projects to Africa
September 2008	\$11.5 million through the WFP, UNICEF and Australian NGOs for drought relief in Ethiopia (Smith, 2009e).
December 2008	\$4 million to assist Ethiopia and Sudan during the food crisis (\$1.5million for Australian NGOs, \$2.5million to WFP in Sudan) (Smith, 2008).
January 2009	\$2 million funding package to Kenya, half to the World Food Program, the other half to Australian NGOs working in Kenya – assisting Kenyans suffering due to drought and post-election violence (Smith 2009d).
26 January 2010	\$500,000 to provide technical expertise to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for its Climate Change Plan of Action; \$6 million to the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission – with \$2 million of these funds going specifically toward Burundi and Sierra Leone, with an additional \$500,000 contribution to the special court for Sierra Leone (Smith, 2010d); \$6 million to South Africa to directly assist the recovery efforts in Zimbabwe, specifically with \$4 million of this for capacity building within the taxation administration and \$2 million for water and sanitation (Smith, 2010f).

### Defence and Security

Australia's defence relationship with the countries of Africa was always modest, mainly supporting either British, Commonwealth or United Nations objectives or interests. Indeed, "Australia's first military involvement overseas was in Africa" (Cuttell, 2008, p. 30-32): 750 men were sent to Sudan in 1885; 16,175 men fought in South Africa's Boer War in 1899; and many went to Egypt during World War One and to North Africa in World War Two supporting Britain and defending the Commonwealth. Since 1960 Australia has been involved in thirteen UN peacekeeping missions to Africa, with a total of 2,458 military personnel involved. (See Table 9 Australian Military Involvement in Africa since 1947). Chisnall has argued that while Australia has only been capable of sending small contingents of military personnel to Africa it "represent[ed] an effective means of 'military diplomacy' and international engagement" (Chisnall, 2003, p. 118; Cuttell, 2008, p.36).

While the Howard government recognized the importance of failed states and terrorism, building upon the reaction and global responses to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks upon America (Cuttell, 2008), the 2005 *Australian Department of Defence Update on Australia's National Security*, did not mention Africa as a significant region of concern, and only mentioned Australia's "small but highly focused [role] ... in the Sudan supporting UN peacekeeping activities" (Department of Defence, 2005, pp. v, 19, 21). The Minister for Defence, Robert Hill and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer argued that such contributions "demonstrate[d] Australia's continuing concern to ensure that the resolution of the Sudan and Darfur conflicts remain high priorities in the international agenda" (Hill and Downer, 2005, cited in Cuttell, 2008, p.39).

**Table 9 Australian Military Involvement in Africa since 1947**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of ADF Personnel</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Operation title/role</b>
2010	15 (plus 10 Australian Federal Police)	Sudan	UN Mission in Sudan
2010	8 (seconded to the UN Dept. of Peacekeeping Operations)	Sudan (Darfur)	UNAMID (UN and AU)
Late 2009	4	Regional (Somalia - Gulf of Aden)	UN DPKO supporting maritime counter-piracy planning off the Horn of Africa
March 2005	15	Sudan	AZURE – United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)
2008	9 military observers	Darfur, Sudan	Hedgerow, supporting the United Nations and African Union
15 January 2001 – March 2003	2 (6 in total)	Sierra Leone	Husky – assisting (UNAMSIL) UN Mission in Sierra Leone
July 2000	2 army observers	Ethiopia and Eritrea	Pamelo – UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE)
July 1994 – January 2002	2 (16 in total) (engineer instructional support, mine awareness, detention, destruction) ongoing financial support \$1.3million toward demining program.	Mozambique	Coracle – UN operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ)
1994-1995	302 Medical support Force (AUSMED) (638 in total)* (22 April 1995 AUSMED witnessed massacre of 2000 Hutu, but could not act due to UN Mandate.)	Rwanda	Tamar – UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR II)
16 March 1993 – November 1994	150 in total (air traffic control etc).	Somalia	2 <sup>nd</sup> UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) 1993-1996
21 December 1992 – 20 May 1993	1,500 in total (infantry battalion etc for humanitarian relief efforts. 1 ADF personnel shot dead on patrol.	Somalia	Unified Task Force in Somalia (UNITAF): 1992-1993
17 October 1992 – 30 April 1993	30 ADF movement controllers (90 in total)	Somalia	1 <sup>st</sup> UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I) 1992-1993
5 September 1991 – 25 May 1994	225 in total (1 army doctor killed in aircraft crash – 1 <sup>st</sup> female soldier to die in multinational peacekeeping op).	Western Sahara (Morocco)	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)
18 February 1989-10	613 (plus election monitors and federal police	Namibia	UN Transition Assistance Group - Namibia UNTAG



April 1990			
18 March 1982 – 24 March 1984	20 in total (after the overthrow of Idi Amin).	Uganda	Commonwealth Military Training Team – Australian Army Contingent.
24 December 1979 – 2 March 1980	152 in total	Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe	Commonwealth Monitoring Force, Rhodesia (CMFR): 1979-1980
1 August 1960 – February 1961	3 (one medical team seconded to the International Red Cross)	The Congo (newly independent republic of Congo)	UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC) 1960-1964

Sources: Cuttell, 2008; Department of Defence, 2009d; and Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veteran’s Association, “The ADF and Police involvement in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations since 1947”, in [www.peacekeepers.asn.au/missions/index.htm](http://www.peacekeepers.asn.au/missions/index.htm) (accessed 1 March, 2010)

Indeed, the Rudd government also continued this pattern of token deployments, in particular by committing nine military observers to the UN Assistance Mission in Darfur (Rudd, 2008, cited in Cuttell, 2008, p.39), or as Cuttell put it “providing smaller contingents of niche capabilities to perform high profile tasks providing maximum strategic return for a relatively small investment” (Cuttell, 2008, p. 40; also see DFAT, 2010b, p. 40).

By 2009, the Department of Defence stated its relationship with Africa was supported by both bilateral and multilateral relationships, even if limited to a small number of African countries. The 2009 Defence White Paper indicated that Australia’s interests would be well served if African countries were able to manage their own security. Thus capacity building support in areas of peacekeeping through defence cooperation were considered a priority, and as **Table 10 Australian Defence Relations with African Countries** demonstrates, these would be supported through pre-existing support for UN Peacekeeping operations, and as announced in February 2009 by the Minister for Defence Joel Fitzgibbon, through newly established links with the AU, amounting to an African-based Defence Attaché (Department of Defence, 2009c; and 2009d). Smith (2010d) argued that “for Australia it makes strategic sense to engage with Africa bilaterally, regionally and through the African Union” – that is, the Rudd government were better placed than the previous government to deal with the AU, mainly because the AU had developed to a point where it was ready for such international engagement, from the likes of Australia (see AusAID, 2008, p.9). Howard and Downer had to work with the more cumbersome Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was superseded by the AU in 2000.

According to DFAT, by supporting both the AU and the UN in their peace building and peace keeping operations in Africa, Australia’s strategic interests and relations with African countries were about “reduce[ing] the drivers of terrorism” (DFAT, 2010b, p.40). Australian financial support for UN peace -building operations in Africa increased between 2007-09 from \$83 million to \$111 million (DFAT, 2010b, p.41).

Thus it could be argued that during the final years of the Howard government, Africa was not a priority for aid, trade or defence concerns. However, it could equally be

argued that this was also the case after the 2007 elections, only with slight incremental differences in the defence strategy. Nonetheless, Australia’s defence relationship and strategy for Africa has remained the same during this period under review – limited.

**Table 10 Australian Defence Relations with African Countries**

Country / Region	Relationship
African Union	<p>While visiting Ethiopia in 2009 Fitzgibbon stated, “The Australian government feels that it is time to strengthen our engagement with Africa and the African Union in the fields of peace and security. Defence will establish a resident Defence Attaché, and offer Defence training in Australia to five AU-nominated officers.” (Fitzgibbon, 2009). The Defence Attache will be based at a new Embassy to be established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, announced on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2010 (Smith, 2010g).</p> <p>Australian Defence plans to support African Union capacity through provision of training courses for at least 5 personnel nominated by the AU in peace operations in Australia, and through “modest training assistance to the African Union’s Eastern Africa Standby Brigade” (Department of Defence, 2009d).</p> <p>Australia co-hosted / sponsored the <i>African Union International Symposium to enhance the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones</i> on 2-5 March 2010. Australia contributed to drafting the guidelines on the Protection of Civilians by Peace Support Missions that were considered at the symposium, and Mike Kelly the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support attended this meeting in Addis Ababa (Kelly, 2010; Department of Defence, 2009d).</p>
Botswana And Kenya	<p>Bilateral Relations in terms of “senior level contact and training and education opportunities offered under our Defence Cooperation Program” (Department of Defence, 2009d).</p>
Somalia	<p>“Australia does not have a bilateral defence relationship with Somalia ... [but does contribute] to international efforts to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia,” (Department of Defence, 2009d) including making a frigate and maritime patrol aircraft available, deploying a maritime counter-piracy officer to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and also by providing “minor equipment support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (Department of Defence, 2009d). In May 2009 a “measured response” from the Australian frigates <i>Sydney</i> and <i>Ballarat</i> in the Gulf of Aden when a merchant vessel sent distress calls after being attacked by Somali pirates, signaled Australia’s involvement in “international counter-piracy efforts” (Department of Defence, 2009a). The Australian government announced on 29 May 2009 that the ADF would “formally commence counter-piracy operations in support of Combined Task Force 151 (Counter-Piracy Task Force) in June 2009” (Department of Defence, 2009b). This involved “1 x RAAF P3C conducting maritime surveillance activities”, “2 Naval Officers in support of the CTF 151 Headquarters” and the support of HMAS Toowoomba.</p>
South Africa	<p>Catered for by a cross-listed Defence Attaché post in New Delhi, and bilateral relations in terms of “senior level contact and training and education opportunities offered under our Defence Cooperation Program” (Department of Defence, 2009d).</p>
Uganda	<p>“Australia has a modest defence relationship with Uganda, aimed at fostering the broader bilateral relationship” (White 2009). What this meant was that Joel Fitzgibbon, the Australian Minister for Defence visited Uganda in February 2009, where he “met with the Ugandan Defence Minister, [and] senior African Union (AU) Officials and ambassadors to the AU from African nations” (Fitzgibbon, 2009). In return some Ugandan defence force personnel visited Australia in 2010. It was anticipated that they might discuss the situation in Sudan and Darfur during this visit (Department of Defence, 2009d).</p>

## Policy - Strategic Interests

It was Keating's Labor government that turned all Australian eyes toward Asia, at "the expense" of an effective and engaging Australian policy on Africa (Lyons 2009). Howard's era was dominated by the prickly decisions whether to boycott the cricket in Zimbabwe, while Rudd and Gillard's era was highlighted by the "rebirth of Africa as a dynamic land of opportunity" (Negin, 2010), perhaps because of the World Cup Soccer held in South Africa in June 2010, which attracted over 43,000 Australians,<sup>10</sup> but more likely because of the rise of democracies across Africa, the resources boom (Green, 2007; Donnelly and Ford, 2008b) and the Australian bid for a seat on the UNSC.

Carl Ungerer (2009) pointed out: "In seeking to end the ad hoc approach to and relatively low ranking of African issues in Australia's foreign policy priorities, the Rudd government face[d] a number of challenges." However, there was little innovation in the Australian-African relationship. Indeed, relations with Africa since Rudd came to office officially focused on four main areas 1) enhancing political and diplomatic engagement; 2) promoting trade and investment; 3) addressing peace and security challenges in Africa, and 4) delivering targeted development and humanitarian assistance (Smith 2010d). These however were not new to Australia's overseas assistance agencies, and Rudd and Smith's so-called 're-focus on Africa' was nothing more than a continuation of the processes put in place under Howard and his predecessors - utilizing Australia's membership in the various multilateral institutions to indirectly or directly support African causes.

Overall, according to Gyngell (2008) the difference between the Howard and Rudd governments' foreign policies were that "Rudd's foreign policy include[d] strong elements of continuity" but "require[d] extensive coalition building and a diplomacy with global reach" (Gyngell, 2008, p.1). Rudd's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith could be credited with keeping Africa on the map and radar, by "carving out a role for himself" in that regard (Gyngell, 2008, p.14). Indeed, Smith's policies toward Africa were arguably different to Downer's. The simple fact that Smith's Western Australian colleagues would have been lobbying him about supporting the mining industry and its interests in Africa would have been persuasive. Overall Smith's mantra by March 2010 was that Australia wanted to work *with* Africa, to broaden, deepen, and enhance the engagement – with what is now a "more confident Africa, engaging with the world" (Smith, 2010d). He saw an enormous opportunity for Australia in Africa, with a population near one billion people and 53 countries, there were "sound economic reasons" (Smith, 2010d). As Carl Ungerer (2009) argued, "continuing a policy of benign neglect towards a quarter of the world's countries [wa]s no longer sufficient to meet Australia's long-term national interests." Furthermore, by 2008, Australia looked good in Africa. Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generations in Australia had resonated well (Grattan, 2008).

While the Rudd government's concern for African development appeared to be genuine (with Stephen Smith and Bob McMullan at the helm), it was not until 2009 that the Rudd government's "enhanced engagement with Africa" (DFAT, 2010b,

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<sup>10</sup> Ironically, Rudd was ousted from his position as PM at the same time and just as swiftly as the Socceroos were dropped from the finals of the World Cup (23-24 June 2010).

p.36) began to be taken more seriously by Australian policy and decision makers (Lyons, 2010). This was signaled by the number of Australian ministerial visits (See **Table 11 Australian Official Visits to Africa**) to Africa since 2009, including Foreign Affairs, Defence, Trade and even the Governor-General (Ungerer, 2009; Negin 2010). In return, Smith noted that there were high level visits from Tanzanian, Kenyan, Rwandan, Botswana and Mozambican diplomats to Australia, representing “more such visits in one year than the previous 10 years combined” (Smith, 2010d; DFAT, 2010b, p.34).

**Table 11 Australian Official Visits to Africa 2009-2010**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Official visit</b>
January 2009 And January 2010	<b>The Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith.</b> Addressed the African Union in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, January 2009. Visited Botswana for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on 25 January 2010 and visited South Africa on 26 January 2010.
February 2009	<b>The Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon.</b> Visited the African Union in Ethiopia on 18 February 2009.
March – April 2009	<b>The Governor-General Quentin Bryce.</b> Visited ten African countries – Zambia (21 March), Botswana, South Africa, and Mozambique (24 March), Ethiopia (28 March), Kenya (29-30 March), Tanzania (30 March), Mauritius, Seychelles, and Namibia (Governor-General, 2009; Smith, 2009a; DFAT 2010b, p.33).
November 2009	<b>The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development, Bob McMullan</b> Visited South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi, “to strengthen Australia’s ties with key development partners” (McMullan, 2009; McMullan, 2009b).
February 2010	<b>Trade Minister Simon Crean</b> Visited the Mining Indaba in Cape Town, South Africa, where he emphasized that the benefits of the ‘Australian brand’ in the resource sector were its “consulting and capacity building” (Negin, 2010; DFAT 2010b, pp.33, 37).
March 2010	<b>The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Mike Kelly.</b> Visited Africa when he attended the <i>African Union International Symposium to enhance the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones</i> on 2-5 March 2010, in Addis Ababa (Kelly, 2010).

Indeed as I have previously argued, Kevin Rudd had already made the determination in 2005 when he was the Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister that Australia would need to re-engage with Africa, “mainly because of China and India’s increased investment there – [Australia] couldn’t afford to be left behind in this ‘new scramble for Africa’” (Lyons, 2009). Australia was also able to capitalize on its brand image, enhanced by the fact that it was not a colonial power (Smith, 2010d).

### **The bid for the UN Security Council**

Among diplomatic circles it was no secret that Australia’s re-engagement with Africa was driven by its goal of achieving a seat on the UNSC (see High Commission of the Republic of South Africa, 2009; Law, 2010). DFAT’s own submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Australia’s relations with Africa, stated that one of the main foreign policy approaches of the Australian government was to strengthen multilateral engagement, and this meant “work[ing] closely with African countries to make progress on important international issues including trade liberalization, climate

change, refugees, UN reform, advancing human rights protections, disarmament and international security and addressing global poverty” (DFAT, 2010b, p.32). In the same document it announced that,

“Australia supports appropriate permanent representation of two African states on the UN Security Council. In Africa, as in all regions of the world, Australia will also seek to build support for its candidacy for a temporary seat ... in 2013-14” (DFAT, 2010b, p.32).

However, as Negin and Ford (2009, p.5) pointed out, the Rudd government’s overall foreign policy was driven by the desire to present “an image of Australia as a principled, positive ‘middle power’”. So ‘re-engaging’ with Africa in a ‘constructive’ manner, was considered to be central to this image, but it was also driven by self-interest.<sup>11</sup> On 29 January 2009 Smith’s ten minute presentation to the AU,<sup>12</sup> emphasized that Australia’s increased financial contribution to Africa would focus on the MDGs (Smith, 2009b). Speaking in South Africa a year later, Smith outlined Australia’s “commitment to increasing its engagement with the United Nations”, and was clearly buttering up the South Africans for their support (Smith, 2010a), and as Callick argued, “thus reinforcing [the] claim to a UN security Council seat” (Callick, 2010). Negin and Denning argued however, that such a strategy would not “sway a huge block of African United Nations General Assembly votes Australia’s way” (Negin and Denning, 2008, p.5).

There have been cynical views about Rudd and Smith’s policy, and a lack of understanding about the benefits of “re-engaging” with Africa, in terms of financial commitment, just to win this seat. *The Advertiser* reported on 29 May 2009 that Australian farmers were appalled at the government’s priorities focusing on Africa, when they were “battling floods and drought conditions” (*The Advertiser*, 2009a, p.3). This comment heralded from the announcement that Austrac would provide \$7.7 million in technical assistance to Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania and Namibia – all of whom will have a vote in 2013 for the UNSC seat.<sup>13</sup> Smith argued however, that the cynics missed the point (Smith, 2010d). Australia’s strategy for this re-engagement with Africa was part of an overall engagement with the international community which

“recognize[d] that critical problems confronting our world such as the global financial crisis, climate change, and peace and security require[d] a regional and multilateral response. Australia’s commitment to Africa is for the long term ... to work with Africa as a friend and partner” (Smith, 2009b).

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<sup>11</sup> The date of the vote for this seat in 2013, was ‘conveniently’ the same date as the review of funding for the continuation of the AAPF (AusAID, 2009a, pp. 15-19).

<sup>12</sup> Smith has since reminded us a number of times (see Smith, 2010a; Smith, 2010b; Smith, 2010d) that he “was the first Australian Foreign Minister to address a meeting of the AU Foreign Ministers in Addis Ababa”, which meant to say that Alexander Downer hadn’t, even though Downer had traveled to Africa a number of times to meet with various OAU officials (Downer, 2010; and see Hawker, 2009b).

<sup>13</sup> This same newspaper did not however make any connection to the relevance of another article on the same page regarding an Australian Navy warship’s role in combating Somali pirates off the Horn of Africa (*The Advertiser*, 2009b, p.3). That is, by assisting Zimbabwe and other African countries where we have a comparative advantage, we may be able to assist the international community to prevent another failed state, like Somalia, and we could be more effective if we had a seat on the UNSC!

On 12 October 2010, the Gillard government demonstrated its engagement and commitment to Africa, and thus its pursuit of the UNSC seat, when it announced that Bob McMullan (who had retired from parliament at the 2010 federal elections), would become Australia's first special envoy for Africa (Rudd, 2010). Given that there was more continuity than there was change in Australia's policy and other relations with the countries of Africa in the period 2006-2010, it could be argued that the major differences between the former Howard led Coalition government and the Rudd and now Gillard led Labor governments was this pursuit of the UNSC seat, the subsequent increased ODA to Africa, the naming of it as a re-engagement with Africa, and finally the appointment of a special envoy for Africa.

## Conclusion

Australia has not had much responsibility or interest in Africa apart from the limited diplomatic, political, tourist, migration, trade, aid and defence connections. The relationship between Australia and Africa has remained constant over the years, with occasional diplomatic stirrings during humanitarian crises. Zimbabwe has by far dominated the diplomatic relationship, while South Africa, Sudan and Egypt have had the biggest influence on Australia in terms of trade, and the flows of migrants. Howard and Downer decided against further pursuit of the UNSC seat, while Rudd and Smith charged ahead with this goal. Gillard, with Rudd as her Foreign Affairs Minister is maintaining the pursuit. If Australia can win a seat on the UNSC it may have an opportunity to become a better international citizen and influence global issues, which may impact upon African countries. Perhaps there will be some votes in Africa after all.

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