

## Australia in the second half of the XX century: in search of national and political identity

Valery N. Timoshenko  
Pacific National University.  
E-mail: 010124@pnu.edu.ru

**Abstract:** The processes of national and political identity are of extreme importance in the modern world. Their underestimation leads to numerous conflicts and to a loss of civilized guidelines (Libya, Syria, Ukraine, the migration crisis in Europe). Study of the experience of the Commonwealth of Australia in pursuing the multiculturalism policy in the 1980s – 1990s is of interest to the wide range of researchers and readers. Australia was one of the first countries trying to determine its place during the world globalization processes. The paper “Australia in the second half of the XX century: in search of national and political identity” is aimed at comprehensive study of the Australian authorities’ activities in the tough transition period from the “white Australia” policy to the “multiculturalism” policy in the context of determining the national and political identity. This research results are instructive for the Australians themselves as well as for many other countries that are determining the national identity and searching for the political guidelines. The paper used the traditional methods of the historical science: comparative-historical, problematic-chronological methods and a system analysis. They made it possible to find out the peculiarities of Australia’s internal policy during the globalization, to determine the common goals, methods and modes of this policy. The research found out that Australia has never been an “Asian country” and will not be such a country, its cultural and political ideals are connected with the Western civilization, its Anglo-Saxon guidelines in determining the national identity and the preservation of the American-British area in the political identification. **Keywords:** Immigration, “white Australia”, multiculturalism, Anglo-Saxon orientation, Asian crisis, anti-immigrant attitudes.

### 1. Introduction

The specialists are paying more and more attention to the political identity problems of a nation because the globalization processes are exerting greater and greater influence on the world order. Australia, a comparatively young “immigrant” country, which has the European roots and the Asian location, did not avoid a difficult search for the national and political identity too. The identification processes were especially intensive in the 1980s and 1990s. Their results are instructive for the Australians themselves as well as for many other countries determining the national identity and searching for the political guidelines.

Before the Second World War Australia was completely associated with Great Britain and was considered to be its “white colony” in a cultural sense. The expression “the British man to the marrow of his bones” voiced by Robert Menzies, the former Prime Minister of Australia, corresponded to the cultural and political orientation of the Australians. Till the end of the Second World War Australia pursued a tough immigration policy. As early as in 1901, with support of the “For white Australia” movement, the Australian authorities passed the law on immigration restriction, in the first place, for those coming from Asia and Africa. The racist attitudes were widespread at that time. As a result, the Australian population was formed almost entirely by the people coming from the British Islands. After the war the situation changed. Australia was willing to host the immigrants from the Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe. They were hired, mainly, for the hard-unskilled labor. The immigrant influx was increasing from year to year. In the 1960s the number of migrants to Australia rose sharply. So, from 1961 to 1970 approximately 1 million people moved into Australia. Over the whole post-war period 3.5 million migrants moved into Australia, while almost 2/3 of them came from the continental Europe [Malakhovsky, 1980, p. 227]. The non-English-speaking “new Australians” made up a large part of the urban population and they took an active part in the Australian political life, had their “ethnic organizations” and print media in more than twenty

languages. It comes naturally that these “new Australians” had no desire to have much to do with the “Anglo-Saxon race” and its traditions.

In the 1970s the general immigration flow decreased significantly. However, a new immigration tendency appeared – a quantity of migrants from the countries of the Asian-Pacific region, the Middle East and Africa increased sharply. This was because during the less intense ties with Europe and the strengthening of the economic relations with the Asian-Pacific region countries, the Australian government, after long disputes and discussions, decided to change the “white Australia” strategy and the “assimilation” policy, according to which an access of the representatives of “non-Caucasian” (Indo-European) race to the country was restricted. The “assimilation” policy was replaced with the “integration” policy, according to which the “non-European” immigration representatives and the aborigines can assimilate with the Australian society and keep their cultural identity. Officially, John Gorton government proclaimed this policy as early as at the end of the 1960s. The Laborites, who came to power in 1973, expanded it significantly. They did not just change the immigration laws, they tried to determine Australia’s place in the world and its cultural identity over again. For the first time a strategic concept of “multiculturalism” was advanced. The foreign researchers believe that the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and, especially, Albert Grassby, the Minister for Immigration in this government, made a major contribution to this strategy development.

In a short time in power the Laborites managed to second the “building of a new nation” policy with specific deeds. They started with the “estrangement from the European past” policy. In 1974 the national anthem of Australia was changed. Instead of the anthem “God Save the Queen” the melody “Advance Australia fair!” was performed. The phrase “British subject” was not written in the Australian passports any longer. The Australian citizens started swearing fealty to Australia, and not to the Queen. From then on, the Queen herself was named the “Queen of Australia”. The legal appeals to London Privy Council were abolished.

When the conservatives of the Agrarian-Liberal coalition came to power again, the existing tendencies did not change. The Asian immigrant influx became still more intense. In 1977 the Malcolm Fraser government signed an agreement with China for reunification of families, which made the ethnic Chinese entry into Australia much easier. The similar agreements were also entered into with the counties of Indo-China, the Middle East, South Africa and others. Apart from that, Australia continued to import the labor force from the region countries and to host a great number of refugees. Especially many refugees from Vietnam and East Timor settled in Australia. At the beginning of the 1980s 50 thousand Vietnamese, 40 thousand Khmers (Cambodians), 35 thousand Chinese, 20 thousand Indians, 12 thousand Turks, 12 thousand Sinhalese, 11 thousand Javanese, 5 thousand migrants from Malaysia, Fiji and Samoa each lived in the country. Apart from them, there was a colony consisting of 127 thousand Muslims from the Middle East [Brook, 1986, p. 710]. According to some reports, their quantity varied from 100 thousand to 250 thousand people [Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1991, p. 20]. Anyway, this is more than a number of the Jews living in the country. A great number of students from the African-Asian countries studied in Australia.

## 2. Methods

The principles of a scientific historicism and objectivity served as a methodological basis for the research. When following these principles, the author examines the problem in the general context of the political and economic situation within Australia, with account taken of a situation on the region and in the world on the whole at this stage of history. The historicism principle also implies that it is impossible to modernize the past, to “update” it, to assess in terms of the present day the past events, when another historical situation, another logic of

events, other understanding of the progress, civilization, other understanding of fairness existed. One must take into account the historical process dynamics.

The paper used traditional methods of the historical science: comparative-historical, problematic-chronological methods and a system analysis. This method helped to objectively assess the data that the other researchers received. The problematic-chronological method favored the research structuring in the unity of its general essence that does not break the general logic and chronological succession. The system analysis made it possible to pay attention to the interrelations of all elements of the internal policy that is typical of Australia, to determine the general and to find out the regularities on the basis of specific material.

A classification method was used during the work with the sources. By means of this method it was possible to purposefully select and to systematize the sources used in the research. A statistical method was used, which made it possible to use the mass and aggregate indicators, to find out some regularities and quantitative characteristics of certain processes and phenomena.

The paper also used methods applied in the political conflict management, in particular, an economical-deterministic approach, according to which the reason for ethnopolitical conflicts is the fight for resources, while the ethnopolitical conflicts are provoked by the socio-economic crises, and the worsening of the socio-economic situation in a country or a separate region can favor the ethnopolitical conflict escalation.

A historical-genetic method, as one of the efficient ways to study the internal policy of the states, is an important part of a system of the methods used in the course of the research. Its universality, flexibility and accessibility made it possible to reconstruct the historical facts, events and tendencies, the cause-effect relationships and regularities of the historical development in their direct perception. The historical-genetic method efficiency in this paper is driven by the necessity to analyze a wide range of the sources and to process a great volume of the factual data.

When writing this article, the author took into account the concepts of domestic and foreign specialists in the field of history and political science as well as the theory and analysis of the globalization problems: H. Kissinger, V.A. Tishkov, A.V. Torkunov, A. I. Utkin, F. Fukuyama, S. Huntington, and others. Not all the concepts are worked out quite deeply today, many of them are discussed by scientists fiercely, but their doubtless advantage is that they make it possible to take into complete account and to adequately analyze the universal and the unique, the general and the particular in historical development of the international relations.

### 3. Results and discussion

According to the research results, the demographic changes, which took place in Australia since the end of the 1960s, were significant and they were able to influence the internal and external policy of Australia. A specialist's team of the Royal Institute of International Relations in London, who researched the Australian-British ties jointly with the scientists of the Australian National University, defined these changes as "dramatic" and leading to the global economic and political changes [International Affairs, 1994 Vol. 70, No 1, p. 42]. Berry Leal of the South Queensland University (Australia) said that the "multiculturalism" gave rise to great contradictions in the 1970s, which continued to take place in the 1980s and the 1990s [Berry Leal, 1994, p. 128]. A famous Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey wrote that the immigrant influx from Asia and Africa "created a threat of inter-ethnic clashes within Australia" and «exposed to danger the regional status» of the country at an international level [Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1991, p. 19].

The policy of creating the multicultural society greatly favored the strengthening of the national and linguistic identity of the Australian ethnic groups and their desire to make

themselves more important within the Australian society. Many of them perceived the integration policy as creation of a kind of ethnic colony in Australia. In a greater degree this concerns the African-Asian immigrants. That's why an authoritative domestic ethnographer S.I. Brook sorted out the Asian and African migrants, who lived in Australia, into "a special group of foreign people, who kept their isolation and who were almost not mixed with the other population" [Brook, 1986, p. 711]. This group did not have the cosmopolitan tendencies and, as R. Kettle, the professor of the Adelaide University, a Member of the House of Representatives of this state, this group was more worried about the immigration problems (towards the increase of quotas for the Australians – author's note) than about the "multiculturalization" problems [Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1991, p. 19].

New search for the political identity of the Australian nation was the result of the quickly changing geopolitical situation. Some scientists believe that in new conditions the society came to realize the world picture and its own place in this picture, mainly, via the political and geographical images of countries and regions. Making a cult of the ideas of human rights and universal human values diluted the traditional national stereotypes of the Australian society and they urged this society on the self-identification on the regional basis more and more.

Since the 1960s the indigenous population issues started to be an important part of the political and cultural life of the country. In May of 1967 a national referendum was held over cancellation of the anti-aboriginal discrimination provisions of the Australian Constitution. The aboriginals were acknowledged as Australian citizens, they acquired rights for their lands, the state subsidies for their medical service and education increased. These changes favored an important demographic turn: the indigenous population started increasing rapidly. At the beginning of the 1980s the aboriginals number exceeded 161 thousand people, and 250 thousand people including the metises [Brook, 1986, p. 711]. The Australian society not only addressed the needs of the aboriginals, but also connected the search for the Australian national identity with them.

Returning to the immigration problem, it is necessary to note that at the end of the 1970s – the beginning of the 1980s "new Australians" started playing a prominent role in Australia's political life. By that time, they made up a great part of the population in the largest cities. Their own organizations were formed at a quickened pace. These organizations took a more and more active part in the electoral and other political campaigns. At the beginning of the 1980s Australia had about 2.3 thousand "ethnic organization", published over 70 print media in more than 20 languages. All the political parties paid a lot of attention to an "ethnic factor", when trying to win over the voters from among the non-English-speaking "new Australians". The Australian political observers unanimously predicted that the "ethnic factor" would be getting more and more important, and they said, in particular, that the parliamentary elections results would depend in large part on the "ethnic minorities" votes in the foreseeable future.

In this respect the Vietnamese community activities in Australia are significant. Their activity had an impact on soft policy pursued by the Australian government in respect to Vietnam. In the 1983 elections the Laborites voiced their plans to recover the assistance to Vietnam, which largely favored their victory in the elections. Such a position of the Laborites was quite explainable. The Vietnamese made up to 5% of the electorate in three federal districts – one in Melbourne and two districts in Sydney.

When following the new policy and experiencing a certain pressure from the ethnic groups, the Australian government took the specific steps to establish the "multicultural society". A lot of "ethnic newspapers" were published and a lot of "ethnic" radio stations were created. This process culmination was the establishment of the Special Broadcasting Service and the opening of the "multicultural" television channel on the state television, which broadcast in the minorities languages. The SBS channels kept transmitting the programs and



news editions from the countries, from which the immigrants came. In the educational sphere the government supported the “Saturday schools” network with teaching in national languages. Apart from that, many of these languages were presented in the secondary school curricula and they underwent a public examination officially. The “multiculturalism” ideologists believe that this favored the “expansion of a sense of the Australian identity” [Journal of European Studies, 1994 Vol. 24 No 94, p. 129]. But on the other hand, all these measures favored the long preservation of the ethnic groups’ connections with the “historical native land” and they slowed down the processes of assimilation and adaptation to the Australian values that were based on the European culture and traditions.

Under pressure exerted by the “ethnic organizations” the government continued to pass the immigration laws that were unpopular among the majority of the Australians. So, at the beginning of the 1980s Australia started to rank first in the world in a number of political immigrants. By no means all of these immigrants fought for the “democracy” and “human rights” in their native countries. Reactionary elements, who were connected with the separatist, nationalistic and religious extremist organizations, posed a serious problem for Australia itself. Groups of the Ustashe, Salashists and other pro-fascist movements were active in Australia. The ideologists and the heads of many terrorist organizations sought shelter in the country under the guise of political immigrants.

At the end of the 1970s the “ethnic aspects” broke into Australia’s foreign policy on such areas as the Middle East, Indo-China and South Africa. So, the Lebanese refugees influx paved the way for supporting the Palestinians inside the Australian society. The Inquiry Office of the Palestinian Liberation Organization was founded in Melbourne. The Muslims made up a large part of the electorate in three districts in Sydney and a district in Melbourne. But the Jewish community accounted for approximately the same number of voters. This situation forced the Australian government to take the centrist position on the Middle Eastern problem, on the one hand when criticism of Israel, on the other hand without recognition of the PLO [Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1991, P. 22].

Another example is the Australian government activities to settle the Cambodian problem. The government used the Vietnamese community services in order to obtain Hanoi’s consent with the peaceful settlement plan. Simultaneously the government exhibited a diplomatic activity in China and the ASEAN countries and strove to lay away the problem solution for the future. Thus, R. Kettle said that the Laborites, on the one hand, won over the Vietnamese voters, and, on the other hand, they got rid of a reputation of the pro-Vietnamese government. [Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1991, P. 22]. All of that confirms the seriousness of provisions about the “ethnic groups” influence on Australia’s foreign policy.

The 1990s were marked by the deep global changes, which influenced the economic, political, social and cultural life of the planet, destroyed the old security system and created a new geopolitical reality. Collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp led not only to the end of the “cold war”, but also to disappearance of the bipolar world, with account taken of which the security system of the countries majority was built.

The Australians paid close attention to the international relations development as well as tried to determine Australia’s place and role in new historical conditions. Australia had serious reasons for that. At the end of the 1980s – the beginning of the 1990s the serious economic changes took place in the country. The traditional economic ties with the European Union countries and the USA were cut down. Since the end of the 1980s the EU countries share in the Australian export and import was reducing steadily. In 1991 the share was 12% and 20.8%, respectively [International Affairs, 1994 Vol. 70, No 1, p. 45]. It is possible to state that by the beginning of the 1990s, in consequence of tough protectionist policy, which the EU leadership pursued, Australia was actually ousted from the European market. The both sides

were on the verge of the trade war. At the meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany H. Shiffer, during his visit to Australia, the Prime Minister Gareth Evans threatened a possibility of such a war and warned that postponement of solving the issues about the trade liberalization can lead to the retaliatory measures from Australia and the third world countries. “The crisis of the world economic system, - he said, - comes from Europe” [Australian Foreign Affairs Record, 1989 Vol. 60, No 3, P. 68-69].

The economic relations between Australia and the United States of America were complicated too. For a long time, the American market was the second most important for Australia after Europe, although the trade between the two countries was not very intensive and had an imbalance 2:1 in favor of the USA. At the middle of the 1980s Ronald Reagan administration obtained the fall in prices on the global scale via the World Trade Organization and the American Increase of Exports Foundation, which immediately had an effect on the Australian market. By the end of the 1980s Australia’s deficit in the trade with the USA had doubled and made up 12 billion Australian dollars a year. Australia’s export in the USA fell by 25%, while at the same time the American import to the country increased almost twice [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1996, p. 6-24]. The protectionist policy pursued by the European countries and the USA drastically changed the Australian foreign trade geography. The Australian export goods were sent, mainly, to the Asian-Pacific Region. As long ago as the 1980s the Asian-Pacific Region accounted for two thirds of the whole Australian export and import. The region’s north-east accounted for 45% of the export, the Southeast Asia accounted for 15%. Japan alone accepted up to 30% of the export [The Oceanic Economic Handbook, 1990, p. 24-48]. In the second half of the 1980s the Asian-Pacific Region was getting more and more important for Australia because of the economic slack that started in the country. Prices for the export products plummeted, a great payment deficit appeared, the debt obligations hit a record high. The government had to cancel the state control and to devalue the money, but this did not take effect. By 1992 Australia’s foreign debt made up 42% out of its GDP [World Today, 1993, No 7, p.128]. Australia’s image as a successful country became a thing of the past, especially against the background of the quickly developing ASEAN countries, China and South Korea and was replaced with talks about a “banana republic” and the necessity of “shock therapy”. The former Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew said that Australia was getting a “useless white junk of Asia” [International Affairs, 1994 Vol. 70, No 1, p. 49].

The tough economic situation, in which Australia was at the end of the 1980s, radically influenced the internal and defense policy of the country. For the first time a new security threat to Australia appeared, and it had nothing to do with the traditional military threats. This was a threat to the economic welfare of the Australian society during the competitive battle strengthening in the world markets. Recognition of the economic vulnerability stirred up the state and public policy-makers activities to determine Australia’s place and role in the global and regional economy. This led to appearance of a new strategy that was built on understanding that Australia’s economic sovereignty would be destroyed by strong power of the international capital and the international market, on which the country has no leverage. In this context, as the Australian researcher Richard Higgott said, “traditional concerns about the country sovereignty, about military threats to its security were superseded by one main concern – the concern about the society welfare”, which “put an end to division into economic and political spheres, into internal and external spheres that dominated in Australia’s foreign policy starting from the federation formation” [Richard Higgott, 1994, p. 49]. In other words, in order to achieve the economic well-being Australia is ready to sacrifice many its traditional guidelines in the internal policy and to take a different view of the country’s place and role in the international relations system.

As early as in the 1980s Australia's scientists and politicians widely discussed the topics of determining a place in the modern world, on the one hand, of directly the country (location), and, on the other hand, of the Australian society (identification). The endless political rhetoric clearly showed two main ideas that ruled the minds of the country community as well as the government – ideas of the regionalism and multiculturalism. Their essence boiled down to the fact that Australia is a part of Asia geographically as well as politically, and the Australian society is a part of the Asian society.

The Soviet Union collapse and the socialistic system ruin accelerated the processes of “joining of Australia to Asia”. When the “Soviet threat” disappeared, Australia lost hopes for support from the USA and its other Western allies on Australian security, giving Australia a feeling of “needlessness” to the West. The economic problems had an effect on the political relations between the EU countries and Australia. In spite of the historical, cultural, intellectual and other connections with Europe Australia was getting more and more estranged from Europe politically. The European Union, which always considered Australia to be “a respectable citizen of the world”, failed to pay due attention to the development of political contacts with this country. Ruin of the socialist system in Europe strengthened these processes. The EU leadership focused on the problems of the Eastern-European countries. Forecasts made by many Australian politicians and specialists, that Europe would inevitably turn into “a separate fortress”, came true.

Europe's isolation had harsh consequences for the Australian economy. The economic slack, which began at the beginning of the 1980s, continued. The prices for the export products plummeted, a great payment deficit appeared, the debt obligations hit a record high. The government had to cancel the state control and to devalue the money, but these measures failed to stop the economic slack. In 1992 Australia's foreign debt made up 42% out of its GDP [The Weekend Australian, 27 August, 1996]. The GDP growth rate of 2.5% a year, which was expected in the 1990s, would not improve the situation, since the 7% rate is necessary for normal development.

A new reality frightened the Australian political elite. The British specialists A. Makkrew and S. Brook said that “the Australian creators of policy were more and more worried about appearance of the unstable multipolar world and increase of the military possibilities of a number of countries during the growing instability and tension, and, above all, in the context of absence of the vital mechanisms for prevention and resolution of conflicts” [Asia-Pacific in the New World Order, 1998, p. 201]. The Australian government saw a way out of this situation in strengthening of the regionalism and multiculturalism policy. The establishment of a collective regional security system like the OSCE in Europe, the development of closer military contacts with the Asian countries in the aggregate with the Australian society identification as the Asian society would make it possible to assure the reliable security of the “green continent”.

The identification in the Australian way had its own peculiarities. It is generally recognized that the main principle of any self-identification is voluntariness. People must voluntarily identify themselves with the values and symbols that determine the identity. In Australia the regionalism and multiculturalism ideas were not made by the common people, but they were imposed from above via the administrative system and the mass media. The powerful information press, which is internal as well as external – from the Europe and the USA, gave the Australian society a feeling of uncertainty in determining its own national values and guidelines.

At the beginning of the 1990s one could note a process of cultural separation of Australia from Europe. The Australian society, especially its business, administrative, academic circles and the mass media, had a deep reorientation of values that were connected with determining Australia's place and role in the modern world. Many Australians ceased to identify themselves

not only with Great Britain, but also with the European civilization on the whole. The refusal from the “European heritage» was accompanied by the ideas of establishing a special “Pacific nation”. Re-orientation to the Pacific market and the demand for the low-paid manpower led to a sharp influx of the “Asian immigrants”, and simultaneously the number of people coming from Europe decreased. So, in 1994 the people coming from Great Britain made up only 10% of the Australian population. 50% of the tourists, who visit Australia, are also the representatives of the Pacific region states. In terms of quantity of the Japanese students, Australia ranked second in the world after Japan. The Japanese language tended to become the leading language in Australia’s higher education system. The Ministry of Education of Australia also developed the project of retraining of the foreign languages’ teachers into the Japanese teachers. The English language share in the education system and in the mass media decreased permanently. At the same time, the school curricula sharply reduced the study of European history and culture, less and less attention is paid to the European contribution to Australia’s foundation and development.

The Paul Keating government decided to accelerate the processes of creating the multicultural society through the final break with the “European past” and it actively supported the Australian movement for the republic that was created in 1991. The movement ideologists believed that the establishment of a republic in the country would make it possible to solve many economic problems and would favor the approaching of the “Asian future”. Paul Keating himself said that “Australia’s involvement into the region can be taken seriously only when the country gets rid of the “psychological baggage of the past” and establishes the republican status” [Paul Keating, 1993, p. 7]. The country started a process of preparation for the referendum. However, the republicanism idea, which ruled the minds of politicians, journalists and business elite, failed to find complete support from the Australian people. The referendum complicated relations not only with Great Britain, but also with the European Union on the whole. The relations became still worse after the so-called “Wavell report” on the problems of the Second World War was published in 1993. The report accused the 8th Australian division, which defended Singapore, of “cowardice, violence, marauding and disobedience of orders”. An effort to shift the failures of the English military policy onto the Australian soldiers, who were actually left to the mercy of fate, aroused indignation among the Australians and strengthened the negative anti-European tendencies.

Rapprochement of Australia and Asia with the simultaneous refusal from the “European heritage” is perceived by the Australian society ambiguously. Many representatives of the Australian scientific elite warn against such a sharp turn of the Australian policy to Asia since this could have dangerous consequences. In spite of its economic possibilities, Asia continued to be an extremely weak region in the field of policy and democracy. A famous Australian political scientist, the author of the Australian new defense strategy L. Dibb said that “after lifting of the restrictions imposed by the “cold war” dangerous tendencies appear in Asia” and that, in spite of the seeming stability, efficiency and steadiness of the current relations, in the region “historic enmity is strong, which can pose a threat of tension and conflicts” [Manjit Bhatia, 1998, p. 88]. A famous American scientist S. Huntington, the author of the clash of civilizations concept, warned Australia against “falling into the Asian neighbors’ arms” and reminded that the Australian national interests center around “the Western civilization” [Cited by Paul Dibb, 1998, p. 1]. But at that time the statements on similar topics were perceived as blasphemous statements, and S. Huntington’s arguments were condemned as racist ones.

In the second half of the 1990s the situation with the multiculturalism problem started changing. While analyzing this situation, professor J. Khirst of La Trobe University said that the Australian society perceived the efforts to present the Australian history beyond connections with the European civilization negatively [Quadrant, 19 May, 1993]. More than that, one of the



main lessons, which the Australians learnt from contacts with the Asian countries, was the understanding that a political culture of many Asian countries does not correspond to a level of Australia and even is dangerous for it [Berry Leal, 1994, p. 135].

Numerous ethnic conflicts in Europe in the first half of the 1990s, strengthening of the terrorism on inter-ethnic and religious grounds made the Australians unconfident in correctness of an idea of creating the “multinational” society, which was propagandized and imposed by the EU states in this way. “The European Union’s inability in settling the crisis in Yugoslavia, the conflicts in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, problems of the foreign workers in Germany, - as B. Leal believes, - are a bad incentive to learn the culture and policy from Europe” [Berry Leal, 1994, p. 138]. The Asian-Pacific region countries were not eager to accept Australia into their “Asian family”. The Prime Minister of Malaysia Mohamad Mahathir said acrimoniously that “the Australians do not have an Asian character, and their efforts to rank themselves among the Asian nation are groundless, whatever they speak” [Australian Journal of International Affairs, 1994, Vol. 48, No 1, p. 105].

In March 1996 a coalition formed by the Liberal and National parties headed by John Winston Howard came to power in Australia. These politicians cast doubt on correctness of the policy pursued by their predecessors. The “Asian way” came under criticism more and more frequently. A sharp turn in the Australians’ minds took place in 1998 in connection with dramatic changes in the economic and political space surrounding Australia. An economic crisis broke out in the Asian-Pacific Region, which was followed by the political crisis. In Indonesia the crisis led to the overthrow of Suharto regime, in Malaysia there was a conflict between the Prime Minister and his deputy, which led to the violent street demonstrations. The xenophobia growth in South Korea, the mass immigrant removal from Malaysia, the Chinese population pogroms and the Islamic fundamentalism surge in Indonesia were a consequence of the crisis too. The Asian regional forum, which was held in Manila in July 1998, said that the current situation created a real threat to the security in the whole region [ARF Ministerial Meeting, 26-27 July 1998].

Australia also suffered the consequences of the Asian economic crisis. Many Asian markets were lost for the country, the trade deficit and foreign debt grew, the national currency devalued. The Society started the wide debate that tried to find out the reasons and consequences of this phenomenon. Discussions showed that the Asian economic crisis cast doubt on many statements, which were vital for Australia, about the economic and political situation in the region. It was evident that the euphoric statements made by the specialists about the regional stability were not true. In reality, a well- advertised “Asian economic model” was a “mixture of the capitalism with corruption and financial incompetence based on the foreign investments and the export-oriented economy in the authoritarian states” [Mohan Malik, 2001, p. 3]. The “Asian democracy”, which was based on the Confucian and Islamic values, was criticized for triadism, nepotism and elitist power system, which favor the popular discontent and can lead to the political instability, demonstrations, rebellions and even revolutions [Christopher W. Hughs, 2000, p. 10]. The discussions also showed the inability of such regional organizations as APEC, ASEAN and RFB to solve the problems of a way out of tough economic and political situations. The contradictions are growing between their countries. In particular, there is friction between Malaysia and Indonesia on problems of illegal immigrants, between Thailand, on the one hand, Malaysia and Indonesia – on the other hand, on cooperation with the IMF, between Malaysia and Singapore – because Singapore refused to turn the Singapore dollar into the ASEAN collective currency.

The Australian community was worried about a growth of nationalism and religious extremism in the region. History shows that the nationalism, as a rule, rests responsibility for its own internal failures on some external forces. The search for a foreign enemy is a usual

nationalistic practice. In connection with that Paul Dibb, the head of Strategic and Defence Study Center, said that in event of an economic crisis “the national leaders start looking for “scapegoats” in order to support their own weakened position” [Paul Dibb, 1998, p. 2]. Australia could be such a “scapegoat” with account taken of its colonial past and large presence in the region in the present.

#### 4. Conclusions

A negative assessment of reasons and consequences of the Asian economic crisis led to the change of an attitude of the Australian public opinion towards the Australian policy, which is pursued in the region over recent years. A policy of “joining the Asia” and slogans like “Australia is a part of Asia” were not supported by the majority of Europeans any longer. The information bulletin of Strategic and Defence Study Center of Australia said that the “Asian crisis” showed deep differences between the European and Asian economic systems”, which are unlikely to co-exist within the “globalization” concept because of “the absence of a global community of styles and ethics” [Strategic and Defence Study Center, 1998, p. 4].

The racist and anti-immigrant attitudes became stronger in Australia.

The activities of the “One Nation” party are significant in this respect. The party emerged in the Australian political life in the second half of the 1990s. In the 1996 elections its leader Polina Khanson was elected to the House of Representatives from Queensland, although shortly before that she was ousted from the Liberal party for her position on a status of the Australian aboriginals. When she became a Member of Parliament, she attracted attention of the press and then she gained great popularity in the society due to her critical statements against the aboriginals’ land rights, the government’s multicultural policy and a high level of immigration from Africa and Asia. In June 1998 “One Nation” party unexpectedly gained wide support in the elections in Queensland (23% of votes in the elections and 11 seats in the Parliament). Although the party lost the federal elections in October 1998 and received no seats in the House of Representatives, 8% of the Australians voted for it, which confirmed the attractiveness of its populist program and the temperamental criticism of the political establishment.

The society resumed the debate about the Australians’ national identity and Australia’s place in the world system. It was found out that the majority of the Australians were influenced, above all, by the racial, historical and cultural factors, and not geography [Cavan Hogue, 2000, p. 142]. Return to the old values and guidelines was quite a natural phenomenon. What happened is that the specialists call “xenotransplantation” when somebody else’s “transplants”, which are especially imposed from above or from outside, are rejected by the society.

Australia returned to the West civilization field in special conditions. Australia’s economic growth against the background of the Asian crisis and increase of its political and economic weight in the regions caused among a part of the Australian society and the ruling elite an opinion about the Australian nation’s superiority and about Australia’s exceptional mission if not all over the world, then, at least, in the Asian-Pacific region. The Howard government didactically showed the generosity and nobility of its country that rendered material economic assistance to the Asian countries. As a matter of fact, Australia took part in all three programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on crediting Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia, it decided to postpone the payments on the Indonesian debts, lobbied the softening of conditions of extending the credits to Asian countries, while emphasizing that a friend in need is a friend indeed. John Winston Howard, when showing his dissociation from the policy pursued by Evans-Keating, said that Australia’s successful way out of the crisis made a statement about Australia’s dependence on Asia outdated, irrelevant and erroneous. Australia

ceased to be for Asia “a cadger asking for attention and acknowledgement” [Garry Smith, 1999, p. 195].

The coalition government also showed concern with the global problems of disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, human rights. Australia always took part in the work of the UN commissions on preservation of the environment and nuclear test ban, criticized India and Pakistan for the implemented nuclear explosions, actively looked for the mass destruction means in Iraq. John Winston Howard and other eminent persons in the ruling coalition kept repeating that Australia had never been the Asian country and would not be such a country, its cultural and political ideals were connected with the Western civilization. The new leadership’s ideas were understood by a large part of the Australian population. This was confirmed once again by the constitutional referendum on the republic of 1999, where the Australia’s inhabitants voiced their loyalty to “the great old mother” and “uncle Sam” again [Cavan Hogue, 2000, p. 141].

The events, which occurred on September 11, 2001 in New York, and subsequent explosions on Bali Island in Indonesia made the “Western” tendencies in the Australian society still stronger. Australia took an active part in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, threatened to use force in relation to the region countries supporting the terrorism, and pursued a tough anti-immigration policy approved by the majority of the country population. If the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon guidelines in determining the national identity can give rise to discussions, then the American-British area remains unchanged in the political identification of the Australians.

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