Western Australia:

Peripheral State and Indian Ocean Orientation

Dennis Rumley

Inaugural Professor of Indian Ocean Studies, University of Western Australia

Introduction

Three general propositions will be advanced in this paper:

- 1. That Western Australia (WA) possesses a distinctive political sub-culture due in part to its peripheral location and history within the Australian Federation.
- 2. That Western Australia's linkages, while strongly associated with Northeast Asia, are also strong with the Indian Ocean Region and that these latter links will strengthen in the future.
- 3. Third, Western Australia's current economic security outlook is especially favourable due to its vast minerals resources and agricultural potential. However, the nature of future development is likely to be determined in part by regional and global energy, food and water security considerations. These three issues energy security, food security and water security will become increasingly important in WA State, Australian national and also in global geopolitical terms over the next several decades.

It is concluded that, as a result of global concerns over energy and food security, that Western Australia, 'peripheral' at the creation of the colonial state of Australia, will increasingly assume a 'central' role over the next several decades.

Peripherality and politics in Western Australia

It is argued in this section of the paper that the State of Western Australia possesses a distinctive political sub-culture due in part to its peripheral location and history within the Australian Federation.

The colonial map of Australia

As in all European colonies, political boundaries were imposed by the Imperial power. In the case of the British colonists in Australia, these were often expressed in the form of straight lines and so-called "natural" boundaries along river courses or along the crests of mountain ranges.

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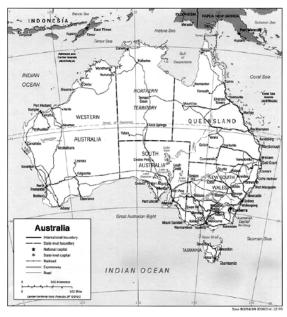


Figure 1 The Colonial Map of Australia

In the vast majority of cases, state boundaries and other internal boundaries divided pre-existing nations, tribes and communities. In short, among other things, the very delimitation of the colonial map, including that of Australia, was an act of community dislocation. In the case of Australia, however, the colonial map was imposed in the mistaken belief that indigenous peoples did not even exist, a view embodied in the idea of "terra nullius". Thus, the eastern boundary of Western Australia inevitably cuts through tribal territories along both its Northern Territory and South Australia sections (Figure 1).

The British colonial nature of the Australian political map was further reinforced in at least two additional ways. First, it was reinforced in terms of the naming of the individual States. The conservative *Victoria* stood in opposition to labour *New South Wales* with *Queens* land being the most conservative of all. These were the important States and the others, with the exception of Tasmania, were relatively unimportant since they were simply designated with geographical nomenclature — North, South and West. Second, it was reinforced in terms of the resultant settlement pattern and thus eventual spatial distribution of political power within the Australian federation. The relative unimportance of the North, South and West meant that population settlement and political power were concentrated in the south-eastern corner, just as in the mother country, England. The transplanted fragment in the form of the colonial map of Australia was now complete, and furthermore, from its inception, Australia's geopolitical orientation would thus be turned to the Pacific Ocean and away from the Indian Ocean (Rumley 1999).

The contested theory of space and peripherality

It is interesting and instructive to attempt to apply aspects of the contested theory of space and peripherality—the core-periphery model—to the Australian state. The essential core-periphery model as applied to the socio-political structure of any state postulates a set of dichotomous opposites that apply to the geographical centre (the capital city, Canberra, in this case) and the geographical periphery (the peripheral States of Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania). Thus, the model would postulate that the centre would be more likely to be national, republican, progressive, cosmopolitan and developed. The periphery, on the other hand, would be expected to be more royalist, authoritarian, conservative, parochial and monocultural (Table 1).

The Western Australian social and political culture exhibits many if not all of the peripheral characteristics listed in Table 1. For example, it is certainly relatively conservative; it is more royalist; and it is more alienated and possesses a historically inherent feeling of regionalism and 'separation' from the rest of Australia.

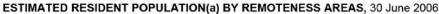
Peripherality is also evident in the distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. Of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in 2006 of 517,200 (or 2.5% of the Australian population), the largest numbers were located in New South Wales (148,200) and Queensland (146,400). However, there is a very clear association with peripherality or remoteness when Indigenous people are taken as a proportion of the State or Territory population. Indigenous populations above the national average are located in Northern Territory (31.6% of NT population), Western Australia (3.8%), Queensland (3.6%) and Tasmania (3.4%). In short, the more remote is the location, the higher the proportion of Aboriginal people (Figure 2). Aboriginal people are thus also geographically as well as socially, economically and politically peripheral.

For the non-Indigenous population, for lengthy periods throughout Australian history, the propor-

Core Periphery Central Remote National Colonial Powerful Subordinate Republican Royalist Democratic Authoritarian Progressive Conservative Dense population Low population density Cosmopolitan Parochial Multicultural Monocultural Developed Underdeveloped Non-Aboriginal Aboriginal Connected Disconnected Belonging Alienation Centralism Regionalism

Table 1 Core-Periphery Characteristics

10 Western Australia



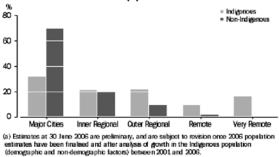


Figure 2 Aboriginality and Remoteness

tion of overseas-born of the total Australian population has been in excess of 20% and generally the largest proportion of these were from the UK and Ireland (Rumley 1999, p.159). It is well known that without significant immigration, Australia's population would decline and that the nature, size and structure of immigration has been a long-standing political issue, often surfacing at election time. In 2006, the most peripheral State, Western Australia, contained the largest proportion (30%) of overseas born people, and, by implication, has been regarded by many as the 'most British' of all the Australian States.

While Australia is notionally a Christian country, it comes as a surprise to some observers that the largest proportion of Australians (25.3%) regard themselves as Catholics. While this has been an important component of domestic political party politics it is a factor that clearly differentiates Australia from the 'mother country' where the Church of England predominates. However, when religious affiliation is taken in combination with WA peripherality and percentage overseas-born, then there have been some additionally interesting political-geographical implications. Three such implications will be briefly discussed here – the national song referendum results, the pattern of Federal voting behaviour, and the pattern of State voting behaviour in Western Australia.

The National Song Referendum

On 21 May 1977, Australian voters had a choice among four alternatives in a referendum on the national song—God Save the Queen (the British National Anthem which had also remained as Australia's National Anthem), Advance Australia Fair, Song of Australia and Waltzing Matilda. The State-by-State variability in the voting results for the May 1977 Australian National Song Referendum provide some interesting insights into the intersection of the three variables—peripherality, overseas born and religious affiliation (Figure 3).

Overall, one would expect that God Save the Queen would not fare particularly well in a Catholic country such as Australia. In fact, God Save the Queen received 18.7% of the total vote, second last only to Song of Australia (9.7%). However, there were some interesting variations by State in

State/ Territory	Enrolment							
		God Save The Queen	Advance Australia Fair	Song of Australia	Waltzing Matilda	Formal	Informal	Total
NSW	3 002 241	376 539 *15.15	1 277 853 *51.41	133 297 *5.36	697 748 *28.07	2 485 437	281 169	2 766 606
VIC	2 252 439	370 699 *20.46	728 349 *40.20	117 694 *6.50	595 010 *32.84	1 811 752	260 724	2 072 476
QLD	1 240 739	217 028 *21.22	469 278 *45.88	65 910 *6.44	270 518 *26.45	1 022 734	110 501	1 133 235
WA	682 441	122 556 *22.81	202 778 *37.73	84 232 *15.67	127 824 *23.79	537 390	76 036	613 426
SA	799 063	119 360 *17.91	160 648 *24.11	227 356 *34.12	159 011 *23.86	666 375	76 831	743 206
TAS	259 620	49 006 *22.31	92 491 *42.10	21 951 *9.99	56 252 *25.60	219 700	25 101	244 801
NT	38 209	679 *18.08	1 410 *37.55	533 *14.19	1 133 *30.17	3 755	171	3 926
ACT	120 875	1 468 *6.73	7 887 *36.14	1 863 *8.54	10 607 *48.60	21 825	373	22 198
TOTAL	8 395 627	1 257 335 *18.65	2 940 694 *43.61	652 836 *9.68	1 918 103 *28.45	6 768 968	830 906	7 599 874

^{*} Percentage of first preference votes recorded in favour of the individual songs - to formal votes.

Source: 1991 Parliamentary Handbook. Parliamentary Library.

Figure 3 Australian National Song Referendum 1977

the vote for God Save the Queen. For Western Australia, for example, given its peripherality, that it has the highest proportion of overseas born and that it is also the most 'British' of the Australian States, it is no surprise that 'God Save the Queen' fared best there (22.8%). It also fared well in the other peripheral States of Tasmania (22.3%) and *Queens* land (21.2%). Conservative *Victoria* also had an above national average vote (20.5%). The core (ACT), in contrast, had the lowest level of support (6.7%) for God Save the Queen (Figure 3).

Furthermore, feelings of peripherality, on the one hand, and nationalism and republicanism in a Catholic country such as Australia, on the other, would find clear expression in the lowest vote for 'Waltzing Matilda' in the peripheral State of Western Australia (23.8%) and the highest vote in the ACT (48.6%). As a footnote on this important issue, Advance Australia Fair, the winning song, only finally became the Australian national anthem in 1984, the same year as the national colours of green and gold were adopted.

Federal voting patterns

To a significant degree, patterns of Federal voting behaviour exhibit a generalised core-periphery variability in the sense that conservative politics is a feature of the periphery and progressive politics characterises the core. For example, often the lowest support for the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is found in the mainland periphery (Western Australia and Queensland) and the highest is invariably found in the core (ACT).

Two federal elections results - 2004 and 2010 - can used to illustrate this general tendency. For the

ELECTION 2004: the official election report and results...

House of Representatives

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TWO PARTY PREFERRED BY STATE



TWO PARTY PREFERRED BY STATE

	Liberal/National Co	alition	Australian Labor	Party		
State	Votes	%	Votes	%	Total	Swing
New South Wales	1,998,699	51.93	1,849,995	48.07	3,848,694	+0.27
Victoria	1,535,650	51.00	1,475,519	49.00	3,011,169	+3.14
Queensland	1,256,533	57.09	944,355	42.91	2,200,888	+2.23
Western Australia	607,829	55.40	489,244	44.60	1,097,073	+3.78
South Australia	511,845	54.36	429,799	45.64	941,644	+0.28
Tasmania	144,829	45.81	171,294	54.19	316,123	+3.54
Australian Capital Territory	80,238	38.46	128,388	61.54	208,626	-0.46
Northern Territory	43,507	47.85	47,408	52.15	90,915	+0.34
National	6,179,130	52.74	5,536,002	47.26	11,715,132	+1.79

Figure 4 The 2004 Federal Election Results by State and Territory

House of Representatives

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TWO PARTY PREFERRED BY STATE



TWO PARTY PREFERRED BY STATE

	Australian L Party	abor	Liberal/National Coalition				
State	Votes	%	Votes	%	Total	Swing	
New South Wales	1,958,077	48.84	2,051,241	51.16	4,009,318	-4.84	
Victoria	1,758,982	55.31	1,421,202	44.69	3,180,184	+1.04	
Queensland	1,069,504	44.86	1,314,675	55.14	2,384,179	-5.58	
Western Australia	524,861	43.59	679,140	56.41	1,204,001	-3.15	
South Australia	521,115	53.18	458,834	46.82	979,949	+0.78	
Tasmania	198,322	60.62	128,830	39.38	327,152	+4.41	
Australian Capital Territory	137,948	61.67	85,749	38.33	223,697	-1.73	
Northern Territory	47,636	50.74	46,247	49.26	93,883	-4.67	
National	6,216,445	50.12	6,185,918	49.88	12,402,363	-2.58	

Figure 5 The 2010 Federal Election Results by State and Territory

2004 election result (Figure 4), there is an appreciable difference between support for the ALP in the ACT (61.5%) and ALP support in Western Australia (44.6%) and Queensland (42.9%).

A similar voting pattern is to be found for the 2010 Federal Election results (Figure 5). One again, the highest ALP vote is found in the core (61.7%) and the lowest level of ALP support is found in the two mainland peripheral States of Western Australia (43.6%) and Queensland (44.9%).

Western Australia State voting patterns

Voting at the State level, like the Federal level is also compulsory. While there is some variability in the general pattern of Federal and State voting behaviour on the part of individuals, the nature of Dennis Rumley 13

Table 2 Western Australian State Election Results Summary 1890–2013

1890-2013 - Western Australia has had 39 Parliaments

Labor has governed in 17 of these

Labor had 4 consecutive Parliaments 1933-1943

1962-2013 - Western Australia has had 16 Parliaments

Labour has governed in 6 of these (1971, 1983, 1986, 2001, 2005)

Current Parliament (elected 9th March 2013)

Legislative Assembly (59 members):

ALP-21; Liberal-31; National-7

Legislative Council (36 members):

ALP-11; Liberal-17; National-5; Green-2; Shooters and Fishers-1

'peripheral conservatism' is consistently evident in Western Australia, especially from the 1960s (Table 2).

Overall, in the history of Western Australian electoral politics, Labor has been competitive – that is, it has governed in 17 in the 39 WA Parliaments. However, from the 1960s, Labor has only controlled 6 of the 16 Parliaments, and, in the most recent March 2013 State Election, the ALP lost 5 Legislative Assembly seats in a significant shift to the Liberal Party. In short, from a pre-existing conservative electoral environment in WA, the State has become even more conservative.

Western Australia and its Indian Ocean regional context

The second proposition to be advanced in this paper is that Western Australia's economic linkages, while strongly associated with Northeast Asia, are also strong with the Indian Ocean Region and that these latter links are likely to strengthen in the future due in part to a combination of WA's peripherality and its resource endowment.

It should be noted at the outset that, since 1987, Australia has officially enacted a "two oceans policy" in terms of security—the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Indian Ocean to the west (Rumley 1999, p.231). However, the Indian Ocean has generally been neglected in Australian Foreign Policy up until relatively recently, due in part to the geographical distribution of power within the Australian Federation. The recently-released Australian Senate Report—Importance of the Indian Ocean Rim for Australia's Foreign, Trade and Defence Policy—makes a variety of recommendations to the Australian Government designed to increase Australia's profile in the Indian Ocean rim, including investing in developing Australian understanding and awareness of the region (Commonwealth of Australia 2013).

Clearly, the 'gateway' to and from the Indian Ocean is Western Australia, and, to some degree, this has been reflected in the pattern of British settlement—that is, it literally was the 'first stop'! The economic geographical orientation of Western Australia, on the other hand, has been increasingly with Asia, especially following the British entry into the Common Market in 1973.

Three sets of Western Australian Asian linkages will be briefly examined here – first, the way in which WA is as close or closer to Asia than the rest of Australia in terms of time zones; second, Western Australia's developing linkages with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR); third, the changing structure of Western Australia's international trade links.

Time zones

From the viewpoint of orientation, Western Australia has always been more internationally outward-looking (north and west) rather than nationally inward-looking (east). It has maintained a degree of separateness and a set of economic linkages closer to Asia than Australia. Depending on the time of year and the vagaries of the daylight saving regime around Australia, Western Australia is as close or closer to Delhi than to Sydney. The non-existent or small time differences between Western Australia and China and Japan, furthermore, have facilitated enhanced business linkages.

Indian Ocean Rim and IOR-ARC

Being located on the Indian Ocean rim, Western Australia has a degree of commonality with other 'rim states' (Figure 6). While foreign policy is a Federal responsibility in Australia, it has often been argued that the WA State Government should undertake a much more proactive role in increased Indian Ocean engagement.

The Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), which was initiated in 1997 started life as an economic cooperation grouping, is now in the process of reform and will at-

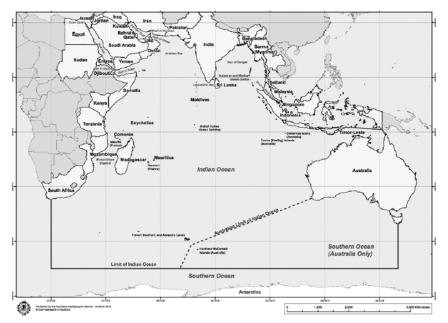


Figure 6 The Australian Government Definition of the Indian Ocean Rim

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Table 3 Membership of the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)

Full Members (20)

Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka,

South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Dialogue Partners (6)

China, Egypt, France, Japan, United Kingdom, United States

Observers (2)

Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation (IOTO), Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG)

tempt to broaden its cooperative agenda.

India is presently the Chair (until November 2013) and Australia is the Vice-Chair – there are currently 20 full members, 6 Dialogue Partners and 2 Observers (Table 3). As one of the key Dialogue Partners, Japan potentially has an extremely important role in IOR-ARC and thus in facilitating an increased sense of community and cooperation around the IOR. From a Western Australian perspective, economic and social interactions between WA and the other IO Rim states are likely to increase in future decades.

Australian and Western Australian International Trade linkages

Australian strongest trade and investment linkages have generally been with Northeast Asian states (Figure 7). The pattern of Western Australian trade, however, has been slightly different from that of Australia as a whole both in terms of direction and in terms of importance.

For Australia in 2011, the combination of China, Japan and South Korea made up more than 37% of Australia's total trade. The combination of these three Northeast Asian states plus further four Asian states – Singapore, India, Thailand and Malaysia – means that in 2011 more than 50% of Australia's total trade was with Asia (Figure 7).

For Western Australian trade, some Asian states are more important than at the national level. For example, more than 40% of WA exports go to China. In addition, India is a more important export destination for WA than for Australia as a whole (Figure 8).

In addition to India for exports, two other IOR-ARC states – Singapore and UAE – are more important for WA than for Australia as a whole. These Indian Ocean linkages are likely to strengthen in future decades, especially with India and The Gulf States, especially in relation to the energy and food exports. Furthermore, it is important to note that Western Australia, especially since the end of the Cold War period, has become increasingly important in terms of value to Australia's overall national export profile. In 2012, for example, Western Australia accounted for more than 40% of Australia's total export income. This important shift in the relative importance of WA to national exports has become increasingly linked to federal-state conflicts in Australia primarily focussed on

		Goods ^(a)	Services ^(b)	Total(c)(d)	% Share
1 China		113.6	7.4	121.1	19.9
2 Japan		68.4	4.0	72.5	11.9
3 United State	s ^(e)	38.1	16.1	54.2	8.9
4 Republic of	Korea	30.4	2.2	32.7	5.4
5 Singapore		20.5	7.1	27.7	4.6
6 United Kingo	iom	14.3	8.7	23.0	3.8
7 New Zealand	I	15.3	6.3	21.6	3.5
8 India		17.5	2.9	20.3	3.3
9 Thailand		15.2	3.3	18.5	3.0
10 Malaysia		13.1	3.0	16.0	2.6
Total two-way	trade ^(b)	499.1	109.1	608.2	100.0
	APEC ^(e)	367.7	63.9	431.6	71.0
of which:	ASEAN10	68.4	19.9	88.4	14.5
	EU27 ^(c)	60.0	21.3	81.4	13.4
	OECD(c)(e)	225.9	55.0	280.9	46.2

Figure 7 Australia's Major Trading Partners 2011

Western Australia's major export destinations, 2011:			Western Australia's major import sources, 2011:			
	A\$m	% Share		A\$m	% Share	
China	52,081	43.2	Singapore	3,777	12.4	
Japan	22,596	18.7	United States	3,449	11.3	
Republic of Korea	10,415	8.6	China	3,435	11.2	
India	5,461	4.5	Japan	3,026	9.9	
United Kingdom	4,608	3.8	United Arab Emirates	2,299	7.5	

Figure 8 Western Australian Trade 2011

the national distribution of taxes and revenues.

The future – energy, food and water security

The nature of future WA development is likely to be determined in part by regional and global energy, food and water security considerations. These three issues—energy security, food security and water security—will become increasingly important in WA State, Australian national and also in global geopolitical terms over the next several decades.

Energy Security

Energy dependency is a feature of 15 energy-import dependent states around the world, including Japan, India and Singapore (Rumley 2013, p.50). However, energy dependency is only one element that contributes to overall energy insecurity (Rumley and Chaturvedi 2005).

Due to its enormous energy resources, Western Australia is likely to figure in the future global geopolitics of energy security and this is already occurring to a significant degree with regard to the huge natural gas deposit developments off the northwest coast of WA. It will also occur over the next decade and beyond due to the significant uranium deposits located within Western Austra-

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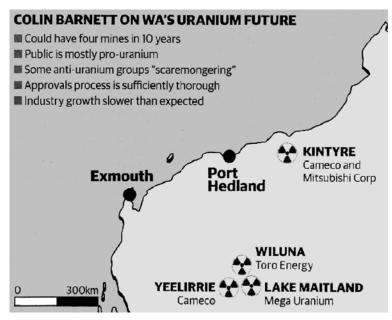


Figure 9 Proposed Uranium Mines in Western Australia

lia. WA does not yet have a uranium mine, but in the next decade is likely to be exporting uranium to India, among other energy-deficient states.

In December 2012, the Western Australian Premier, Colin Barnett, announced that, by 2023, Western Australia would have no less than four uranium mines—Kintyre (owned and run by Cameco and Mitsubishi), Lake Maitland (Mega Uranium), Wiluna (Toro Energy) and Yeelirie (Cameco) (Figure 9). However, what will actually occur not only will depend on Federal Government project approvals, but also on the global price of uranium. One company—Cameco—has since decided to delay uranium mining at its Kintyre deposit due to the uranium price (Sas 2013). However, the Federal Government April 2013 environmental approval of Toro Energy's proposed Wiluna mine has meant that it will likely commence production as WA's first uranium mine towards the end of 2015.

It is a matter for some conjecture as to whether the controversial issue of a large-scale nuclear waste facility re-enters the debate in Australia once uranium mining commences for the first time in WA.

Food Security

Food security has become an important moral, economic and political issue in Australia in the last few years. It has been suggested that a global food crisis associated with increased food insecurity became evident in 2011 when the UN Food Price Index reached an all-time high (Rumley 2013, p.70). From a global perspective, increasingly important impacts of climate change have had some

impact upon food productivity. This, in turn has had an impact upon food prices. Coupled with global population increases and increasing standard of living expectations, this has resulted in the question of food security becoming of increasing global importance.

Clearly, there are many variables involved here – two important ones are:

- the degree to which countries can actually produce enough food to feed their populations (food availability)
- (ii) the proportion of household income actually spent on food (food affordability).

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) provides considerable data on these two issues including information on net food imports/exports for cereals and data on % income spent on this (Figure 10). Graphing availability (on the vertical axis) against affordability (on the horizontal axis) yields some very interesting groups of states within different food insecurity categories (FAO 2011). The top right hand quadrant of Figure 10 locates many states in Africa, around the Indian Ocean and elsewhere that have a high degree of food insecurity—that is, high net imports (low availability) and food as a high proportion of household expenditure (low affordability). Australia is located in the lower left hand quadrant of the graph, indicating a relatively high degree of food security (high availability and high affordability). Japan, on the other hand, has high affordability and relatively low availability (Figure 10).

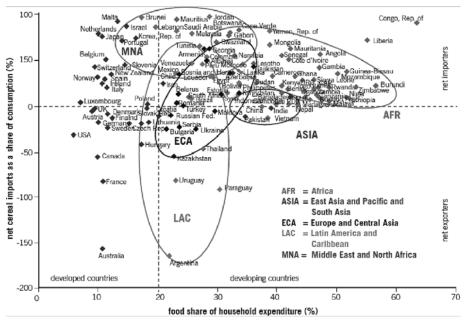


Figure 10 Global Food Security Indicators 2011

As has been argued, Australia's high level of food security raises the possibility of it becoming a "food superpower" if current food exports can be quadrupled to feed 200 million people (Kitney 2013). Food insecure states in Asia, Africa and the Middle East would be the principal markets for such increased food production. This would include many food insecure states around the Indian Ocean Rim.

Water Security

Climate change has been associated with a significant shift in the patterns of rainfall over the past 40 years, especially evident in the southwest of Western Australia, where most people in the State actually live. For example, the total net inflow to Perth dams has been in steady decline since 1974, and, coupled with a growing population, has necessitated the construction of desalination plants to meet water demand. Clearly, in any scenario involving increasing food production, then the southwest of WA may not be important compared to the tropical north where water is in relative abundance and where population is relatively sparse. Indeed, it is in northern Western Australia, where the combination of water, energy and minerals abundance and agricultural potential, that WA is likely to make the State become increasingly central and less peripheral in future decades.

Conclusion

In a speech in Melbourne in May 2012, the then Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, stated that, "Australia must be ready to act as the food bowl of Asia". The idea of Australia being a "food bowl" appeared to grow in importance in the media and political circles during the course of 2012. Naturally, in order for food to be grown, there needs to be plenty of water and good soil. The idea has thus emerged of a "Top End Food Bowl" that would stretch from Townsville in Queensland to Broome in WA. This is yet another indication that, in terms of energy, food and water security, Australia's periphery over the next several decades is in the process of becoming the centre.

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