Reassessing the ANZUS Alliance: 
Strategy and Diplomacy between 
Australia, New Zealand and the United 
States, 1945-1956

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Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Andrew Kelly
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Abstract

This thesis critically analyses the development of Australian-New Zealand-American relations from the end of World War II in late 1945 to the end of the 1956 Suez Crisis. Surprisingly the current literature does not demonstrate the magnitude of problems and disagreements that occurred in the trilateral relationship, even after these countries concluded the 1951 ANZUS Treaty. This is at least partly attributable to the tendency in the existing literature to draw on documentary source materials of only one (or at best, two) of the ANZUS signatories. This thesis, in contrast, makes extensive use of Australian, New Zealand, and US archival materials. This approach has resulted in two broad conclusions, neither of which is given due consideration by the existing literature. Firstly, Australia and (particularly) New Zealand fretted about US leadership in the Pacific and what this meant for Britain’s future in the region. Secondly, the United States did not consult closely with its new partners (albeit junior partners) in the Pacific until at least the mid-1950s. This analysis reveals that US policymakers were not only disinclined to share leadership with Australia and New Zealand in the Asia-Pacific, but were in fact unwilling to consult on matters both great and small until at least the mid-1950s. It also reveals that the trans-Tasman countries struggled to cooperate closely, which was mainly due to the difficulties associated with balancing close ties with both the United States and Britain.
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INTRODUCTION

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Australian Prime Minister John Curtin signalled the future of Australian diplomacy and strategy. “Without any inhibitions of any kind,” he declared, “I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.”¹ While not going as far as suggesting a closer US relationship would come at the expense of relations with Britain, New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser made similar comments about the importance of the United States to the future conduct of his country’s diplomacy. “New Zealand realises,” he said, “that the security and future development of the Pacific can only be satisfactorily achieved in co-operation with the United States.”² Britain’s self-ruling Dominions in the South Pacific had come to the understanding that the United States had replaced Britain as the predominant power in the Pacific. US officials agreed. The Pearl Harbour attack had utterly discredited the

¹ David Day, “27th December 1941: Prime Minister Curtin’s New Year Message, Australia Looks to America,” in Turning Points in Australian History, Joseph M. Siracusa and David G. Coleman eds. (University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 129-142.

pre-war isolationist movement, and had set the United States on a path toward becoming a global superpower.\(^3\) Nowhere was this more evident than in the Pacific, where the United States maintained an almost complete monopoly of power. As US Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal put it in April 1945, “all discussions of world peace” rested on the assumption that “the United States [would] have the major responsibility for the Pacific.”\(^4\)

Once Japan had formally surrendered and World War II drew to a close, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States each confronted questions concerning the transfer of leadership from Britain to the United States. Superficial appearances notwithstanding, their responses were neither straightforward nor smooth. In the immediate post-war period, American policymakers rarely consulted with Australia and New Zealand in addressing mutual strategic issues. This trend slowly began to change by the early to mid-1950s, yet policymakers in Washington were still unwilling to award their Australian and New Zealand counterparts a significant voice in shaping regional strategies. This caused significant discord in the relationship, especially on issues such as the occupation of Japan, conclusion of a mutual defence treaty, and responses to crises in Indochina, the Taiwan Straits and the Suez Canal.

US disinclination to consult closely with Australia and New Zealand might have impelled a closer trans-Tasman relationship, yet policymakers in Canberra and Wellington struggled to cooperate. This was due in some measure to mutual distrust, but it also stemmed from trans-Tasman differences over Britain’s proper role in the post-war Pacific and Middle East.

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\(^3\) See, for example, David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt’s America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Ivan R. Dee, 2001).

Canberra continued to cooperate and consult closely with London, yet the Anglo-American power shift caused Australian diplomats to pursue actively a much closer relationship with the United States in order to meet their own security requirements. Wellington similarly continued to consult closely with London, yet New Zealand diplomats were ambivalent about the transfer of power from Britain to the United States. Policymakers in Wellington recognised the need for a closer security relationship with the United States, yet concerns remained over Washington’s capacity to avoid an economic collapse as well as maintain its hegemony in the Pacific. These policymakers were also concerned about the US possession of the atomic bomb and the catastrophic consequences involved in using these weapons. New Zealand remained sceptical of US leadership and tried, wherever possible, to align its policies with Britain. In short, while both countries maintained close British ties, active Australian efforts to pursue closer US-Australian strategic cooperation—often at the expense of cooperation within the British Commonwealth—caused significant discord in the trans-Tasman relationship. The Anglo-American rift that developed during the early to mid-1950s—arising initially out of different views over the question of recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and then deepening in the wake of crises in Indochina, the Taiwan Straits and Suez Canal—further exposed trans-Tasman differences over whether or not to prioritize US or British policies.

Focusing on US-Australian-New Zealand efforts at recalibrating their relationships in the wake of World War II, this thesis argues that foreign policy disagreements between these countries stemmed from Britain’s role in the post-war Pacific and Middle East as well as the way in which each country handled the United States taking a leading role in the trilateral relationship. The first chapter examines immediate post-war relations concerning developments in the Pacific theatre between 1945 and 1948. It demonstrates that the United States was intent on establishing its dominance in the Pacific, and did not give much consideration to Australian and New Zealand concerns. It also demonstrates that Australia and
New Zealand initially struggled to adjust to American dominance over the Japanese Occupation and the control of key islands in the South Pacific. Moreover, through examining Australian-New Zealand-British discussions over defence arrangements in Southeast Asia and the British nuclear weapons program, this chapter also suggests that Australia and New Zealand were not yet ready to abandon entirely their close political ties to Britain in the face of US preponderance.

The second chapter examines contrasting views surrounding the conclusion of the 1951 ANZUS Treaty. The United States only seriously considered signing a mutual defence treaty with Australia and New Zealand after the outbreak of the Korean War and a subsequent need to secure quick trans-Tasman support for a Japanese Peace Treaty. Australia, in contrast, had always wanted as binding a commitment as possible that was similar in scope to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). New Zealand preferred a Presidential Declaration that outlined US preparedness to defend Australia and New Zealand if attacked. Even then, a defence arrangement with the United States was favourable insofar as it allowed New Zealand to continue its military commitments to the British cause in the Middle East. This chapter argues that ANZUS negotiations demonstrated the different motives of each signatory to conclude a mutual defence treaty. The treaty also served different purposes for each country. These differences stemmed from the way in which each country used ANZUS to adjust to the post-war Anglo-American transfer of power in the Pacific.

The third chapter examines post-treaty issues and trilateral responses to the 1954 Indochina Crisis. By examining trilateral views concerning the ANZUS machinery, the possibility of British membership and potential treaty replacements for defending Southeast Asia, this chapter argues that the ANZUS powers remained divided about the way in which the United States should adopt a leading role and where, if at all, Britain might be involved. This chapter also argues that the Australian and New Zealand response to this crisis demonstrated that the
Tasman countries were not prepared to act unreservedly alongside an American-led multilateral intervention plan in Southeast Asia without British participation.

The fourth chapter examines the question of recognition of China and the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. While all countries shared similar ideological views that tended to oppose awarding recognition to the PRC, the first section of this chapter suggests that Australia and New Zealand were more willing to reconsider recognition as a means to prevent future Chinese aggression. It was also a means to align their policies with Britain, which had already extended recognition to the PRC despite US protestations. In the context of trilateral views toward PRC recognition, the second section provides the first trilateral account of Australian, New Zealand and American responses to the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. While the Eisenhower Administration consulted more closely than the Truman Administration did with Australia and New Zealand during this crisis, the Tasman countries generally supported the British position and were extremely reluctant to commit to the US plan of defending the offshore islands. Australia and New Zealand also explored the idea of extending diplomatic recognition to the PRC in the hope that it would mitigate hostilities in the Taiwan Straits. On these issues, this chapter argues that divergent policies between the ANZUS powers largely stemmed from Anglo-American differences over the most appropriate way in which to contain a Communist government on mainland China. Moreover, as Australia and New Zealand ultimately avoided publicly rejecting the US position on China due to concerns it would compromise their security relationship with the United States, it exposes clear limits to unequivocal Australian and New Zealand support for either US or British policies.

The fifth chapter examines Australian, New Zealand and US responses to the 1956 Suez Crisis. While President Dwight Eisenhower condemned Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser’s nationalisation of the Canal and wanted it to remain under international control, he hoped to achieve this through peaceful means. Australia and New Zealand, which held similar views
throughout the crisis, instead supported the British decision to retake the Suez Canal by force, even though many diplomats were privately horrified by this tactic. These responses provide an interesting insight into the contrasting views over Britain’s post-war role in world affairs. Moreover, it demonstrates a turning point in alliance diplomacy in Canberra and Wellington. By 1956, five years after the conclusion of ANZUS, Australia and New Zealand were not prepared to defer to US leadership when vital British interests were at stake.

**The Historiographies of the ANZUS Powers**

The most noticeable historiographical issue is the lack of a balanced ANZUS history that properly considers the perspectives of all three alliance partners, especially in relation to the transfer of leadership from Britain to the United States and the impact this transition had on each country’s foreign and defence policies. In other words, the literature is largely split into respective Australian, New Zealand and American diplomatic histories. This section examines these sub-fields individually and outlines how this thesis’s trilateral approach addresses some of the major gaps in the current literature.

*Australian Historiography of Early Cold War Foreign Policy*

In the context of examining the early stages of the ANZUS relationship, most Australian historians and commentators have focused on the Australian-American relations and the challenges Canberra faced in balancing closer ties with Washington alongside traditional ties with London. Yet despite the clear significance Australian policymakers attached to building close ties with the United States, the relationship was originally slow to receive the scholarly attention it deserved. Most early commentators were Australian diplomats, who tended to write descriptively about Australian policies and its relationship with the United States rather than
analytically about its intricacies and implications.⁵ Reflecting this scholarly oversight was the inattention, until the 1960s, of Australian universities to Australian foreign policy. This was at least partly because Australia’s fledgling Department of External Affairs—which was itself a “late starter” and only became a separate government division in 1935—had not yet established its own distinct character and traditions until the late 1940s and early 1950s. For Joan Beaumont, this culminated in something of a “Cinderella story” in the historiography of Australian foreign policy.⁶ Its study was originally neglected and often seen as boring and one dimensional, but evolved to become a captivating field of inquiry.

After Australian participation in the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s, Australian foreign policy began to receive greater historical examination. This early literature suggests that Australia, constantly fearing that it was vulnerable to attack after the Japanese attacks on Darwin and Sydney Harbour in 1942, acted as little more than Washington’s puppet to secure protection. For Alan Renouf, former Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Australian Ambassador in Washington during the mid to late 1970s, Australia gained a reputation of being an “American client state.” “There has been little innovation or originality in Australia’s


attitudes abroad,” Renouf remarked, “like a child, Australia has shown a marked inclination to ‘stay with mother,’ first Britain and then the United States.”

These views were not uncommon. In what he called the “web of dependence,” Joseph Camilleri, a senior political scientist at La Trobe University, argued that Australia’s “close association with the United States severely restricted its diplomatic freedom.” According to Camilleri, Australia had no independent voice and focused on its relationship with the United States at the expense of its own regional objectives. Because of the enormous disparity in economic and military power, the Australian-American relationship “made nonsense of any notion of diplomatic equality.” Moreover, Camilleri suggested that there was a “readiness of Australian governments to comply with American policies and perceptions, often with little or no thought to their consequences for Australia or the region.”

As relevant Australian and American archival records were opened during the 1980s, historians had greater evidence to challenge previous criticisms of the Australian-American relationship. However, these newer studies did not go as far to suggest that there was not a clear link between Australian dependency and support for US policies. Although these records demonstrated that the Australian-American relationship was more complex than first believed and was full of ambivalences, historians such as Glen St. John Barclay and Coral Bell still

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described the relationship as “asymmetrical” and that they were “never true allies.”

For Bell, Australian dependency on the United States had a substantial impact on the degree to which policies were similar or different to Washington. It was not always consistent—Bell, in fact, suggests the level of Australian dependency was a series of “rolling foothills”—but argues that such dependency connotes “a relationship humiliatingly thrust upon the weak, and one that the dependent nation must be anxious to slough off.”

In the wake of widespread reconsiderations of Australia’s allegiance to the United States in the early 2000s, a strong revisionist movement emerged that challenged directly Canberra’s history of subordination to Washington. Revisionist critics were particularly outspoken about the early Cold War, and sought to rectify the simplicity to which the literature dealt with Australia’s foreign relations during the period. Some historians, such as Joseph Siracusa and David Coleman, began questioning the existing literature’s emphasis on Australian subservience to the United States. Instead, Siracusa and Coleman argued that there was little evidence for such a claim when examining the Australian and American archival records.

Joan Beaumont made similar observations. She argued that Australian foreign policy during the 1950s actually “gained considerable maturity, and its capacity to act independently grew with the professionalism of its diplomatic service.” This contrasted directly to the “popular mythology,” particularly among Left-wing historians, that the 1950s was a “nadir of foreign-policy dependency.” According to Beaumont, this “pervasive” understanding was “narrowed


10 Bell, *Dependent Ally*, 1-4.

to alliance relationships with “great and powerful friends,” and as far as its relationship with Washington was concerned, Australian foreign policy was little more than “fawning at the White House.” She rejects this historical paradigm, describing it as “grossly simplistic.”

In recent years, support for these characterisations of the Australian-American relationship has come largely through biographies of some of the most influential figures in the Department of External Affairs. These biographies demonstrate that views within the Department were not always in accordance with US policies or interests, nor were Australian diplomats always in agreement amongst themselves over Australia’s foreign policy objectives. In so doing, these works give credence to the notion that Australian foreign affairs during the 1950s were not only complex, but policies were considered to strategic calculations of its own interests. In 2006, Peter Edwards wrote the first biography of Department Secretary Arthur Tange, a long-time servant of Australian foreign affairs and one of the Department’s most important advisers. In 2010 David Lowe followed suit and wrote the most comprehensive political biography to date of Percy Spender, Australian Minister of External Affairs (1949-1951) and Australian Ambassador in Washington (1951-1958). For Lowe, Spender was “one of Australia’s most internationally-minded politicians.” “[Spender’s] independent thinking about Australia’s future and the rise of the United States ensured political prominence,” according to Lowe, even with a “maverick status that was hard to throw off.” These studies challenge the idea that Australian post-war foreign policy was straight-forward and revolved entirely around Canberra’s relationship with Washington.


Even Richard Casey—Australia’s second longest serving Foreign Minister who sparked considerable historical interest throughout the preceding decades—has received further re-examination in his Ministerial role. Drawing on papers from an Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum, the 2012 edited volume *R.G. Casey* argues that Casey’s contribution to Australian diplomacy during the 1950s was extensive, multifaceted, and perhaps most importantly, addressed Australia’s regional objectives as well its relationship with the United States. For James Cotton, Casey’s legacy is tied almost inextricably to his independent outlook even if it was not compatible to US policies and interests. Cotton reflects that Casey’s “policy advocacy while Minister for External Affairs suggests a more specifically Australian outlook that was cognisant of the power realities of the immediate region. More particularly, national outlook was consistent, in his opinion, with instances of disagreement with the United States.”¹⁵

Overall, recent scholarly developments on Australian foreign policy during the early Cold War have shifted away from the idea of subservience to the United States. Instead, they focus on individuals and offer a more detailed understanding of the intricacies and complexities present in the Department of External Affairs, Prime Ministers Department and the Department of Defence in the post-war years. Similarly, recent works also suggest that one of Australia’s primary post-war difficulties was to balance its close ties to Britain and the United States alongside efforts to assert a more independent foreign policy agenda. As Christine de Matos pointed out in 2006, the challenge for Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley and External

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Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt in the late 1940s was to “juggle both a more independent role within the Commonwealth without alienating Britain and the United States.”

This thesis aims to expand upon these recent examinations by examining Australian foreign policy as part of a balanced trilateral analysis of the ANZUS relationship. Put another way, it will draw upon New Zealand and American archival sources largely overlooked by Australian historians to provide a new understanding of how Australian diplomats worked with the other ANZUS partners and how they were perceived in Wellington and Washington. It will also provide a greater focus on New Zealand’s role and trans-Tasman relations in the conduct of post-war Australian foreign policy. Outside of objections to the Japanese Peace Treaty and ANZUS negotiations, very few Australian historians have included New Zealand in the development of the ANZUS relationship throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. In building upon recent developments towards understanding the complexities of Australian foreign policy in the early Cold War, this thesis includes trans-Tasman relations as a major focal point. This will be explained in greater detail later in this chapter.

New Zealand Historiography of Early Cold War Foreign Policy

While there have been fewer works that focus on New Zealand’s post-war foreign relations when compared to Australia, examinations into New Zealand foreign policy during the early Cold War note several similar features to their Australian counterparts. These studies acknowledge New Zealand’s small-power status and geographic isolation from most of the world as key features that shaped its post-war foreign policy. Some historians, such as Christopher Pugsley and Malcolm Templeton, focus on the development of New Zealand

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foreign policy in key regions such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East in an effort to explain the New Zealand response to critical international developments including the 1956 Suez Crisis and the Vietnam War.¹⁷

There are two major overarching themes in historical works on New Zealand foreign policy. The first is that Wellington’s view of its role in the world was fundamentally shaped by its place in the British Commonwealth. This was because, in New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner in London Frank Corner’s own words, “New Zealand at heart [had] always been content with a ‘colonial’ position and had readily accepted the leadership of Britain.” Similarly, he suggested in 1954 that “if New Zealand entered the American orbit … this would be a great pity.”¹⁸ Wellington, in short, wanted US protection but was reluctant to align itself too closely with Washington lest it damage relations with London. As Australian National University historian T. B. Millar first concluded derisively in 1968, New Zealand was more inclined to “cling closer than did Australia to the skirts of Mother England.” As part of its clinging, “New Zealand have thus from the beginning looked at the world through different eyes, from an increasingly different viewpoint than Australians, and have seen as increasingly different world.”¹⁹ More recent historical works, such as those written by David Capie and Philippa Mein Smith, reach similar conclusions about New Zealand’s close British connections.²⁰


¹⁹ T.B. Millar, Australia’s Foreign Policy (Angus & Robertson, 1968), 182.

The second major theme in the historiography of New Zealand’s post-war foreign policy is a focus on New Zealand efforts to establish an independent voice in international affairs. In W. David McIntyre’s estimation, there was little notion of New Zealand acting subserviently to either Washington or London. “From the earliest days,” McIntyre argues, “New Zealand began to assert an independent voice in international affairs and not simply in empire affairs.” McIntyre goes on to write:

Although some of the trappings of British sovereignty had yet to be severed and dependence on great power protection continued for forty years, New Zealand expressed a new assertiveness and claimed a distinctive voice … In the immediate post-war years [New Zealand’s] external relations began to be more complex … The United States was the predominant power of the Pacific and, therefore, the ultimate backstop of New Zealand’s security. But, whereas New Zealand had long had a voice in Commonwealth affairs, the United States was a more aloof and unpredictable ally.21

Malcolm McKinnon reached similar conclusions about New Zealand’s post-war relations. In the aptly named *Independence and Foreign Policy*, McKinnon suggested that ANZUS marked New Zealand’s “independent” status as a sovereign state. New Zealand chose to conclude a defence treaty outside of the Commonwealth in order to protect itself, even if “the United States did not fit neatly” into New Zealand’s British world.22 It is worth noting that other historians


have traced New Zealand’s independent approach to foreign policy even earlier than the post-war period. In 2011, Gerald Chaudron described New Zealand’s activities in the early stages of the League of Nations as the beginning of an independent N.Z. foreign policy.\textsuperscript{23}

New Zealand has been generally accredited as an independent yet loyal Commonwealth power in the early post-war period. While some historians have criticized Australia harshly for its subservience to the United States, New Zealand historians have commended diplomats in Wellington for standing by its British ties, pursuing a more independent foreign policy and remaining sceptical of US intentions. Moreover—and, again, in direct contrast to the Australian historiography before the early 2000s—there was clear depth and complexity to its foreign relations. McIntyre was not alone in this assessment. In the context of the occupation and post-war treatment of Japan, Ann Trotter described New Zealand’s early Cold War foreign policy as “developing a new depth and complexity.” Although looking through New Zealand eyes is, for Trotter, “looking at events through the least significant player … the New Zealanders were very independently minded observers … [and] made sharp criticisms from this position.”\textsuperscript{24}

This thesis will take no issue with the ideas that New Zealand’s close British ties or efforts to establish an independent voice fundamentally shaped its relations with the ANZUS powers and the wider world. It will, however, address other major gaps within the New Zealand scholarship. The first gap relates to little explanation in the current literature as to why New Zealand clashed with Australia on a myriad of policy issues in the early Cold War despite shared political interests, geographical positions and close social ties. The second gap relates primarily to a heavy focus in New Zealand on the study of relations during the Truman Administration (1945-1953) at the expense of other periods. As James Waite described the state of the field in


\textsuperscript{24} Trotter, \textit{New Zealand and Japan}, 3-5.
2006, “historians have concentrated on New Zealand’s role in the Cold War during the Truman years … in contrast, historians have given less thought to New Zealand’s role in the maturing Cold War after 1953.”

Through focusing more closely on trans-Tasman relations as well as extending the analysis beyond the end of the Truman Administration, this thesis will provide new conclusions about the extent of New Zealand’s close British ties in the conduct of its foreign policy as well as the post-war complexities involved in dealing with the Australians.

American Historiography of Early Cold War Foreign Policy

In regards to the US literature, a wide breadth of historical work already exists that extensively analyses almost all aspects of American foreign policy under the first two post-war US Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. These studies include debates surrounding the attribution of responsibility for the development of the Cold War, the emergence and implementation of global containment strategies, examinations into key individuals, and explaining how post-war US foreign policy shaped the international system for the duration of the 20th century and beyond.

While it is important to acknowledge that these sub-fields of


historical scholarship exist, it would far exceed the scope of this thesis to attempt to meaningfully offer new insights about these debates and issues.

Instead, this thesis aims to address significant gaps in relation to the historical coverage of the early post-war American relationship with Australia and New Zealand. Despite some minor exceptions, there is simply no substantial body of American scholarship that investigates American relations with Australia and New Zealand during the early Cold War. During this period, Australia and New Zealand played minor roles in the eyes of US strategists even though the United States played a pivotal role in Australian and New Zealand strategies. For this reason, Joseph Siracusa and David Coleman concluded that “Australian scholars have been talking and writing about the United States far more than American scholars have been talking and writing about Australia.” The same conclusion is certainly true for New Zealand.

This, however, is a glaring oversight, especially because recent historians have begun to recognise the role small powers played during the Cold War and the unique historical insights available from such studies. For instance, not only do examinations into US relations with small overlooked powers offer new insightful conclusions about how Washington managed its alliances as part of the broader the East-West struggle, but they also provide a new means to assess US diplomatic and strategic efforts to use these small powers effectively to meet American global objectives. To this end, Tony Smith used the term “pericentrism” to describe

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28 Siracusa and Coleman, *Australia Looks to America*, 185.
the role of junior members of Cold War alliances who “tried to block, moderate, and end the epic contest” but also “played a key role in expanding, intensifying, and prolonging the struggle between East and West.”

Fitting neatly within Smith’s “pericentric” framework, Australia’s and New Zealand’s small but not insignificant role in US foreign policy during the early Cold War is certainly one area that requires further historical examination.

Over the past several decades there have been only two major studies that have given a balanced analysis of the policies, issues and positions of all the ANZUS partners in order to reassess the nature and development of the trilateral relationship: Trevor Reese’s dated yet still influential book *Australia, New Zealand and the United States* and W. David McIntyre’s *Background to the Anzus Pact*. Even then, these works have their own specific limitations. Reese’s book was published well before the availability of most archival resources. McIntyre was able to draw upon archival resources from each country yet his main analysis ends with the conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. He does include post-treaty issues and developments in Southeast Asia in the concluding section of his book, yet these topics are treated as an aftermath rather than the continuation of similar problems that existed in the lead up to the conclusion of the treaty. Since then, there has been no extensive archival-based study on all three ANZUS powers that also extends into the mid-1950s. One of the primary aims of this thesis is to address this oversight.

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Chapter Outline

This thesis contains five chapters that examine why the ANZUS powers disagreed so often in the early Cold War. Chapter One explores mutual post-war security issues between Australia, New Zealand and the United States in the Pacific theatre from 1945 to 1948. It examines initial post-war defence plans, contestation over the control of key Pacific Island bases, and Australian and New Zealand discontent over US dominance of the Allied Council, the Far Eastern Commission, and revisions to US occupation policies in Japan. Adding to the existing literature, this chapter’s trilateral approach demonstrates that by early 1949 differing post-war defence and foreign policy objectives left the Australian-New Zealand-US relationship on uncommon ground and not on any foundation for closer co-operation through a regional defence arrangement. Moreover, through examining Australian-New Zealand-British discussions over defence arrangements in Southeast Asia and the British nuclear weapons program, this chapter also suggests that Australia and New Zealand were not yet ready to abandon entirely their close political ties to Britain in the face of US preponderance. These issues considered, this chapter will argue that major foreign policy disagreements between the

ANZUS powers from 1945 to 1948 stemmed from the way in which they initially handled US preponderance in the Pacific and adjusted to a fleeting British presence in the region.

Chapter Two examines trilateral views toward the negotiation and conclusion of the 1951 ANZUS Treaty. It explores the international developments that made concluding a formal defence treaty more practical. It also critically analyses the type of commitment Australia, New Zealand and the United States were willing to conclude with one another. Finally, it details the ANZUS Treaty negotiations in early 1951 and exposes US military reservations about the desired scope of the treaty as well as the difficulties passing it through the US Senate before its formal conclusion in September 1951. In this way, this chapter critiques claims such as Panagiotis Dimitrakis’s that the treaty’s main shortcomings related to a lack of a “command structure and the commitment of its principal member, the United States.”

Instead, it suggests the conclusion that the ANZUS Treaty largely overshadowed the consistent disagreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States about mutual security issues and the overall nature of the relationship. While the United States did indeed only seriously consider signing such a treaty after the outbreak of the Korean War and a subsequent need to secure quick trans-Tasman support for a Japanese Peace Treaty, Australia had always wanted as binding a commitment as possible that was similar in scope to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). New Zealand preferably wanted a Presidential Declaration that outlined the United States was prepared to defend Australia and New Zealand

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if attacked. Even then, a defence arrangement with the United States was favourable to New Zealand insofar as it allowed it to continue its military commitments to the British cause in the Middle East. In the context of the post-war trilateral relationship, these differences support the idea that Australia, New Zealand and the United States disagreed over ANZUS primarily due to contrasting views about accepting the United States as the principal treaty member as well as what the treaty represented with regards to Britain. Canberra and Washington accepted that through ANZUS the United States would take the leading role in the relationship, whereas Wellington was reluctant to follow the American line. Policymakers in Wellington also believed that ANZUS would meet its security concerns in its own region, and in turn, allowed New Zealand to defend British interests in the Middle East.

Chapter Three examines relations between the ANZUS powers in the aftermath of the treaty’s conclusion from 1952 to 1954. It contains two sections. The first section examines post-treaty issues including ANZUS’s consultation machinery, the possibility of British membership, and potential replacements such as the Five Power Staff Agency. It also explores changes in US national security strategies when Dwight Eisenhower replaced Truman as US President and how these changes affected ANZUS relations. An examination into these issues suggests that the ANZUS powers were still divided about the way in which the United States would take a leading role in this relationship and where, if at all, Britain might play an intimate role in this partnership.

The second section of this chapter examines responses to the 1954 Indochina Crisis. This section will argue that through consulting with Australia and New Zealand on the plan for multilateral intervention, the United States (intentionally or otherwise) enabled these countries to play a more influential role in shaping US strategy. During this crisis, US consultation with Australia and New Zealand not only aimed to gather support for the US plan but also aimed to get Canberra and Wellington to convince London to participate. Historians such as Roberto
Rabel, Peter Edwards and Fredrik Logevall have all pointed out that British participation was a crucial element in each country’s response, yet these works overlook how Britain’s response impacted the ANZUS relationship. This chapter argues that the Australian and New Zealand response (particularly the latter) demonstrated that the Tasman powers were not prepared to act unreservedly alongside the United States in Southeast Asia without British participation. From an American perspective, it also highlights that the United States saw one of Australia’s and New Zealand’s primary roles in the ANZUS partnership as acting to influence British policy to suit US interests during times of crisis.

Chapter Four examines Australian, New Zealand and American views toward recognising the People’s Republic of China (PRC) between 1949 and 1954 as well as respective responses to the 1954-1955 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. The first section of this chapter focuses on the issue of PRC recognition between 1949 and 1954. While all countries shared similar ideological views that tended to oppose awarding recognition to mainland China, this section suggests that Australia and New Zealand were more willing to reconsider recognition as a means to prevent

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future Chinese aggression and reach greater policy solidarity with Britain. In the second section, this chapter provides the first trilateral account of Australian, New Zealand and American responses to the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. While the Eisenhower Administration consulted more closely with Australia and New Zealand during this crisis, the Tasman powers generally supported the British position and were extremely reluctant to commit to the US plan of defending the offshore islands. Overall, this chapter suggests that


divergent policies between the ANZUS powers on China largely stemmed from tensions in the Anglo-American relationship about extending diplomatic recognition to Beijing. Tensions were also caused by concerns in Australia and New Zealand that the Eisenhower Administration’s brinkmanship-like approach to rebuffing Chinese aggression could spark a major war. Moreover, despite trans-Tasman concerns about the US approach to China and growing support for British views, Australia and New Zealand were unprepared to risk isolating themselves from the United States and compromise the US commitment to the ANZUS Treaty. This demonstrates that there were clear limits to unequivocal Australian and New Zealand support for either US or British policies in regards to China and the Taiwan Straits Crisis.

The final chapter focuses on Australian, New Zealand and American views toward defending the Middle East and responding to the 1956 Suez Crisis. In a similar format to the previous chapter, Chapter Five also contains two sections. The first section examines Australian, New Zealand and American security interests in the region prior to the Suez Crisis. While Australia was originally committed to the defence of the Middle East and agreed in principle to the formation of a Middle East Command in the early 1950s, by the middle of the decade Australian defence and strategic policy centred increasingly away from the Middle East and toward the Asia-Pacific. New Zealand followed a similar trajectory, except Wellington remained more committed to the defence of the Middle East and strongly supported British dominance in the region.37 Across the Pacific, US post-war interests in the region increased gradually. By the mid-1950s, the United States had two primary interests in the region: defending the Middle East from Soviet control, and maintaining a free flow of resources through the region to the West. The second section provides the first extensive trilateral

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37 Templeton, Ties of Blood and Empire, 1-48.
examination into Australian, New Zealand and American responses to Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the Anglo-French Israeli invasion in mid to late 1956. While President Eisenhower condemned Nasser’s actions and wanted the Suez Canal to remain under international control, he hoped to achieve this through peaceful means. Holding similar views, Australia and New Zealand instead supported the British decision to retake the Suez Canal by force, even though many diplomats were privately horrified by such a reckless response. In this context, Australian-New Zealand-American responses to the crisis provide an interesting insight into contrasting views between the ANZUS powers toward Britain’s post-war role in world affairs. Moreover, this trilateral analysis of the Suez Crisis demonstrates a turning point in alliance diplomacy in Canberra and Wellington. In this instance, Australia and New Zealand were not prepared to defer to US leadership when vital British interests were at stake.

Conclusion

Over the next five chapters, this thesis aims to address the historiographical gaps that this introductory chapter has outlined. It will ultimately argue that foreign policy disagreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States during the early Cold War period was ultimately shaped by two main factors: close Australian and New Zealand ties to Britain and contrasting views about U.S leadership. The next chapter, Chapter One, provides a contextual

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understanding of the nature of trilateral relationship by examining immediate post-war relations in the Pacific theatre between 1945 and 1948. Based on the issues that Chapter One explores, disagreements based on US unwillingness to share leadership in the Pacific and continued trans-Tasman defence ties to Britain were consistent themes in the early post-war relationship.
In April-May 1946, Australian and New Zealand representatives attended the second Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London to discuss post-war defence and foreign policy cooperation between Britain and its former colonies. As it stood, any meaningful cooperation looked bleak. War-torn Britain was no longer able to provide the defence provisions necessary to protect post-war Australian and New Zealand interests in the Pacific. Writing from London, New Zealand External Affairs Officer Frank Corner described this dire situation to his colleagues in Wellington. “What do we do now?” Corner asked rhetorically in a lengthy letter to New Zealand External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh during the Conference, “the British stated quite frankly that they are no longer able to defend the whole Commonwealth.”

Meanwhile, the United States, the country that almost single-handedly defeated the Japanese in the Pacific theatre during WWII, moved ahead swiftly with its post-war plans for the Pacific

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without any serious thought of cooperating closely with Britain or Commonwealth countries. Based on US Joint-War Committee plans drafted a year earlier, US Chief of Naval Operations Chester Nimitz and Chief of the Army Dwight Eisenhower agreed that the United States must set up a Pacific Command (stretching from the main Japanese islands through to the Philippines) and a Western Command (covering the “rest of the Pacific”) solely under the leadership of American naval officers.² For New Zealand, the only solution to the contraction of British power in the Pacific was that it must now look towards the United States to meet its post-war security requirements. “Britain is resigning her leadership in the Pacific out of weakness,” Corner conceded, and the only “logical development of this trend was to push Australia and New Zealand steadily towards the US.”³ Reporting back from the Prime Ministers Conference, the Australians made similar observations. In an address to the Australian Parliament on 19 June, Prime Minister Ben Chifley stressed that Australia’s post-war relationship with the United States would now form “a cornerstone of our foreign policy.”⁴

These conclusions reached during mid to late 1946 were indicative of the major immediate challenges Australia, New Zealand and the United States faced respectively in the post-war Pacific theatre. The United States was intent on establishing its dominance in the Pacific without much consideration for issues like cooperation with its wartime allies. Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, had to accept the reality of US leadership and find new ways in which to search for security in the region without a significant British presence. Even then, trans-Tasman cooperation towards these issues was conspicuously lacking despite their shared

³ Corner to McIntosh, 27 May 1946, in Unofficial Channels, 44-54.
⁴ Chifley Address to Parliament, 19 June 1946, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), A816, 11/301/586.
circumstances. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the Australians were generally more accepting than the New Zealanders of US leadership. They were also far more vocal about their claims for close consultation with the United States. This caused significant discontent in the New Zealand External Affairs Department.

As part of this thesis’s examination into why the ANZUS powers disagreed so often about mutual problems in the early Cold War, this chapter explores issues between Australia, New Zealand and the United States in the Pacific during the early post-war period. It examines their respective post-war defence plans, disagreements that occurred over the control of key Pacific Islands, and Australian and New Zealand discontent over US dominance of the Allied Council and Far Eastern Commission in Japan as well as later revisions to occupation policies. It also explores Australian-New Zealand-British discussions over defence arrangements in Southeast Asia and the British nuclear weapons program, both of which suggest that Australia and New Zealand were not yet ready to abandon entirely their ties to the British Empire in the face of US preponderance. These issues considered, this chapter argues that major policy clashes between Australia, New Zealand and the United States during the immediate post-war years stemmed from the way in which they dealt with US leadership in the Pacific.

Australia, New Zealand and American Post-War Defence Plans

As the world’s most powerful nation, initial US post-war foreign and defence policies were global in nature. Moreover, all policies (including those in the Pacific) were considered in relation to its impact on the Soviet Union and the global balance of power. As part of these global post-war strategies, relations with Australia and New Zealand were low on the list of US priorities. As US Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy told Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal in November 1945, “the ‘post-war problems are global; that is, the conditions of anarchy, unrest, malnutrition, unemployment … the economic dislocations are profound and
far-reaching.” For the Departments of War and the Navy, the US had to devise and develop broad defence policies to meet these challenges and prepare for war against the most likely post-war enemy, the Soviet Union. The United States must respond to the “universal fear of the Russian colossus, both in terms of the size of that country and the locust-like effect of their occupation wherever they may be,” McCloy reasoned.⁵

Reflecting McCloy’s global outlook, the US Joint Post-War Committee concluded that in the Pacific, the United States must take a global perspective. In essence, this meant the United States must consider Pacific strategy and defence policy in relation to its effect on the Soviet Union and other regions of primary US interest, such as Europe and the Middle East. A report produced by the Committee in July 1945 outlined that in the Pacific theatre, the United States should maintain an island barrier of bases stretching from Japan’s northern islands down to the Philippines and the Southwest Pacific. These defence plans aimed to safeguard US territory from again being attacked from Asia, but also to prepare a global fight against the Soviet Union.⁶ Further reports for US global defence policy were drawn up by the Committee in May 1946. These plans were code-named “Pincher.” Based on the assumption of war with the Soviet Union, the Pincher Series assessed defence capabilities for the United States and its allies. The

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⁵ McCloy and Forrestal Meeting, 5 November 1945, in Mills ed. The Forrestal Diaries, 105-106. See also Leffler, A Preponderance of Power, 30-54.

⁶ Steven Ross, American War Plans, 1945-1950, 3rd edition, (Routledge, 2013), 25-52; McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact, 91-96. It should be noted that while the U.S. military began planning for war with the Soviets, the State Department was yet to agree wholeheartedly with a confrontational approach to the Soviet Union. In 2007, Wilson Miscamble pointed out that “indecision and even confusion” characterised the State Department’s views towards whether or not to collaborate or confront the Soviet Union. See Wilson Miscamble, From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
plans concluded that the United States must prepare for potential war with Moscow, and outlined contingencies for a “contest of Russian land power against Allied sea and air power.”

In assessing Allied post-war defence capabilities, Australia and New Zealand did not feature in US plans for a future war with the Soviet Union. This was largely due to Australia and New Zealand’s respective geographic isolation and limited military potential, but also because Washington thought that their defence plans were largely shaped by British defence priorities. In late 1945, US Envoy in Wellington Kenneth Patton told US Secretary of State James Byrnes described that New Zealand was still “strongly inflicted with the Mother Country complex.” Similarly, US Ambassador to Canberra Nelson Johnson outlined that “Washington [dealt] with Australia as part of the Empire.” Before the war ended, he even went as far as suggesting that post-war discussions between Australia and the United States “would not be settled in Canberra but in consultation at 10 Downing Street.”

In fact, as a British Dominion in the Southwest Pacific, Australia faced its own set of unique problems in the post-war period. Unlike the United States, Australia was not a global power and did not possess a sizeable military force or industrialised economy. Under these limited circumstances, initial post-war Australian security rested on US leadership in the Pacific. As Australian External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt told US Secretary of State James Byrnes on 20 October 1945, US leadership was the “basis” for peace in the region. Accordingly, Australian defence interests in the Pacific “depended upon [American] leadership.”

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7 Ross, American War Plans, 25-52.
8 Patton to Byrnes, 15 October 1945, United States National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 59, 711.47H/10-1545.
9 Johnson Memorandum, 3 February 1945, NARA, RG 59, 711.47/2-345.
10 Conversation between Evatt and Byrnes, 27 October 1945, NARA, RG 59, 711.47/10-2745.
At this early stage, however, Australia did not play a significant role in post-war defence plans in the Pacific. Much to Australian External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt’s frustration, the United States did not give “countries like Australia and New Zealand” the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the post-war defence of the Pacific.\textsuperscript{11} Reflecting this lack of consideration by US policymakers, Australian post-war security also loosely rested on the creation of the United Nations to maintain the peace and uphold the rights of small powers. At the United Nations, Evatt aimed to increase Australia’s prestige as well as champion the rights of other small powers. In pursuing these objectives, he earnt a reputation as being one of the most “formidable and successful” representatives of non-great powers.\textsuperscript{12}

As far as Australia’s defence capabilities were concerned, Australian military personnel were still returning from overseas deployments throughout late 1945. This delayed finalising more concrete objectives for Australian post-war defence policy. As Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley outlined in November 1945, early defence policy considerations were also affected by:

\begin{quote}
The delay in establishing an effective world security organisation, the international difficulties that have arisen in establishing cooperation in the immediate post-war world, [and because] any present estimated strength of
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
post-war forces would be very provisional while demobilisation at present leaves a doubt as to the ultimate strengths to which forces can be reduced.¹³

Once Australian personnel returned from overseas and better estimations could be made about Australian military strength, defence policy was first outlined publicly in November 1946. This outline revolved around the concept of Empire cooperation. In an address to the Australian Parliament on 2 November, Australian Governor-General Prince Henry Albert suggested that Australian forces be used in three roles: for UN peace-keeping forces, under old British Empire arrangements and in national defence. It was also announced that Australia would make a larger contribution to Commonwealth defence in the Pacific. This outline was then built upon by Australian military planners in a 1946 proposal titled the “Nature and Function of Post-War Defence Forces,” which suggested that the “basic ingredient” of the defence of Australia was “Empire Co-operation.”¹⁴ In short, despite the clear decline in British power in the Pacific over the preceding decade, Australia was committed to retaining defence ties with Britain due to personal networks and loyalty to empire.

Australian defence policy did not begin to take a clearer shape until 1947. On 6 March, the Australian Council of Defence (consisting of the Defence Minister, Defence Secretary the Chief of the Australian Defence Forces and other service chiefs) summarised that the post-war security of Australia rested on “cooperation with Empire Defence and the development of regional security with the United States.” Australian cooperation with larger powers was crucial, as the Australian Chiefs of Staff concluded that Australia was “an isolated smaller

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¹³ Chifley Memorandum on Australian Defence Policy, 27 November 1945, NAA, A5954, 2226/6.

¹⁴ McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact, 173.
power with limited manpower and resources … it is not able to defend itself.” Later that month, the Joint Intelligence Committee (a sub-organisation of the Department of Defence) approved the Defence Council conclusions and planned for potential war scenarios that might involve Australian troops. As the Committee could see no immediate threat to Australia “in its own theatre,” the most likely threats to Australian security would be in either the Middle East or the Far East. These areas were determined to be the most likely to threaten vital British interests and consequently result in Australia becoming involved because of its ties with the United Kingdom. From these initial reports, it appeared that Australian post-war defence policy was to set to take a similar shape to previous wartime policies insofar as it centred on British cooperation and fighting for Commonwealth interests rather than depending completely on US policy.

Six months later, the Australian Defence Committee (a sub-organisation that advised the Defence Minister on matters relating to defence policy) agreed with these recommendations and produced the “Strategic Position of Australia” report. In the 1947 report, the Australian Chiefs of Staff insisted on preparing Australian troops to be deployed in either the Middle East or the Far East, depending on how desperately British forces needed Australian support and whether such support would serve Australian interests. In each scenario, it was suggested that Australian defence preparations should be orchestrated in co-operation with the British

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16 Joint Intelligence Committee Appreciation, 27 March 1947, DAFP 1947 Vol. XII, 277.
Again, the Australians appeared to prioritise British cooperation over and above potential cooperation with the United States.

Across the Tasman, New Zealand post-war defence policy rested on two pillars. Firstly, like Australia, New Zealand defence planners recognised that the country was too small to defend itself and wherever possible it would have to co-ordinate its defence policy with Britain and the United States. The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff outlined on 30 October 1945 that local defence would be linked to a system of forward island bases in the Pacific. In short, the Chiefs concluded that the United States would probably take responsibility for the island bases in Northeast Asia, so New Zealand should contribute to the defence of the Southwest Pacific through co-ordination with British occupied bases in the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, and Fiji.\(^{18}\)

The major problem with adopting this strategy was that Wellington had very little information regarding American post-war policies in the Pacific. Without these plans, New Zealand could not properly co-ordinate its own defence plans with the United States. As New Zealand Minister in the United States Carl Berendsen told US Representative for the Allied Commission on Japanese Reparations Isador Lubin on 15 October 1945, New Zealand could not support US foreign policy in the Pacific unless the New Zealand Government “knew what American policy was.”\(^{19}\) Facing this lack of information exchange, US Envoy in Wellington Kenneth Patton suggested that New Zealand should be informed of US defence plans. Even while New Zealand generally followed the lead of the United Kingdom, Patton’s interpretation of New Zealand’s defence policy suggested that New Zealand objectives in the Pacific were

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\(^{17}\) The Strategic Position of Australia, September 1947, NAA, 5954, 1628/3.

\(^{18}\) Isitt to Chiefs of Staff, 30 October 1945, Archives New Zealand (hereafter Archives NZ), Registered Secret Subject Files (hereafter RSSF), 022/4/32.

\(^{19}\) Patton to Byrnes, 15 October 1945, NARA, RG 59, 711.47H/10-1545.
“nearly identical” to the United States and that Wellington would support US plans “if they were communicated to the New Zealand Government.”  

At this stage, however, Washington was not seeking a closer consultative arrangement with Wellington. That being the case, New Zealand Chiefs of Staff concluded that while there was no immediate threat to New Zealand in the Pacific theatre, the second pillar of New Zealand’s initial post-war defence policy should be to assist in an Allied victory in the event of war in the Middle East. Under this plan, New Zealand was prepared to send its largest military contribution to the Middle East so that its limited military potential would make the greatest contribution to the outcome of a future war. As with the Australians, New Zealand defence policy was tied to British defence planning. On the advice of the British Chiefs of Staff, New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser and his Defence Chiefs agreed that New Zealand should make its primary military contribution to the defence of the Middle East. Such a contribution was outlined clearly and with a specific time frame: an army expeditionary force would be deployed within ninety days after the decision to do so was made, and air squadrons within seventy days.

**Contestation in the Pacific Islands**

American dominance in the Pacific first became a problem for Australia and New Zealand during the post-war settlement of the Pacific Islands. For Australia, New Zealand and the United States, each island held a different strategic value for each country and were considered for different purposes. John Minter, the US chargé in Canberra, relayed to the State Department

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20 Ibid.  
22 Chiefs of Staff Minutes, 24 September 1948, Archives NZ, EA, 85/1/1 Part 3. See also McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, 200-203; Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, 8.
early in January 1946 that Australian External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt was “directly interested in security and welfare arrangements in the whole Pacific area” and that the “Australian government [felt] that both countries should participate in any talks which are held on this subject.”

Evatt’s thoughts were based in part on the ANZAC Pact, an Australian-New Zealand agreement reached in January 1944 that formally declared that the two countries have common interests in the South Pacific and that “any disposal should effected only with their agreement and as part of a general Pacific settlement.”

Evatt’s demands reflected his frustration at being left out of the 1943 Cairo Conference (Allied powers had determined in Cairo the fate of Japanese seized territories after the war was won). It also reflected his determination to get Australia’s viewpoint considered more seriously in Washington. In truth, Australia’s realistic Pacific ambitions lay in only a select number of islands. Australia negotiated with Britain the post-war control of Nauru, the Cocos Islands, Christmas Island, the New Hebrides and the British Solomons, all of which have been dealt with extensively elsewhere.

As far as the Australians were concerned, the key island was Manus, the largest island in the Australian-mandated Admiralty Island group just north of modern day Papua New Guinea. In early 1946, the State Department approached Australia to enter into discussions over joint-base rights on Manus and the Admiralty Islands. As part of the US proposal, Australia would remain the administering authority of the trust territory and have full legislative control. The

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23 Minter to Secretary of State, 26 January 1946, Foreign Relations of the United States Series (hereafter FRUS) 1946 Vol. V, 1.


United States made it clear that it wanted no obligations or military costs: in a draft agreement sent to the Australian Legation, it proposed that the US was “not hereby committed to maintain military forces or facilities in the Admiralty Islands when it judged that military forces or facilities are unnecessary.” The US only wanted rights to be able to “import, station, store in or remove from the Islands, personnel, material and supplies.”

To Australian eyes, it looked as though the United States wanted the right to do whatever it wanted on Manus but without obligating itself to do anything.

Evatt took this approach as a means to pursue his own goals: establish a regional defence arrangement with the United States and strengthen Australia-US defence relations. He was prepared to allow the US Navy to establish a base on the island but in return wanted reciprocal base rights for the Australian Royal Navy in American ports. He also demanded that an agreement over Manus should be concluded as part of a broader settlement over the Pacific Islands and “develop a regional defence arrangement which would include New Zealand” rather than “discuss individual bases such as the Admiralty Islands.”

Joint agreement on bases, at least as far as Evatt was concerned, could be reached “more easily” if it was “developed within [a] framework [of] an overall arrangement for the defence of Australia and New Zealand as well as the United States” and give strength in numbers to the defence of the Pacific.

US President Harry Truman, in fact, got word that Evatt “refused” to consider a joint-base solution unless it was part of an overall defence arrangement. Evatt was also “very

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26 State Department to Australian Legation, 14 March 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 16-17.


29 Acheson to Truman, 7 May 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 41-42.
keen,” according to US Secretary of State James Byrnes, for an international conference on the settlement of the Pacific Islands rather than pursuing these negotiations privately.\(^{30}\)

The United States strongly opposed Evatt’s counter-terms. According to Byrnes, the only reason the United States was interested in Manus was because they had spent 156 million US dollars on the Manus Island base during the war and did not want to do “anything more than is absolutely essential for defence purposes.” As Manus was not a high US priority, Byrnes thought that it was better not to have a formal meeting because “it would only serve to create a lot of talk.”\(^{31}\) For its part, New Zealand was likewise uninterested in partaking in Manus Island discussions or a formal conference over the settlement of Pacific Islands. “This question of bases has to be dealt with very discreetly,” New Zealand Minister in the United States Carl Berendsen told New Zealand External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh on 4 June 1946, “the worst possible thing we could do … would be to embark on a course of public polemics.”\(^{32}\)

A formal conference also proved unnecessary because the State Department rejected categorically Evatt’s suggestion that the settlement of the Pacific Islands should be undertaken as part of broader discussions toward a regional defence arrangement. On 25 April 1946, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson advised that any regional defence arrangement was “premature” and “inadvisable.”\(^{33}\) The US military agreed wholeheartedly with Acheson. Assistant Chief of Naval Operations Robert Dennison thought that since the United States was “not discussing the larger question of reciprocal use of bases,” the “present negotiations have no relation whatsoever to a mutual defence arrangement or a regional security pact. Such a plan

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\(^{30}\) Byrnes Memorandum, 28 February 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 6-8.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.


\(^{33}\) Acheson to Harriman, 27 April 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 34.
would be artificial and impossible under present conditions.”

George Lincoln, US Military Adviser to the Secretary of State, added that Evatt’s Pacific plan was “strategically unsound and contrary to the accepted military concept of the Joint Chiefs of Staff” to avoid binding military obligations in the Pacific. Instead of pursuing a joint-base on Manus further, the US preferred ultimately to abandon the project and leave the island in Australian hands. “At the suggestion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” US Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett later advised President Truman, the United States “has no further interest in having bases in territory under Australian jurisdiction.”

The reality was that the United States had little interest in the entire Southwest Pacific. While there was “undoubtedly some strategic interest” in the Southwest Pacific for defensive purposes and civil aviation, the United States only made serious claims for exclusive rights to three islands: Canton, Christmas and Funafuti. The United States actually staked a claim to twenty-five islands, but Washington was prepared to abandon these claims if it could acquire exclusive rights over these three islands. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff thought that “these islands were somewhat more important from a purely strategic and military standpoint than the others.”

Outside of these islands, the United States pursued joint rights for territory under the administrative authority of other countries.

At the same time the United States approached Australia for joint-base rights to Manus, the State Department was in advanced negotiations with New Zealand over a joint trusteeship for

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34 Dennison to Hickerson, 22 April 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 32.
36 Lovett to Truman, 7 October 1947, NARA, RG 59, 711.47/10-747.
37 Lovett to Forrestal, 23 September 1948, NARA, RG 59, 811.014/9-2048.
38 Hickerson Memorandum, 19 March 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 15. See also Furber Memorandum, 22 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 811.24590/3-2246.
Western Samoa. These negotiations progressed more smoothly than with the Australians over Manus, but was not without its share of disagreement. Like Manus, Western Samoa was a New Zealand mandate and the only New Zealand territory to which the United States wanted rights. The United States had built an airfield there during the war and spent several millions on defence installations. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff asked for joint operating rights but wanted New Zealand to cover airfield operation at its own expense and demanded that any defence installations fall under a “strategic area trusteeship.” 39

New Zealand did not respond favourably to this US proposal. Prime Minister Peter Fraser was “not too happy” about the proposal for Western Samoa to become a US “strategic area,” nor did External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh agree that the settlement of a trusteeship go ahead before negotiations for military bases were settled. “While it was perfectly apparent that we all wanted to achieve the same ends,” McIntosh told Deputy Director of the Office of European Affairs John Hickerson, “[I] do not feel that we were in agreement.” 40 McIntosh suggested that a military base agreement should be settled before a trusteeship was put into effect in Western Samoa because he was concerned about what might happen if the joint US-NZ trusteeship failed to be approved by the UN. 41 McIntosh, in other words, was concerned that New Zealand’s views would be ignored.

After raising these concerns with Hickerson, McIntosh and Fraser were eventually able to work out an acceptable solution and a joint US-NZ trusteeship for Western Samoa and the UN General Assembly approved the trusteeship on 13 December 1946. The Australians, for their part, were “extremely angry” with New Zealand for not reaching the Western Samoa

39 Hickerson to Acheson, 11 July 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 47.

40 Hickerson Memorandum, 27 February 1946, FRUS 1946 Vol. V, 8-10.

41 Ibid.
trusteeship solution co-jointly with their Manus Island problem.42 Before the General Assembly, the Australian government cabled New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser on 26 August, stating that Australia was “anxious to ensure mutual full support at the next General Assembly.” The cablegram continued to stress that it was “desirable to [Australia] to attempt to attempt to remove without delay any point of substantial difference between us” over the settlement of trusteeships in the Pacific Islands, and hoped for an “early expression of [New Zealand] views.”43

No New Zealand reply was sent to Australia. Although this lack of a response was unusual and difficult to explain, it is plausible that at least part of New Zealand’s unwillingness to cooperate with Australia in the UN was its recent frustration that Australia appeared only to cooperate with New Zealand when it suited Australian interests. “I am getting very fed up with Australia,” Minister in the United States Carl Berendsen told McIntosh in April 1946 after helping Australia’s bid for the UN Security Council. “I don’t remember any single instance where Australia has supported any action that I have taken … I am bound to say that [Australia-New Zealand consultation] appears to be a validity (sic) only when it involves the support of Australian policy, and I am getting a little tired of it.”44 Berendsen—who, incidentally, was Australian by birth—recorded similar comments about this abrasive and non-consultative style of Australian diplomacy in his memoirs.45

McIntosh shared Berendsen’s frustrations with Australian diplomacy toward settling the post-war control of South Pacific islands. In this instance, New Zealand’s unwillingness to

43 Australian Government to Fraser, 26 August 1946, NAA 1838/238, 306/1/1 part II.
44 Berendsen to McIntosh, 2 April 1946, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 106-107.
cooperate undercut Evatt’s diplomacy on working towards a broader regional defence arrangement. It also highlighted that Australia and New Zealand were not at all working together in the Southwest Pacific but at cross-purposes. “I get more and more fed up with Australia,” McIntosh replied to Berendsen later in May 1947 over Australian diplomacy in the UN and the Pacific Islands, “you simply don’t know where they are except that they will be following their own interests in every case.”

Irrespective of Australian-New Zealand differences, New Zealand and the United States were eventually able to come to an agreement over Western Samoa even though many politicians in the Fraser Cabinet were uneasy about US activity in the South Pacific. The New Zealand government “strongly opposed” the transfer of sovereignty of Canton, Christmas and Funafuti to the United States for exclusive rights, believing that this was “unnecessary” for the strategic and civil aviation reasons the State Department contended. In the end, there was clearly no agreement or acceptable solution to all of Australian, New Zealand and American ambitions in the Southwest Pacific. Each country’s primary interests lay in different islands, and when these interests overlapped, agreement was not easy to come by. Although Evatt tried desperately to secure a broader American commitment through its settlement, Manus remained in Australian hands. New Zealand was eventually able to work out an acceptable trusteeship solution with the United States for Western Samoa. The US eventually secured access to the three islands (Canton, Christmas and Funafuti) it considered to be most valuable for strategic purposes through negotiations with Britain.

46 Berendsen to McIntosh, 21 May 1947, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 125. See also McKinnon, Independence and Foreign Policy, 50-56.


48 See W. David McIntyre, Winding up the British Empire in the Pacific Islands (Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-7.
Outside of the South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and the United States also shared a keen interest in the post-war treatment and occupation of Japan. The United States led the occupation and dominated the organisations put in place to oversee the Japanese surrender terms (the Allied Council and the Far Eastern Commission). This US domination of these organisations caused considerable indignation in Australia and New Zealand. Then, once the US abandoned its initial occupation policies and began planning for a Japanese peace settlement in mid to late 1947, Australian and New Zealand protestations at American actions in Japan grew louder. The post-war treatment of Japan quickly became one of the major divisive issues in the early Australian-New Zealand-American post-war relationship.

In the aftermath of Japan’s surrender, the United States, which bore the overwhelming brunt of the war-effort against Japan during World War II, took charge of the post-war occupation. Although this was nominally an allied occupation, the United States assumed what diplomat George Kennan later termed a “totality of responsibility” in Japan.49 Secretary of State James Byrnes made it clear that unlike in Germany, Japan would be an American-led occupation and retained the right to make final decisions on post-war policy. As Assistant Secretary of State Charles Dunn told Byrnes, under no circumstances would Washington allow a “control Council in Japan” to diminish American influence.50

Initially, the United States pursued two basic objectives in the occupation of Japan: demilitarisation and democratisation. These policies ensured that “Japan [would] not again become a menace to the peace and security of the world.”51 As far as war reparations were concerned, President Truman’s Personal Representative Edwin Pauley outlined in late 1945

50 Dunn to Byrnes, 30 August 1945, FRUS 1945 Vol. VI, 697.
that the United States would seek a complete industrial disarmament of Japan and pass on much of Japanese industrial equipment and plants on to countries entitled to reparations. Japan, in turn, would be only left with access to industries that were absolutely essential, such as food production.\textsuperscript{52} Australia and New Zealand had no objections to these plans. They ensured that Japan was completely unable to threaten Australia and New Zealand in the short-term future.

The major objections Australia and New Zealand raised during the occupation’s early stages related to the Allied Council and the Far Eastern Commission. The Council acted as an advisory body intended to ensure Japan’s surrender, occupation and control plans were met, whereas the Commission was an organisation based in Washington that oversaw the Council. Both Canberra and Wellington argued that their voices were silenced by the Americans, who were unwilling to consult seriously with their allies about occupation policy. Indeed, whilst it appeared that these committees might offer the Allied powers a shared voice in the Japanese occupation, the United States refused to consider seriously any views that differed or criticised US policy.\textsuperscript{53}

In Wellington, New Zealand policymakers were in fact initially pleased with their position on the Far Eastern Commission. A place on the Commission offered New Zealand diplomats an opportunity to ensure that Japan’s capacity and desire for aggressive expansion would be completely removed, and in so doing, protect New Zealand from the possibility that Japan would again come close to threatening its borders like it did in 1942. After the first Commission meetings were held in early 1946, New Zealand Secretary in Washington Guy Powles reported to Prime Minister Peter Fraser that “there seemed to be a general feeling of pleasure” in Ministry that New Zealand was “able to do something” in regards to overseeing the Japanese

\textsuperscript{52} Statement by Edwin Pauley, 31 October 1945, FRUS 1945 Vol. VI, 997-998.

occupation. New Zealand’s position on the Commission also offered its main diplomat Minister to the United States Carl Berendsen a unique opportunity to discuss New Zealand’s post-war security interests as it related to Japan with all the great powers. Berendsen was even appointed Chairman of the Steering Committee, an organisation that aimed to organise the Commission into various sub-committees and make recommendations about each aspect of the Occupation (including reparations, economic problems, legal reforms and war criminals). At this early stage, policymakers in New Zealand were unlikely unaware about the powerlessness of the Commission and these sub-organisations.

The Australians, in contrast, were not satisfied with a position on the Far Eastern Commission. Japanese attacks on Australian soil had spurred a strong sense of hatred towards Japan and its people. As both a punishment for wartime misdeeds and in an effort to prevent future Japanese aggression, the Australian people urged their leaders to demand a tough peace with Japan. Australian External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt charged that Australia could not address these issues if it was not awarded a significant voice on Allied post-war Japanese policy. More specifically, Evatt believed that the British government was at fault for not pressing upon the Americans that Canberra should be involved more closely in occupation plans because of its primary strategic interest in preventing a resurgence of Japanese militarism. Evatt simply did not think Britain understood fully Australian concerns about

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54 Powles to Fraser, 20 March 1946, Documents on New Zealand’s External Relations (hereafter DNZER) Vol. II, 347-349.

55 Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 30-31.

Japan. “Japan is an enemy who tried to destroy us,” Evatt told British Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin bluntly in May 1946.\textsuperscript{57}

Canberra did secure one concession from the great powers. It was agreed in Moscow that a fourth member of the Allied Council would be a member representing jointly Britain, Australia, New Zealand and India. Responding to Evatt’s claims to Attlee and Bevin, London conceded that Australia should be the Commonwealth representative. Christopher Waters argues that Britain’s decision was motivated by its desire to encourage Australia and New Zealand to accept a greater share of the burden of Commonwealth commitments in their own regions. As Britain had so few military and economic resources to spare for the Japanese occupation, Waters argued that “British prestige could be best projected through a combined Commonwealth effort rather than by its own small contribution.”\textsuperscript{58}

The Chifley Government appointed William Macmahon Ball as the British Commonwealth member of the Allied Council of Japan in January 1946. With Ball’s appointment, Australia hoped it might influence Japanese policy, establish its status as a Pacific power and to strengthen its claim to be “Britain’s representative” in the region. The Americans, however, were unwilling to offer Australia (or any other power) a chance to meaningfully influence the policymaking process for the Japanese occupation. In short, the United States was not pleased with Ball’s appointment. Chairman of the Allied Council George Atcheson even complained that Ball’s early criticisms of occupation policy were “palpably designed to cause embarrassment” for the United States.\textsuperscript{59}

Indeed, Ball had immense difficulty in getting Australian views—and, by extension, Commonwealth views—considered seriously by the Americans. When he proposed slight

\textsuperscript{57} Corner to McIntosh, 27 May 1946, in \textit{Unofficial Channels}, 50.

\textsuperscript{58} Waters, \textit{The Empires Fractures}, 50.

alterations to these policies in mid-July, Ball noted with frustration that “during most of the time I was talking Atcheson paid no attention but was turning over papers and talking with his State Department assistant.” When Ball finished, he complained to Evatt that Atcheson “looked up and said that he could not understand my line of argument and expressed disappointment that ‘no specific and concrete’ proposals had been made.” Ball concluded that “the intention seems either to bog the Council down in a series of matters … [of] routine administration which it could only get further advice from SCAP’s (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) own officers.”

As the weeks progressed, Ball grew further frustrated at American attempts to sideline the Allied Council. “I am sure there is a quiet and effective campaign to minimise in Japanese eyes the influence and prestige of all Allied Powers but the American,” Ball complained again to Evatt on 23 July 1946. Because of this reality, Ball even recommended that the Allied Council be abolished. “If [the Council] is to be exclusively American,” Ball continued to Evatt, “I regard it advisable to remove the pretence of an Allied Council.”

Ball’s inability to get Commonwealth views considered in Japan even began to cause serious repercussions for Anglo-Australian relations. As the Australian Government urged Britain to support Australian efforts to find appropriate resolutions on the Allied Council, London stressed that it simply had more pressing matters and needed US support elsewhere. As British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs Viscount Addison told Canberra,

> Our collaboration with the Americans in other parts of the world (e.g. at this juncture in the Middle East and the forthcoming meeting of Foreign Ministers) is

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60 Ball to Evatt, 12 July 1946, NAA, A1838, 482/1/7.

61 Ball to Evatt, 23 July 1946, NAA, A1838, 482/1/7. For a recent detailed examination of Ball’s time in Japan, see Ai Kobayashi, *W. MacMahon Ball: Politics for the People* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013).
of such outstanding importance that we are not prepared to be committed in advance to a general policy of mediation in Japan. This might well fail to achieve its purpose in Japan and at the same time cause friction with the United States Government.\footnote{Addison to Department of External Affairs, 16 April 1946, NAA, A3317, 1/46 Part 2; Waters, \textit{The Empire Fractures}, 75.}

In other words, even though Australia was tasked with representing British interests as well as Indian and New Zealand interests, Canberra was unable to find any support from London for its views on the Council in Japan. Annoyed that the Americans were ignoring every proposal he made, in July 1947 Ball resigned as the British Commonwealth Representative on the Allied Council. Even with Ball’s resignation, however, Christine De Matos argued that there was no fundamental change in the main elements of Australian foreign policy towards Japan.\footnote{Christine De Matos, “Diplomacy Interrupted? MacMahon Ball, Evatt and Labor’s Policies in Occupied Japan,” \textit{Australian Journal of Politics and History} 52, no. 1 (2006): 196. See also Alan Rix, “W. MacMahon Ball and the Allied Council for Japan: The Limits of an Australian Diplomacy under Evatt,” \textit{Australian Outlook} 42, no. 1 (1988): 22-28.}

New Zealand came to share Australian concerns with the US disinclination to consult its allies in Japan. “There is resistance to any proposed course of action which will involve the slightest deviation from the line that has been adopted” by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Japan Douglas MacArthur, Berendsen told McIntosh on 31 May. He added that “I cannot over-emphasise the degree of exasperation and frustration which this attitude presents to New Zealand and other members of the Far Eastern Commission.”\footnote{Berendsen to McIntosh, 31 May 1946, DNZER Vol. II, 409-412.}
Adding Berendsen’s frustration was that his efforts to change this US dominance were unsuccessful. In late May, Berendsen candidly told Chairman of the Far Eastern Commission Frank McCoy about his “extreme dissatisfaction with the lack of progress” on the Commission but doubted whether even sharing this view “served any useful purpose.”65 As a result, Berendsen concluded that the Commission was “nothing but a joke.” The Commission was not “allowed to decide on any questions of policy at all,” Berendsen later told McIntosh, but rather it “follow[ed] behind [MacArthur] in every step, and merely applauded him.”66

Berendsen was equally annoyed that Australia did not support New Zealand and instead opposed all of its proposals. Even after speaking with Evatt and agreeing that Australia and New Zealand had similar concerns about the futility of the Commission, there was no subsequent trans-Tasman cooperation towards these issues.67 “On the Far Eastern Commission, [the Australians] seem to go out of their way to oppose our views,” he complained to McIntosh on 2 April 1946, citing protestations about the timing of Japanese elections and proposed wording of the Japanese Constitution.68 Taking these concerns one step further, McIntosh thought that Australia aimed to be the Commonwealth representative for all matters relating to the American occupation the Japanese peace settlement.69

65 Ibid.
66 Berendsen to McIntosh, 2 April 1946, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 107; Berendsen to McIntosh, 4 June 1946, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 110-111.
68 Ibid.
By 1947, growing Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union and fears over the global threat of Communism forced Washington to reconsider its policies in Japan. The United States abandoned its twin demilitarisation and democratisation objectives and instead planned for rebuilding Japan’s economy so that it might become a powerful American ally in Northeast Asia. In August 1947, the Policy Planning Staff (PPS) expert on Asian affairs John Davies told Kennan that they should propose to the National Security Council that the US encourage a “stable Japan, integrated into the Pacific economy, friendly to the US, and in case of need, a ready and dependable ally of the US.” As a result, the US began an intensive economic recovery program in Japan to revive the war-ravaged nation as a powerful American ally and ultimately push the balance of power further in America’s favour.

Among other US allies and partners, Australia was concerned by a US revision to Japanese occupation policies. As the future of Japan was vital to Australian security interests, any movement towards an economic recovery could put Australia at risk. At least as far as the Australian military were concerned, its own interests were best served by a continued American presence in Japan. Therefore, the occupation should continue under present conditions. As the Australian Defence Committee concluded in June 1947, the “most important single strategic question affecting Australia’s security in the Pacific is the continuance of the present favourable balance of power in the Pacific brought about by the United States participation in the occupation of Japan.” The Australian military believed that US should continue the Allied occupation of Japan “until such time as Japan is considered unlikely to endanger the peaceful

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70 Davies to Kennan, 11 August 1947, FRUS 1947 Vol. VI, 485-486.
aims of the United Nations.” As part of this hope for a continued Allied occupation, it was also concluded that there should also be a continued “destruction of Japanese war potential.”

In the External Affairs Department, Australian policymakers argued similarly that a change of policy afforded Tokyo the possibility of returning to its imperialistic ways and threatened the security of Australia. Even after his position somewhat softened after visiting Japan in late 1947, Evatt reported that

The first principle of our policy has always been the safety and security of the Pacific, including our own country … Australia has called for the disarmament and demilitarisation of Japan, destruction of its capacity to wage war, and a sufficient degree of supervision under the peace treaty to prevent the regrowth of war-making capacity. The second principle has been the encouragement of democracy in Japan, which involves the gradual growth of the social, political and economic system.

In other words, Evatt’s public position appeared to match closely America’s original post-war Japanese policy insofar as it urged complete disarmament and demilitarisation, but was reluctant to accept any immediate change to policies for Japan.

On top of Evatt’s outline of Australian policy for Japan, the Chifley Government also demanded that Japan award reparations to Canberra for its war waged against Australia during World War II. These demands became especially urgent in light of potential revisions to US

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71 Australian Defence Committee Minutes, 24 June 1947, NAA, A1838, 539/1/2.

policy in Japan that focused on economic development, as Australian diplomats feared that any delay might mean that Australia would not get fairly compensated. “The Australian Government feels that [the] total amount and distribution of reparations from Japan should be settled urgently,” a Department memorandum to New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser specified. The message warned that “it is possible that the United States may go ahead now and issue an interim directive on reparations” which might entail that there might be “no reparations at all from Japan.”\(^{73}\)

Australian pronouncements against an immediate revision to Japanese economic and reparation policies were causing considerable headaches for the United States. While the US began redrafting its Japanese occupation plans, US Political Adviser in Japan George Atcheson Jr. complained on 5 July 1947 to US Secretary of State George Marshall that Australia’s “distorted pronouncements and unwarranted criticisms have been so violent and so widely publicised” that it threatened US prestige in Japan and throughout the Far East. He also warned Marshall that “any appeasement of [the] Australians will without question seriously undermine American prestige in this part of the world.”\(^{74}\)

Complicating problems further was Evatt himself, whose abrasive and demanding personality grated on the Americans. Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett was particularly scathing of Evatt, telling Truman in October about

\[\text{[Evatt's] aggressive, egocentric manner … He has been accused of self-seeking, and it is not always clear whether he is motivated by true patriotism or simply by egotism. He has great self-confidence and determination, is}\]

\(^{73}\) Australian Government to Fraser, 20 April 1948, NAA, A1838/2, 479/10 Part V.

anxious to have a finger in every pie, is slow in giving his confidence, and insists on receiving full credit for his achievements.\textsuperscript{75}

While Lovett was indeed concerned by the way in which Evatt acted, there remained hope in the State Department that his egocentrism could benefit the United States if properly cultivated. This was especially true in relation to Evatt’s efforts to purposely champion the voices of smaller powers in the United Nations rather than always support US policies.\textsuperscript{76} In the instances when Evatt’s views and American views aligned, the State Department later concluded that “Evatt’s egotism [should] be turned into constructive channels … When we are satisfied that the Australians will follow our line of thinking he, as Australia’s spokesman, should be encouraged to take the initiative.”\textsuperscript{77}

New Zealand had similar problems with Evatt, who all too often spoke on New Zealand’s behalf or ignored their point of view entirely. “If [Evatt] ever stops to think,” McIntosh once told one of his External Affairs Officers Frank Corner, he will sometimes “go out of his way to consider New Zealand’s viewpoints.” The problem was that Evatt’s “laundry [was] so large that he sometimes forgets our irons amongst the others he has in the fire,” McIntosh added, mixing his metaphors.\textsuperscript{78}

So far as revising Japanese policies were concerned, the Americans found New Zealand diplomats much easier to deal with than Evatt and the Australians. Although Wellington also

\textsuperscript{75} Lovett to Truman, 7 October 1947, President’s Secretary’s Files, Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (hereafter TL).

\textsuperscript{76} Evatt’s involvement in the United Nations has been examined extensively elsewhere. See Hogan, \textit{Moving in the Open Daylight}; Daniel Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Creation of Israel: The Undercover Zionist} (Routledge, 2004).

\textsuperscript{77} Policy Statement of the Department of State, 18 August 1948, NARA, RG 59, 711.47/8-1848.

\textsuperscript{78} McIntosh to Corner, 14 June 1946, in \textit{Unofficial Channels}, 58.
feared that a soft peace treaty and an economic revival might reignite Japanese aggression—as Anne Trotter points out, New Zealand “at all times” viewed Japan as a potential threat to the South Pacific—New Zealand policymakers realised that Evatt’s antics were doing little to help the Americans. It would be better, so far as Wellington were concerned, to keep quiet on the issue. 79

Nevertheless, reaching a common position on Japan became urgent after the United States issued invitations to the eleven countries on the Far Eastern Commission to attend preliminary talks for the Japanese settlement in July 1947. In an effort to find some degree of policy solidarity between Australia, New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries in the face of revised US Japanese occupation policies, a Commonwealth Conference was held in Canberra from 26 August to 2 September 1947. Although Australian policymakers had been very vocal in their support for long-term demilitarisation and democratisation policies in Japan, it was agreed that a peace treaty could be finalised so long as Japan remained demilitarised. It was also agreed that there should be strict controls over Japanese imports and exports and that there should be some form of supervisory commission established to implement the terms of the treaty. 80 In other words, the Commonwealth delegates hoped for a virtual continuation of strict early occupation-era controls.

Overall, the communique that was issued after the Conference urged support for an early yet hard-line demilitarised peace treaty for Japan. In Wellington, the agreements reached at the Conference were “commended” by the New Zealand External Affairs Department. A report by the External Affairs Committee on the Japanese Peace Settlement concluded that as far as a


80 Department of External Affairs to Mission in Tokyo, 8 September 1947, NAA, A1068, P47/10/61 Part IV. For an agenda list of the Commonwealth Conference, see Preliminary Notes on Provisional Agenda by Evatt, August 1947, DAFP 1947 Vol. XII, 578-591.
potential peace treaty was concerned, Japan “must be completely disarmed and demilitarised for an indefinite period.” The report also concluded that “post-treaty economic controls will be required” so that a peace conference could be held at an early date.81 In other words, if an early peace settlement was reached, New Zealand made it clear that it favoured a hard-line settlement with Japan.

This sentiment was shared in Australia. As Evatt said to US Secretary of State George Marshall after the Conference, if the Commonwealth was to support a peace treaty, special provisions must be made to ensure that Japan could not access “certain industries with obvious war potential” such as steel and iron ore.82 External Affairs Advisor to the Australian Delegation at the Commonwealth Conference Frederic Eggleston went one step further, arguing that the Conference did not properly demonstrate how important it was for Australia that Japan remained demilitarised if it was to agree to any Japanese peace settlement. “Conferences of this kind do not approach the crucial issues,” he told Assistant Secretary of External Affairs Alan Watt in September, “to agree on negatives is a waste of time.”83

Eggleston warned Evatt directly against reaching a speedy settlement in Japan and the possibility of the country becoming truly democratic. “I feel somewhat disturbed at the views which appeared to predominate at the British Commonwealth Conference,” he told Evatt, adding that “there seems to be a feeling that nothing could be done except to demilitarise [Japan] and that the democratisation of Japan was desirable, but the Allies could not impose it and it was futile to try.” According to Eggleston,


82 Evatt to Marshall, 2 September 1947, NAA, A1838, 538/1 Part II.

83 Eggleston to Watt, 3 September 1947, DAFP 1947 Vol. XII, 613-615.
If these views prevail, a position of instability will develop in the Pacific which will be very disappointing to the Australian people. Japan will be free to resume her superiority in East Asia and will then be available to move with all her economic and strategic power into the orbit of the highest bidder … under these circumstances, I strongly urge that we ask for a prolonged occupation or control of Japan. 84

Evatt had no serious problems with Eggleston’s claims about the risks associated with a militarised Japan. The crucial issue, especially in Australia, was Japanese remilitarisation. At the time, Australia and the Commonwealth was only open to a peace settlement as long as Japan’s war potential was completely denied or strictly controlled. Evatt, assuming that no movement had yet been made towards remilitarising Japan, told US Secretary of State George Marshall and MacArthur that the Commonwealth agreed with US policy in Japan and supported movement towards a peace settlement. 85 However, the State Department was in the middle of reconsidering the idea of a demilitarised Japan. In September 1947, the Policy Planning Staff drafted a top-secret paper titled “US Policy Toward a Peace Settlement with Japan” which outlined that “a major shift in US policy toward Japan [was] being talked about under cover.” The paper suggested that the “idea of eliminating Japan as a military power for all time [was] changing” and that a peace treaty “would have to allow for this changed attitude.” 86 This drastic change in US policy would have serious ramifications for the movement towards a peace settlement, as Australia and New Zealand vehemently opposed the idea of post-occupied Japan

84 Eggleston to Evatt, 1 October 1947, DAFP 1947 Vol. XII, 617-621.
86 Kennan Memorandum, 14 October 1947, FRUS 1947 Vol. VI, 536-537.
having its own military power without assurances from the United States that their countries would be protected. This critical issue between Australia, New Zealand and the United States subsequently formed one basis for the ANZUS Treaty negotiations, which will be examined at length in Chapter Two.

Under these policy changes, Australia would still not be afforded the opportunity to influence the decision-making process. The United States, in short, remained intent on dominating the Japanese occupation without seriously consulting with its allies in the Pacific. Even while it was “highly desirable” to procure Australian support for its policies in Japan, the State Department advised that the United States should do little more than explain the reasons for these new policies to its allies rather than involve them in the decision-making process. “Whenever possible,” the State Department suggested on 18 August 1948, “announcements of new policy decisions should be preceded by [a] frank explanation of our motives to the Australians both here and in Canberra” in order to avoid any measures being “misunderstood by the Australian Government.” Since the Australian public took a “lively interest” in Japan, the Department advised that “every effort should be made to brief Australian correspondents both [in Washington] and in Japan on reasons for SCAP policies.”

Similarly, the State Department recognised that efforts should also be made to explain American policies to New Zealand diplomats and journalists. As a State Department policy statement outlined on 24 September 1948, “New Zealand shares Australia’s certain dissatisfaction with present relations between the Far Eastern Commission and SCAP and has been critical of many of General MacArthur’s policies.” The United States, in turn, should “be careful to prepare the ground through diplomatic channels before new measures are adopted in Japan” and “unheralded interim directives by SCAP should be avoided wherever possible.”

87 Policy Statement of the Department of State, 18 August 1948, NARA, RG 59, 711.47/8-1848.
Again, these conclusions concisely demonstrated US disinclination to consult with Australia and New Zealand in Japan. US policymakers aimed to explain American policies as clearly as possible to Australian and New Zealand policymakers after decisions were made in Washington and Tokyo, yet these diplomats would not be accommodated a place in the decision-making process.

**Britain, ANZAM and the Joint Anglo-Australian Rocket Project**

As discussions over the Japanese occupation and a potential peace treaty progressed, Australia hoped to secure a regional defence pact with the United States in order to safeguard against the possibility that it might be attacked from Japan or elsewhere. “What [Australia] needs is an appropriate regional instrumentality in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific,” Evatt announced in Parliament on 26 February 1947 as part of his endeavours to conclude a regional pact with the United States over the settlement of Manus Island. He also suggested Australia needed access to US military planning so that it might better prepare for its own defence in the event of another world war. “The proposed regional instrumentality,” Evatt announced, “will at least facilitate the free and rapid exchange of basic information … and plans for regional co-operation.” As explored earlier in this chapter, the United States were unwilling to consider a formal pact during negotiations over Manus Island and refused to share military information. As a result, Australia’s attention turned to co-ordinating defence planning more closely with Britain. This manifested itself in two ways: the formation of ANZAM and the Anglo-Australian Joint Rocket Project.

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89 Evatt Statement, 26 February 1947, Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Debates, no. 9 1947, 166.
The Formation of ANZAM

Britain’s dire post-war economic situation forced London to look for allied assistance in regions that were not in its primary interests. Against this backdrop, it became wholly practical for Britain to work more closely with Australia and New Zealand in the defence of bases in Southeast Asia. In the Pacific, Britain’s major post-war concerns centred on Hong Kong, Singapore and security issues resulting from Communist insurgencies in Malaya. The Foreign Office and British Chiefs of Staff realised that in the event of a global war the defence of the Far East and Southeast Asia would be a low priority. That being the case, London was open to the possibility of co-ordinating strategic planning more closely with Australia and New Zealand. As Communist activity in Southeast Asia became one of the most immediate post-war threats to Australia and New Zealand, both Canberra and Wellington welcomed closer strategic co-ordination with Britain. Australian, New Zealand and British security interests in Southeast Asia coincided and the informal agreement known as ANZAM was established.

On 1 April 1947, the Australian Defence Committee considered reports from the Joint Planning Committee about plans for co-operation with Britain for Commonwealth Defence in Southeast Asia. These reports were based on discussions during the Prime Ministers Conference in May 1946 which considered a Joint Australian-New Zealand-British Liaison Staff to deal with mutual defence problems. The Australian Defence Committee report suggested that the Australian government should undertake greater responsibility in strategic planning relating to regional security matters in the Pacific. Such planning would have to be derived, the Committee concluded, from a broader world-wide strategic plan in which the British Commonwealth would participate.90 One month later, a memorandum on “Commonwealth Defence Cooperation” was produced on 23 May that outlined Australia was prepared to make a larger

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90 Defence Committee Memorandum, 1 April 1947, NAA, A2031, 119/1947.
contribution to Commonwealth defence in the Pacific through co-ordination with Britain. In so doing, the report advised that a Joint Defence Committee with British and New Zealand representatives would be established.91 This Committee also formed the basis for trilateral discussions relating to the activities of Commonwealth forces stationed in Occupied Japan.92

Five days later, Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley sent a letter to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee that outlined his government’s plans for this Committee. At a meeting chaired by Attlee in June, the British agreed to appoint three lower-rank representatives of their Chiefs of Staff to attend Australian Defence Committee meetings. Attlee then replied formally to Chifley’s offer on 17 August, welcoming Australia’s willingness to chair defence council meetings and take primary responsibility for strategic planning in Malaya.93

After Britain was agreeable to the Australian proposal, Chifley contacted Wellington in October to enquire whether New Zealand would also accept its joint strategic plan. New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser responded on 13 November, saying that his government was agreeable to Australia’s proposals for co-operation in British Commonwealth Defence. “I have no doubt that the arrangements will prove satisfactory,” Fraser noted after he told Chifley that New Zealand was appointing Chief of Staff Colonel Duff as the NZ Joint Service Representative.94 With Britain and New Zealand accepting Australian plans, the revised system of defence cooperation for Malaya and Southeast Asia (which was later termed the ANZAM area) began on 1 January 1948.

91 Memorandum by the Australian Defence Committee, 23 May 1947, NAA, A5954, 1850/1.
92 Davies, The Occupation of Japan, 314-315.
93 Chifley to Attlee, 28 May 1947, DAFP 1947 Vol. XII, 322-324; McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact, 213.
94 Fraser to Chifley, 13 November 1947, Archives NZ, EA, 156/10/2 Part 2.
The Joint Anglo-Australian Rocket Project

Once joint-planning began in 1948, the Australians raised the perennial question of the relationship between Commonwealth planning and American planning. Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley argued that Australia needed concrete information from the British Chiefs of Staff about US plans in the Pacific. Australia would need to know, as a minimum, about American plans for the Pacific in relation to Australian security, the southern boundaries of the US zone of responsibility and the extent to which any assistance might be required from Australia in the Pacific.95 The British joint planners appreciated Australian concerns, but also realised that sharing American information involved confidentiality issues. British reluctance to share American military information stemmed from issues arising during the Anglo-Australian Rocket Project, in which Australia hosted and assisted British efforts to acquire its own nuclear arsenal. This project had a sizeable impact on US relations with Britain and the Dominions in the South Pacific.96

British interest in pursuing a joint rocket project with Australia began after the United States changed its stance on Anglo-American nuclear cooperation. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had convinced US President Franklin Roosevelt to sign the Quebec Agreement as early as 1943. This agreement enabled Britain to participate in the US nuclear weapons project

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95 Chifley to Attlee, 7 February 1949, NAA, A5954, 1626/6; McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact, 216-217.
known as the Manhattan Project as well as set up arrangements for joint exploitation and purchase of uranium supplies. After the war, the Truman Administration reversed its previous stance on nuclear co-operation with Britain. In August 1946, the US Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act—also known as the McMahon Act—which prohibited sharing classified atomic information with any foreign country, including Britain. 97

Britain’s new cabinet, led by Prime Minister Clement Attlee, was left to pursue its nuclear weapons project alone. The project could not be undertaken on British soil—nowhere in the British Isles could rockets be fired safely over even a tenth of the required distance. 98 After deciding between two possible Commonwealth testing sites large enough to support the project—Canada or Australia—Attlee cabled Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley on 20 September 1946. He suggested that “an experimental range and supporting development establishment should be set up in Australia” for atomic guidance missiles. 99 By January 1947, Britain’s commitment to the project was all but confirmed when the Cabinet agreed to make atomic bombs and the decision was endorsed by both major political parties. 100

Australia was eager to take part in a British-led nuclear weapons project. Before Attlee approached him in late 1946, Chifley requested Australian High Commissioner in London Stanley Bruce on 4 September 1945 to ascertain whether Britain was open to Australian participation in development work in the atomic field. Chifley’s inquiry was supported by his External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt. In October, Evatt wrote directly to Attlee and


98 Morton, Fire across the Desert, 10.

99 Attlee to Chifley, 20 September 1946, as quoted in Morton, Fire across the Desert, 17.

100 Arnold, A Very Special Relationship, 4.
requested that Australia contribute to an empire defence scheme of research and development. For Chifley and Evatt, participation in a joint project would be a major step forward for the industrialisation of Australia. It would also allow Australian scientists and Defence Department officials to gain privileged access to modern British defence technologies. Finally, Australian participation offered the country an unparalleled opportunity to contribute directly to the defence of Europe and the Commonwealth without committing any of its limited manpower. Australia, in other words, saw clear advantages to nuclear weapons for strategic purposes in Commonwealth hands. As a 1946 Australian Defence Appreciation Report concluded, “the advent of the atomic bomb … may revolutionise the organisation, equipment and employment of armed forces.”

With these benefits in mind, Chifley responded to Attlee’s proposal on 23 November 1946 and accepted in principle the British plan for a joint rocket project in Australia. The joint project came into formal existence on 1 April 1947. A little over one year later on 7 May 1948, the Australian Defence Committee even began contemplating a proposal for an Australian atomic stockpile. The Australian Department of Defence, Army, Navy, Air Force and Supply and Development that Australia should develop “atomic energy from the viewpoint of Defence.” Australian Atomic energy development would also have advantages for “industrialisation, scientific and technological development.”

While New Zealand tended to be an ardent supporter of British foreign and defence policy, New Zealand External Affairs Department officials were particularly apprehensive over the


102 Appreciation for the Strategical Position of Australia, February 1946, NAA, A5954/1, 1664/4.

joint rocket project and the proliferation of atomic weapons. London did not approach Wellington because New Zealand’s land mass was not large enough to support a testing site, but even if it was, New Zealand strongly objected to the development of atomic weapons due to the risk of worldwide nuclear war. At the same time Chifley and Evatt were negotiating with Britain over a possible joint project in late 1945, New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Carl Berendsen expressed to New Zealand External Affairs Secretary McIntosh that he “heartily dislike[d] the look of the world” which was especially grim because of America’s recent discovery of the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb’s “completely destructive power,” Berendsen said, “just completes my cup of doom.” “[The bomb] will certainly be discovered very quickly by others” including Britain, Berendsen added, and he “did not see anything to be gained, and perhaps a good deal to be lost, by such a course.”104

McIntosh shared Berendsen’s concerns and was fearful of Attlee’s determined pursuit of the bomb. “This damned atomic bomb is certainly the worst thing that has ever happened,” he wrote in reply to Berendsen, suggesting almost jokingly that Attlee’s talks with Truman and the Australians were about “nice and friendly … ways and means of devising bigger and better slaughters by atomic methods in the future.”105 Berendsen and McIntosh’s sentiments regarding the bomb were shared by most New Zealand people. Even later during the 1950s when the Sidney Holland government announced it would assist the British in tests on Christmas Island by monitoring their results, the majority of public opinion strongly opposed any form of New Zealand participation.106

The State Department and Pentagon were also anxious about closer Anglo-Australian defence relations, especially when they involved the production of atomic weapons outside of

104 Berendsen to McIntosh, 1 October 1945, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 100.

105 McIntosh to Berendsen, 1 November 1945, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 103.

106 McKinnon, Independence and Foreign Policy, 130-131.
American control. Recent US relations with Australia were chilly, not least because of Evatt’s abrasive diplomatic style and his demands for closer US-Australian co-operation and exchange of military information. Relations with respect to the joint rocket project took a further hit once the Australian media found out about present and planned military projects through a series of “indiscreet statements” and “leaks.” Australian Defence Minister John Dedman was particularly fearful as to what these leaks would mean for Australia’s relations with the United States and Britain. The leaks will “increase the distrust in the safeguarding of secret information in Australia, and may have a serious effect on the readiness of the United Kingdom and the United States to furnish information to Australia,” Dedman told a fellow minister.\(^{107}\) His fear soon materialised after the US, which became convinced these leaks confirmed Australia could not be trusted with its own military secrets, banned Australia from receiving classified information from the United States. Although its motives were not entirely clear, the Central Intelligence Agency concluded that there was an “unsatisfactory security situation” in Australia and demoted the country to a “Category E” recipient of US military information.\(^{108}\) This was the lowest category among all nations with diplomatic representation in Washington.

The US ban on classified information to Australia was an embarrassment for the Chifley government, which had argued both publicly and privately in Washington that Australia and the United States shared a lot of common ground and that both countries should work together in tackling mutual threats in the Asia-Pacific. Australian Ambassador to the United States Norman Makin speculated that it “placed [Australia] on a basis little better than the USSR.”

\(^{107}\) Morton, *Fire across the Desert*, 104. David Lowe suggests the ban on classified information was linked to reports that Communist spies in Australia were relaying US-UK-Australian military secrets to the Soviet Union. See David Lowe, *Menzies and the Great World Struggle: Australia’s Cold War* (University of New South Wales Press, 1999), 24.

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 105.
Although Makin was briefed on 3 July 1948 that the ban was temporary, he was concerned that there was no certainty when the United States might reverse this decision. “In [the] United States,” Makin told Chifley apprehensively, “‘temporary’ arrangements frequently extend over an indefinite period.” In any case, Makin was certain that the ban would “seriously hinder” the joint-rocket project and Australia’s relationship with the United States.109

Determined to upgrade Australia’s reliability in the eyes of the Americans, Chifley realised that Australia wanted to play a greater role in world affairs but could not do so effectively unless this ban was reversed. “Australia should assume a large share of defence responsibilities,” according to Chifley, especially because Australia’s defence expenditures were large in comparison to its small population. His Defence Secretary, Frederick Shedden, reiterated this point later to the State Department, pointing the difficulties during the joint UK-Australian rocket projects being launched in Central Australia because of a ban on classified information. “In addition to the difficulties in connection with the rocket range project, defence planning in the Pacific was being hampered by the lack of exchange of information,” Shedden remarked. So far as he was concerned, all Australia needed to fix these difficulties was “information which would enable her to shape her plans for Australia’s role in Pacific defence” that the State Department and US Department of Defense was refusing to pass over.110

The US position on the exchange of military information with Australia highlighted its overall reluctance to treat Australia as an equal and trustworthy partner. Australia did not even receive information on US atomic projects first hand. Evatt, after telling the State Department in February 1949 that it was his “understanding that information on rocket projects at the present time passed through a third country” (presumably Britain), argued that this arrangement was unsatisfactory and hoped that the “mutually beneficial cooperation between the two

109 Makin to Chifley, 3 July 1948, NAA, A3300, 750.

110 Memorandum of Conversation, 20 April 1949, Secretary of State File, Acheson Papers, TL (online database).
countries which had obtained during the recent war might be continued.” Even after these protestations State Department officials did little to re-evaluate US security ties with Australia, preferring instead to pass information through other countries which were then relayed to Canberra. The United States simply did not trust Australia with classified military information.

**Conclusion**

In the Pacific theatre, US President Harry Truman’s early post-war strategies generally hinged upon US preponderance in the region without significant thought to cooperating closely with its wartime allies. New Zealand instead continued to defer to the leadership of Britain, most notably in the creation of ANZAM and general Empire cooperation for the defence of the Commonwealth. Australia also continued to cooperate closely with Britain, but simultaneously pursued the closest relationship possible with the United States. By early 1949, differing post-war defence and foreign policy objectives left the Australian-New Zealand-US relationship on uncommon ground and certainly not on any solid foundation for closer co-operation through a regional defence arrangement.

It was only through rapid changes in the international situation in 1949 and 1950—such as the Soviet Blockade of Berlin and its first successful test of an atomic bomb, Mao’s Zedong Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, and the outbreak of the Korean War—that Australian, New Zealand and American interests began to coincide more closely. This convergence of interests culminated in conclusion of the 1951 ANZUS Treaty. Yet, as the next chapter explores, the build-up and conclusion of the this treaty did much less to bring Australia,
New Zealand and the United States in closer collaboration with one another than the current literature suggests.
CHAPTER TWO

The ANZUS Treaty, 1949-1951

Conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty on 1 September 1951 by Australia, New Zealand and the United States represented a formal commitment by each signatory to meet the common danger in the Pacific area. Signed against the backdrop of escalating Cold War tensions, the Japanese Peace Treaty and the outbreak of the Korean War, ANZUS, at least as far as its preamble suggests, represented a “sense of unity” between the signatories and their objective of maintaining the peace in the Asia-Pacific. There was a clear “strength” to the ties between each party, Australian Secretary of External Affairs Sir Alan Watt wrote several years after the treaty was concluded. According to Watt, these ties were an important and often “underestimated” reason as to why ANZUS came into being.¹

This chapter provides an integrated, trilateral examination of Australian, New Zealand and American strategies with respect to the conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty. It first examines the international circumstances that made a concluding a formal defence treaty practical for all three countries in 1949 and 1950. Then, it critically analyses the type of defence commitment Australia, New Zealand and the United States wanted to conclude with one another. Finally, it

details the ANZUS Treaty negotiations in early 1951 and exposes divergent views about the desired scope of the treaty in the build up to its formal conclusion in September 1951. Through an examination of these issues, this chapter argues that ANZUS was not just a culmination of shared broad security interests or merely a trade-off for US protection in exchange for Australian and New Zealand acquiescence to the Japanese Peace Treaty.

Instead, this chapter argues that the ANZUS Treaty largely overshadowed the consistent disagreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States about mutual security issues and the overall nature of the relationship. Until mid-1950, the United States refused to consider seriously the conclusion of a formal defence treaty. Indeed, the United States only became willing to become Australia and New Zealand’s chief protector after the outbreak of the Korean War and an increased need to secure trans-Tasman support for a Japanese Peace Treaty. Even then, the United States did not want an explicit military commitment to defend Australian and New Zealand interests. Australia, on the other hand, wanted as binding a commitment as possible that was similar in scope to NATO. Across the Tasman, New Zealand wanted a much looser commitment—namely, a Presidential Declaration that outlined the United States was prepared to defend Australia and New Zealand if attacked. For Wellington, a defence pact allowed New Zealand to continue its military commitments to the British cause in the Middle East. In the context of the post-war trilateral relationship, these differences support this thesis’s assertion that Australia, New Zealand and the United States disagreed over a number of post-war issues because of competing views surrounding US leadership and ties to Britain.

**Movement toward a Pacific Pact in light of Drastic International Changes, 1949-1950**

As Chapter One explored, there was little agreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States on mutual post-war security issues. Yet after a number of rapid international
changes during 1949 and 1950—such as the Soviet Blockade of Berlin and its first successful test of an atomic bomb, Mao’s Zedong Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, and the outbreak of the Korean War—Australian, New Zealand and American interests began to coincide more closely. Against this backdrop the United States began to seriously consider the concept of a mutual defence pact with Australia and New Zealand, an idea first proposed by Australian diplomats. Under the new Australian External Affairs Minister Percy Spender, Canberra pushed for a binding commitment with the United States. His New Zealand counterpart Frederick Doidge initially thought along similar lines, although this was a minority view in Wellington. Most other New Zealand diplomats and military officers did not want a formal commitment with the United States. Across the Pacific, policymakers in Washington refused to consider the idea of a Pacific Pact until the outbreak of the Korean War. This event made obtaining Australian and New Zealand support for a speedy peace settlement in Japan highly valuable, and the State Department reasoned that concluding a defence pact with the Tasman powers was a practical trade-off.

Under the Ben Chifley Government (1945-1949), one of Australia’s primary foreign policy objectives was to secure a formal defence pact with the United States. This plan was spearheaded by Australian External Affairs Herbert Evatt. A regional defence scheme had always been Evatt’s “pet plan,” US Chargé in Canberra John Minter commented as far back as 1946. He wanted to “keep the United States and Australia in the closest association,” Minter noted, adding that Evatt proposed a regional pact not once but “many times.”  

Over the next two years, the State Department grew frustrated by Evatt’s persistent efforts to conclude a defence pact with the United States. Diplomats in the US Embassy in Canberra were especially concerned that Evatt wanted a pact purely to allay domestic criticisms that the

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Australian-American relationship had soured during the Chifley years. These growing concerns were made public when a Melbourne Herald article published in May 1949 suggested that incoming US Ambassador in Canberra Peter Jarman “will have a difficult job because of the persistent efforts to make election-eering [sic] capital out of Australian-American relations.” After the article was published, interim US Chargé in Canberra Andrew Foster told US Secretary of State Dean Acheson that he had trouble “dismissing the whole matter.” While he publicly denied the report, Foster also conceded to Acheson privately that he “did not regard the Australian Government as the most cooperative on Earth.”

Across the Tasman, New Zealand policymakers did not share Evatt’s views on a formal defence arrangement with the United States. On 6 July 1948, New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser told British High Commissioner in Wellington Charles Duff that a regional pact would only “effectively contribute to our security” if Britain was a member. A few months later, Fraser backed away further from the possibility of a formal defence arrangement. A pact would only develop “if the need arose” for New Zealand, Fraser announced in January 1949. In his view, that need “had not yet arisen.”

The State Department was unconvinced by Australian arguments for any kind of regional defence scheme. The State Department had been “luke-warm” to the idea of a Pacific Pact, Deputy Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs John Allison told New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Carl Berendsen in August 1949. Under the present conditions—for example, no “community” or “culture” of mutual interests or settling political conflicts collectively in the Asia-Pacific—Allison stressed that such a pact would be “premature.”

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3 Foster to Acheson, 13 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, 47/5-1349.
4 Fraser to Duff, 6 July 1948, DNZER Vol. III, 477-478.
5 Fraser Memorandum, 11 January 1949, Archives NZ, EA, 10/4/7.
In a bid both to reassure Western Europe that the US remained committed to NATO and to deter unwanted pressure for a pact in the Asia-Pacific, Secretary of State Dean Acheson also dismissed a NATO-type pact in the Pacific. “While [NATO] does not mean any lessening of our interest in the security of other areas,” Acheson announced at a press conference on 18 May 1949, “the United States is not currently considering participation in any further special collective defence arrangements.” In his view, NATO was the product of a “solid foundation” of defence collaboration with Western Europe, whereas no such foundation existed in the Asia-Pacific region. Yet beyond any foundation for a defence partnership in the region, Acheson feared that if the United States committed to a defence treaty in the Asia-Pacific it might overextend US forces into areas that were not primary interests (such as the long simmering conflicts in Indochina, Malaya and Indonesia). “A Pacific Pact could not take shape until present internal conflicts in Asia were resolved,” Acheson said. He simply thought that “the time was not ripe for a pact.”

The time for a regional defence arrangement with Australia and New Zealand might not have seemed “ripe” for Acheson in May, but by late 1949 to mid-1950, a number of events drastically changed the situation for Australia, New Zealand and the United States in the Asia-Pacific. The declarations of Indonesian and Vietnamese independence from Dutch and French colonial control presented two uncertain security challenges to Australia, New Zealand and the United States in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Communist insurgencies in Malaya and the establishment of a Communist government in China also made the Asia-Pacific region appear increasingly unstable and treacherous. Increased Communist activity and the de-colonisation of Southeast Asia prompted Australia, New Zealand and the United States to begin to reconsider the possibility of a formal defence commitment.

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7 Cablegram to Canberra, 18 May 1949, NAA, A1838, 383/1/2/8, Part I.
Appropriately responding to the threat of Communist aggression became a hotly debated topic in Australia and New Zealand. This resulted in changes of government in both Canberra and Wellington. In New Zealand, after fourteen years in power, the Labour government was defeated at the polls in November 1949. Sidney Holland led the newly-formed conservative National government, with Frederick Doidge as his External Affairs Minister. Berendsen and McIntosh, two long-serving diplomats in the New Zealand Department of External Affairs, were hopeful that the incoming National government would be easier to work with than Peter Fraser’s Labour government which had been in office since March 1940. “I will be very glad when the poor old boy (Fraser) has gone,” McIntosh told Berendsen soon after the election.8

Fraser had been passionately interested in international affairs, but often to the point where he took on many of the responsibilities that otherwise belonged to the External Affairs Department. As United Kingdom Deputy High Commissioner to New Zealand Arthur Snelling noted in August 1949,

> Fraser alone determined the policy of the New Zealand government on every question of foreign affairs … [he] rarely consulted his colleagues and did not inform them when he made important decisions … thus New Zealand’s policy on international political issues is as personal as that of any dictatorship.9

After the election, Holland turned out to “dominate the NZ Cabinet,” as “one man or two men” often do, Berendsen complained. Yet, in contrast to Fraser, Holland had “almost no

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8 McIntosh to Berendsen, 10 December 1949, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 193.

9 Arthur Snelling, 31 August 1949, as quoted in Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 23.
interest in foreign affairs.”

Revealingly he took the Finance rather than the External Affairs portfolio in addition to the prime ministership, and when he did intervene in foreign affairs, he “frequently made gaffes.”

The new External Affairs Minister, Frederick Doidge, was better equipped to handle New Zealand’s foreign relations than was Holland. McIntosh, one of the most respected and experienced officers in the Department, actually recommended Doidge to Holland, suggesting he would make an “excellent” Minister of External Affairs. In contrast to long standing convictions in New Zealand against a US guarantee for New Zealand’s security, Doidge, at least in the early stages of his time as External Affairs Minister, was one of the strongest advocates for a Pacific Pact with the United States. Doidge, was “very pact-minded” and was convinced that the United States had to be a signatory to any regional arrangement.

For Doidge, pressing such an agenda was not easy in New Zealand. Even after PRC Chairman Mao Zedong claimed a Communist victory in China, McIntosh told Berendsen and Shanahan in mid-November 1949 that New Zealand still “did not favour regional pacts” because they seemed to be “devised more for artistic symmetry than for any practical purpose.” Nevertheless, Doidge raised the idea of a pact at the Colombo Conference in January 1950. He suggested that a pact would be useless without the inclusion of the United

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10 Berendsen to McIntosh, 28 March 1950, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 222.

11 McKinnon, Independence and Foreign Policy, 114.

12 McIntosh to Berendsen, 10 December 1949, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 192.

13 Ibid., 225.

14 Ibid., 189.
States, Canada and India. According to Doidge, the security of Australia and New Zealand could not be ensured without the United States to “wall in the tide of Communism.”

In Australia, the Liberal-Country Coalition led by Robert Menzies won the 1949 election. Menzies’s victory ended Evatt’s term as External Affairs Minister. He was replaced by Percy Spender, a move that signalled a new era of Australia’s external relations with the United States. The new Menzies Government recognised that Australian security interests in the region rested squarely with the United States. As part of this assessment, External Affairs Minister Percy Spender continued Australia’s push for a formal defence pact with the United States. US policymakers certainly recognised early on that Spender was determined to secure a closer relationship with the United States. After “differences of opinion rising from dissimilar views of the Japanese occupation policy … and by the difficult personality of Evatt,” the State Department concluded, “Spender is desirous of establishing the closest and most cooperative relations with the United States and has in effect made this a cardinal point in his foreign policy.”

The Holland Government likewise recognised that a close relationship with the United States was important to New Zealand, but policymakers in Wellington described the relationship in less fundamental terms to its security interests in the Pacific. While the American-Australian relationship was described as a “cardinal point” of Australian foreign policy by the State Department, Counselor of the New Zealand Embassy in Washington George Laking told US Assistant Secretary of State William Butterworth on 18 November 1949 that it

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16 David Lowe, Australia Between Empires: The Life of Percy Spender (Pickering and Chatto, 2010), 143.

17 Department of State Policy Statement, 21 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 611.43/4-2150.
was just “very sensible” for New Zealand to have a “close association between the United States [and] New Zealand.”

Meanwhile, New Zealand responses to Spender’s appointment and its impact on trans-Tasman relations were mixed. “I don’t know much of him,” Berendsen told McIntosh, “what we saw of him in Australia left us with the impression that he was at least intelligent.” Berendsen was concerned that Spender might be a mere successor to Australia’s “irresponsible” and “hoodlum” behaviour in international affairs that he witnessed with Evatt. When it came to Spender, he was afraid that like most Australians, either by nature or by upbringing, they seemed to be “impossible people.”

McIntosh and Doidge were less praiseworthy of Australia’s new External Affairs Minister, fearing that he would be just as difficult as Evatt. Spender was an “absolute little tick,” McIntosh told Berendsen on 1 February 1950, complaining that he was just as “great an exhibitionist as Evatt” and that “Doidge took an instant dislike to him.”20 Spender and Doidge’s relationship—and, consequently, Australia and New Zealand’s relationship—did not improve in the immediate future. Less than four months later, McIntosh noted that not only do Spender and Doidge “not get on,” but that there is “no common link” between the Australian and New Zealand Cabinet.

No common link between the Australian and New Zealand Cabinet’s stemmed in part from Spender’s relentless pursuit of a regional defence arrangement with the United States as well as his ambitious Colombo Plan (a multinational initiative to assist in the economic recovery of

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20 Ibid., 203.

21 Ibid., 230.
South and Southeast Asia) that he introduced at the Colombo Conference in January 1950. These objectives were not pursued as vigorously by the Holland Government. For instance, after US Assistant Secretary of State William Butterworth told Laking at a meeting in Washington in mid-November 1949 that the United States would not “undertake any firm of formal commitment” to New Zealand’s security, Laking suggested that New Zealand might merely commit to an “act of faith” with the Americans and hope that “they (the United States) will support us [New Zealand] if we should be menaced from Asia.”

Spender might not have been the ideal man to improve Australian-New Zealand relations, yet as far as the pursuit of Australia’s foreign policy objectives were concerned, he was a more than capable replacement for Evatt. He was, as Berendsen predicted, a man of “intellectual gifts,” but Spender was also blessed with an “incomparably more attractive personality” than Evatt. On first glance, he also seemed more “ideally equipped to succeed” where Evatt could not in securing a US guarantee. He was head-strong, experienced, and more than willing to stand up to Menzies—or anyone in Washington for that matter, should he think it was in Australia’s interest—to ensure that Australia’s post-war protection was secured; namely,

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through a pact with the United States. The “future peace of the whole Pacific rested, almost entirely, upon the United States,” Spender had argued shortly before his appointment.25

Spender also recognised that Communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia presented just as clear a threat to Australia as did a potential resurgence of Japanese imperialism and aggression. Upon being handed the External Affairs portfolio, Spender’s primary task remained clear: enlist the United States as a guarantor of Australian security to repel either of these threats. His first job was to ensure that all of his officers, diplomats and staff members understood his vision for Australia’s relations with the world that revolved around a closer relationship with the United States. Before departing for the Commonwealth Conference in Colombo in January 1950, he made his position clear to all Australian diplomatic posts on the future of Australia’s relations with the world. There was a clear “shift of the centre of gravity of the world’s affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific,” Spender declared, adding that “[Australia’s] destiny is irrevocably conditioned by what takes place in Asia.” He went to argue that the “rising and menacing tide of Communism in the East” presented a “definite threat” to the existence of Australia and New Zealand, and both nations had to “develop a dynamic policy” to respond effectively.26

At the centre of this proposed policy was a closer relationship with the United States. Because of their “common British heritage” and “greater technical and industrial development,” Australia and the United States were the “two countries which can, in cooperation one with the other, make the greatest contribution to stability.” In Spender’s view, it was only by “concerted action” that this was possible. Later, during a comprehensive speech in the Australian House of Representatives, Spender made his vision for Australia’s external relations clear to both the Parliament and general public. As part of Spender’s outlook,

26 Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to All Posts, 2 January 1950, NAA, A6366, WL1950/1.
maintaining Australia’s peace and security rested on four pillars: the Pacific, in Western Europe through cooperation with the British Commonwealth, the United Nations, and the United States. In outlining this last pillar, Spender said

I have emphasised how essential it is for Australia to maintain the closest links with the United States for vital security reasons … we propose actively to maintain the official and personal contacts and interchanges which resulted from the urgent needs of a common military effort.

To maintain these links at the highest level possible, Spender had a clear idea in mind:

What I envisage is a defensive military arrangement having as its basis a firm agreement between countries that have a vital interest in the stability of Asia and the Pacific, and which are at the same time capable of undertaking military commitments … I fervently hope other Commonwealth countries might form a nucleus … [but] I also have in mind particularly the United States of America, whose participation would give such a pact a substance that it would otherwise lack. Indeed, it would be rather meaningless without her.²⁷

On top of convincing the Americans, Spender had to persuade his own Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, that Australia needed a formal pact with the United States. Such a task was perhaps surprising, as during Menzies’s first term as Prime Minister (1939-1941) he had hoped for some form of US security guarantee and appealed to President Franklin Roosevelt for American aid during World War II. When it came to foreign policy during his second term as Prime Minister from 1949 onwards, however, Menzies changed this stance and appeared to believe firmly in the strength of the Commonwealth—or to be more precise, the strength of Australia’s relationship with Britain—as the most appropriate instrument for post-war peace and security. The only other alternative, the United Nations, seemed unable to resolve disputes effectively enough for Menzies’s satisfaction. In Menzies’s view, the UN Charter appeared more like a “suicidal doctrine.”

Menzies dismissed a formal guarantee with the United States as an appropriate pursuit for Australia. A quintessential Anglophile and self-confessed to be “British to the boot-heel,” Menzies was unconvinced that a formal agreement with the United States had to be reached even though he had previously explored the possibility during World War II. For Menzies, such a pact might compromise Australia’s close relationship with the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth. Moreover, he thought that the Americans were “uneasy about the stability of most Asiatic countries,” so a Pacific Pact should “not at present be on the map.” Australia “did not need a pact with America,” Menzies told his Deputy Prime Minister Arthur


Fadden in August 1950, because “they are already overwhelmingly friendly to us.” A pact with the United States, at least as far Menzies was concerned, was not the necessity that Spender proclaimed and was sceptical about a pact until it was nearly completed. At one stage, while Spender was straining every effort to conclude the alliance, Menzies remarked provocatively that “Percy is trying to build a castle on a foundation of jelly,” much to the annoyance of Spender and his wife Jean.

New Zealand Minister to the United States Carl Berendsen shared Menzies’s misgivings about a pact with the United States. He was not a believer in regional arrangements for peace and defence. For Berendsen, a Pacific Pact as it had been spoken about so far was “superficially attractive” and “ambiguous, imprecise and completely impracticable.” He feared the result might be Australia and New Zealand having to “defend the indefensible” in areas outside of their primary strategic interests. The New Zealand Military was equally unconvinced. The Chiefs of Staff in Wellington produced a defence report in April 1950 which outlined strategic thinking from a purely military perspective. It concluded that there was “no reasons on military grounds” to approach the United States for a Pacific Pact because they could see no direct threat to New Zealand. Europe clearly took priority for Washington, so New Zealand commitments to the Middle East were more likely needed over any deployment in the Far East. The United States, the Chiefs of Staff maintained, would certainly “prefer to see a New Zealand Division and RNZAF (Royal New Zealand Air Force) tactical forces

31 Menzies to Fadden, 3 August 1950, NAA, A11782, 1950/1.

employed in the Middle East rather than tied down in the Far East in operations which would have no decisive effect on the ultimate outcome of the war."

In reaching this verdict, the report considered New Zealand defence strategy as part of global Allied war against the Communists rather than specific to New Zealand’s defence requirements. “Strategy must be considered on the broadest possible basis,” the report concluded, “there can be no question of considering Atlantic strategy, Middle East strategy or Pacific strategy separately.” As a result of this broad assessment of the world situation and global strategy, there were only two scenarios in which a Pacific pact might be practical: an “inclusive understanding” between the United States, British Commonwealth countries and all non-Communist Southeast Asia countries, or a “limited arrangement” between the United States and British Commonwealth countries. The first scenario was dismissed on the basis that Southeast Asian countries were “not materially or mentally ready to enter into a collective defence pact.” With respect to the second scenario, the New Zealand Defence Chiefs argued that there was already a “like-mindedness” in meeting the Soviet threat between the United States, Australia and New Zealand which made a formal commitment unnecessary in a global Allied fight against the Soviet Union.

Berendsen, however, thought there was some merit to a limited arrangement that the New Zealand Defence Chiefs proposed. He recognised, for instance, that Australia and New Zealand’s limited defence capabilities and the grim realities of the world in the early 1950s left these countries little choice other than to secure a formal guarantee with the major sea power in the Pacific, the United States. Convinced that society was moving toward a third world war which would be brought upon by the “thugs and gangsters” of the Soviet Union,

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33 The Assistant Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Secretary of External Affairs, 28 April 1950, DNZER Vol. III, 537.

34 Ibid., 541-542.
Berendsen thought that Asia was a “boiling cauldron” that was “vibrant with resurgent nationalism.” In this cauldron, the situation seemed ideal for Soviet “fishing in muddy waters.” Since the dangers were so great and a world system of collective security so distant, he was “entirely ready” to accept a regional system as the best compromise available.\(^{35}\) To this end, Berendsen recognised that Spender and Doidge’s efforts to reach some sort of pact with the United States were perhaps in Australia and New Zealand’s best interests. “We are forced to look for something more real, more actual, more practical,” Berendsen told Doidge. “From our point of view,” he went on to suggest, “the logical conclusion which is so simple and obvious that it is present in everybody’s mind, and has been frequently advanced by Spender, is that what we essentially need in our defence is the assistance of the United States.”\(^{36}\)

As a compromise between his reservations for a complete defence arrangement and meeting New Zealand’s security requirements, Berendsen proposed a limited pact. Under this pact, the United States would commit to the defence of Australia and New Zealand in return for their support in defending Japan and the US position in Northeast Asia. The response in Wellington was disappointing. Doidge had not discussed the idea for over a month after Berendsen’s proposal was sent. When Doidge finally replied, he said he would be “very happy to consider it” because he regarded an American guarantee of New Zealand’s security as “the richest prize of New Zealand diplomacy.”\(^{37}\)

Doidge did not give much more consideration to this proposal. Instead, he remained convinced that New Zealand needed a full commitment from the United States. McIntosh informed Berendsen on 12 April that Doidge had not given his idea any consideration, writing

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 522-536.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 531.

that “[Doidge] had not thought the thing out, indeed none of them (the Cabinet) will.”\textsuperscript{38} McIntosh himself was also reluctant to pursue Berendsen’s limited pact proposal. He was particularly “appalled” by the prospect that New Zealand would have to take part in a guarantee for Japanese integrity so soon after fighting a major war against them.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{The Dulles Appointment and the Outbreak of the Korean War}

In any event, up until mid-1950, there was no sign that talk of concluding a defence agreement with Australia and New Zealand, either limited or full-scale, had been considered seriously in the United States. As Second Secretary of the East Asia Section in the Australian Department of External Affairs David Dexter noted, “between the end of 1947 and mid-1950 the Americans showed little inclination to be involved in … a Pacific pact.”\textsuperscript{40} In Far Eastern matters, the Japanese Peace Treaty and its impact on the US-Soviet balance of power in East Asia had been the major subject of deliberation between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The former favoured moving toward a peace treaty, whereas the latter wanted no diminution of a “regime of control” in Japan.\textsuperscript{41} In a deadlock between restoring normal political and economic relations with Japan and a continued occupation—neither of which were “wholly desirable” for the United States—US Secretary of State Dean Acheson appointed John Foster Dulles as a special advisor for reaching a suitable peace settlement.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} McIntosh to Berendsen, 12 April 1950, in \textit{Undiplomatic Dialogue}, 225.

\textsuperscript{39} Trotter, \textit{New Zealand and Japan}, 128.

\textsuperscript{40} Dexter to Shaw, 27 October 1950, NAA, A1838, 535/6 part i.

\textsuperscript{41} Memorandum by the Special Assistant to the Secretary to the Ambassador at Large, 24 March 1950, FRUS Vol. VI 1950, 1151.

\textsuperscript{42} Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to Secretary of State, 18 January 1950, FRUS Vol. VI 1950, 1117-1130.
Dulles’s appointment was crucial for three reasons. As a Republican, it allowed Truman and
Acheson to fend off criticism that the Democrats were failing in Asia and were unwilling to
take a bipartisan approach to meet their objectives. As a specialist in international affairs—he
had been on the US Counsel for the Versailles Peace Conference in 1918, an adviser at the San
Francisco Conference in 1945, and helped draft the preamble for the United Nations Charters—
Dulles brought considerable experience to the role and was able to reach a settlement in Japan
in little over a year. From a historian’s vantage point, it is also possible to see that as a future
US Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959, his relationship with Australian and New Zealand
policymakers would be pivotal in shaping the contours of the relationship for most of the
decade. Dulles’s first task was to visit Tokyo to discuss a Japanese peace settlement with SCAP
Commander Douglas MacArthur and as well as members of the Far Eastern Commission. His
second task was to get Australia and New Zealand, the two most outspoken opponents of a soft
peace treaty, to agree to a settlement that was also acceptable to the United States. Although
their support was not essential, the State Department believed that Australian and New Zealand
support for American policy in Japan was still “highly desirable.”

Obtaining Australian and New Zealand support for the Japanese Peace Treaty as quickly as
possible became all the more urgent after mid-1950. In the early morning of 25 June, North
Korean (DPRK) forces crossed the 38th parallel on the Korean Peninsula and began a full-scale
invasion of South Korea with the support of the Soviet Union. The United States, believing
that the North Korean advance was Soviet-inspired aggression, was quick to commit US
ground forces which were readily available in Japan. As Secretary of State Dean Acheson put

43 Department of State Policy Statement, 21 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 611.43/4-2150.

44 At the end of World War II, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel. A Communist supported government,
led by Kim Il-Sung, controlled the North, while an Allied-US supported government, led by Syngman Rhee,
controlled the South.
it, decisive action was necessary “as a symbol [of the] strength and determination of [the] west.” To do less would encourage “new aggression action elsewhere and demoralize “countries adjacent to [the] Soviet orbit.”

Acheson was concerned that the outbreak of the Korean War put Japan within striking distance of the Communist advance. He was also concerned that such aggression, and a US failure to meet and repel that aggression, would encourage Communist aggression elsewhere in Asia. Determined to meet this challenge, the US Government approved relocating military divisions from Japan to the Korean peninsula immediately. Truman also approved a sizeable increase to the US defence budget. On 19 July, he announced plans to increase army personnel from 630,000 to 834,000, naval warships from 238 to 282, and attack planes from 48 to 58. To fund this program expansion, he asked Congress for ten billion dollars and requested 260 million dollars from the Atomic Energy Commission.

With an American need for an increased war effort, Australia and New Zealand were uniquely placed to provide much needed military support to the United States. It was the perfect opportunity to demonstrate that Canberra and Wellington were prepared to support the US bid for UN intervention in Korea, which was approved shortly after the North Korean invasion (The Soviet Union could not veto the resolution because at the time it was boycotting the UN over the non-recognition of Communist China). Both Acheson and MacArthur urged Canberra to supply material aid and battalions to Korea. Menzies was in London where he argued that

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Australian troops should not be sent to Korea because of their small number and would prevent an Australian contribution to the Commonwealth defence in the Middle East.  

Spender, however, saw Korea as a blessing in disguise with respect to his Pacific Pact ambitions and pushed for a speedy Australian response. Spender cabled Menzies in early July, warning that the “heat may be put on us for further aid” after UN Secretary General Trygve Lie urged over fifty UN members to supply more ground forces in Korea. Receiving no response and growing agitated, Spender wrote to Menzies again on 17 July arguing that from “Australia’s long-term point of view, any additional aid we can give to the US now, small though it may be, will [be repaid] in the future one hundred fold.” Spender added that “if we refrain from giving any further aid, we may lose an opportunity of cementing friendship with the US which may not easily present itself again.”

Menzies was unconvinced. After attending a British Cabinet meeting, he pointed out that for Australia there was a “great danger in allowing the Korean affair to disturb our strategic planning based on the importance of the Middle East and on our national service scheme.”

Menzies’s stance on Korea became increasingly isolated, especially after the Australian Embassy in Washington suggested “the Korea attack has given fresh impetus to the consideration of Spender’s initiative and ideas.” Embassy staff also suggested that “prior consultation between Australia and the United States would have been helpful in meeting the sudden crisis” and that “some machinery for automatic consultation would be helpful in meeting future crises.”

Determined not to let this opportunity slide, Spender phoned Acting

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49 Spender to Menzies, 17 July 1950, NAA, A462/2, 443/1/8 part i.


51 Australian Embassy in Washington to Canberra, 30 June 1950, NAA, A5460/1, 217/6 part i.
Prime Minister Arthur Fadden to issue a statement that Australia had decided to send troops to Korea, who agreed reluctantly. Even without their Prime Minister at home to object, Spender was able to push for an Australian contribution to Korea in the hope that it might encourage the State Department to better see the benefits of a Pacific Pact with Australia.

Australia’s quick support for the US response in Korea was welcomed in the United States. There was “genuine gratification at Australia’s prompt response” in the United States, the Australian Embassy in Washington cabled to Canberra. Moreover, Spender suggested to Menzies that Australia should capitalise on this response and seek a formal defence pact. “This immediate action by Australia made a strong impression on official and unofficial American opinion which has resulted in the closest of friendly relationships,” Spender argued. He added that in order for Washington to realise the benefits of a pact, Australia should demonstrate to the United States that it was wholeheartedly prepared to support US policy in the Pacific. Otherwise, the “Australian attitude might be misunderstood and the genuine warmth of [the] present relationship since the opening of the Korean conflict may be diminished.”

Meanwhile, New Zealand also announced quickly that it would support the US and UN to repel the North Korean advance. On 1 July, Holland announced that two warships, *Pukaki* and *Tutira*, would be sent to the Korea area. He later committed a special combat unit to the fighting in Korea. In so doing, Wellington demonstrated that New Zealand was likewise willing to support the global fight against Communism and that it was a reliable ally in the Pacific theatre. Carl Berendsen, New Zealand Ambassador in Washington, was particularly praiseworthy of this quick response: “we have got kudos and widespread appreciation [in the United States] for

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52 Ibid.

53 Spender to Menzies, 21 July 1950, NAA, A11537 [1].
this immediate indication that we are one of those who do not confine our support of the principles of freedom to words alone.”\footnote{Berendsen to McIntosh, 14 July 1950, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 234; NZ Ambassador in Washington to Doidge, 20 July 1950, DNZER Vol. III, 390.}

Yet over and above any benefit this move had in Washington, New Zealand’s hasty response was primarily through British consultation and consideration of London’s attitudes. Wellington’s decision to make a naval deployment into Korean waters and subsequent land-force contributions was because New Zealand was “unprepared to undertake a military, and through it a political commitment which required it to act independently of a familiar and secure British-led Commonwealth.”\footnote{McKinnon, Independence and Foreign Policy, 118. See also Ian McGibbon, “New Zealand’s Intervention in the Korean War: June-July 1950,” International History Review 11, no. 1 (1989): 272-290.} It is therefore a “stretch,” as Ann Trotter points out, to suggest that New Zealand went to Korea purely to achieve an alliance with the United States.\footnote{Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 135.}

After incessant pressing by the Australian Government, the New Zealand military response was likewise not part of a combined ANZAC Brigade. “That is the very thing we do not want to do,” McIntosh told Berendsen on 7 August, “we can supply artillery, [and] we would feel safer in having this particular type of unit and my own view is that we should stick to it.” In response, Berendsen agreed and thought such a plan would be “disastrous.” If New Zealand co-operated with Australia militarily in Korea, “there [was] no doubt at all about it that the Australians would shove us right into the background and we will get no credit whatsoever for this force which will be represented as, and certainly accepted as, Australian.”\footnote{McIntosh to Berendsen, 7 August 1950, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 238; Berendsen to McIntosh, 15 August 1950, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 242.}
ANZUS Negotiations, 1950-51

By late 1950, concluding some form of a defence arrangement became more practical for Australia, New Zealand and the United States. American policymakers saw a treaty with Australia and New Zealand as a means to reach a speedy settlement of the Japanese Peace Treaty. In Australia, Spender accepted this trade off and hoped to conclude as binding an arrangement as possible with the United States. New Zealand, however, continued to favour a limited arrangement through a Presidential Declaration. There was in fact significant apprehension amongst New Zealand diplomats and military officers about concluding a binding arrangement with the United States. This section explores these views through examining negotiations for the ANZUS Treaty in late 1950 and early 1951.

The outbreak of the Korean War signalled to American policymakers that Communism was a growing danger in the Asia-Pacific and stronger efforts must be made to prevent its spread. It could not, however, continue to do so alone. The US was bearing the overwhelming brunt of the war effort through both the financial cost of funding military equipment and loss of lives. “Ninety percent of the casualties were American,” the US Joint Committee on Armed Services and Foreign Relations recorded, adding that “the plain truth is that the United States has footed most of the bill in money and has furnished most of the men and equipment.”

In consideration of this heavy burden, the State Department was particularly praiseworthy of Australia’s quick response to the Korean War. “The prompt reaction of Australia to the invasion of Korea and the unanimous vote of approval given by the Australian parliament to the military measures taken by the Government,” a State Department memorandum noted on 24 July, “afforded a good indication of the close identity of views between the United States and Australia on matters of fundamental importance.” It is interesting to note that little

58 Styles Bridges to Richard B. Russell, 17 August 1951, as quoted in Barclay, Friends in High Places, 55.

59 State Department Policy Background Memorandum, 24 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 743.13/7-2450.
mention was made of New Zealand, suggesting that perhaps Berendsen was correct in his concerns that Wellington’s contributions to Korea would get overshadowed by the Australian contribution.

In any event, the State Department opened its doors for discussions towards concluding a formal defence treaty. Allen Brown, Australian Secretary for the Prime Minister’s Department, reported this change in US policy in early August 1950. While visiting Washington, he cabled Spender on 3 August to say that in a meeting with Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk and other members of the US Far Eastern Bureau, Rusk told him that the State Department’s views toward a pact were now “very fluid” and were “willing to exchange ideas.”

This willingness stemmed from an increasing need to finalise a suitable peace settlement in Japan as the situation in Korea worsened. As Chapter One examined, Australia and New Zealand were outspoken opponents of a soft peace treaty without suitable assurances that Japan would not again be a menace in Asia. In September 1950, the United States entered into discussions with other governments in the Far Eastern Committee about the Japanese Peace Treaty. Dulles, charged with the primary responsibility of reaching an agreement over Japan, made it clear that the basic American aim was a treaty that restored Japanese sovereignty and kept Japan as an American ally. American desire for a multilateral peace treaty with Japan offered Australia an opportunity to achieve its own objectives; namely, an American guarantee of its security in exchange for Australian acquiescence to the Japanese Peace Treaty.

Spender was excited by the prospect that the United States was now more open to discussions for a Pacific Pact. As a result, he worked harder than ever to “sow the seeds” for a formal defence commitment from the United States. Spender undoubtedly saw such a commitment as vital to Australian security interests, but in his discussions with American

60 Cablegram from Embassy in Washington to Spender, 3 August 1950, NAA, A1838, 250/7/10 part I.

61 Jean Spender, Ambassador’s Wife, 21.
policymakers after the Korean War had begun, Spender also stressed that Australia desperately needed a pact in order to be more closely involved in the global planning and international decision making processes by Western powers. Meeting with President Truman on 15 September, Spender stressed that in the Japanese war Australia had “thrown all she had into that conflict.” He added that its recent commitment to Korea demonstrated further that Australia “could be counted upon in an emergency to give the utmost of her manpower and equipment to meet all new crises.” This, according to Spender, “should merit a greater degree of consideration in matters of consultation among the great powers.” “Australia did not have any say in most of the important international decisions now being made by the friendly powers,” Spender told Truman, suggesting that it was a “great handicap to his country.”

Truman sympathised with Spender and the Australian position, but suggested that this was a matter that he should take up with Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Disappointed by this response from the President, Spender commented publicly at a UN General Assembly in New York that Australia was keen for a regional defence pact and had clear ideas about what scope it should take. He told Alan Watt on 15 September a Pacific Pact should be as wide as possible, “including the countries of the Indian Ocean capable of entering into firm commitments, but that if that were not possible, then an area generally including Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, North America and Great Britain.” He also had no objection to including South American countries.

Spender soon received a clearer idea on US thinking towards Japan and a regional pact. On 22 September, Dulles pulled Spender aside during US negotiations with Far Eastern Commission nations for the peace settlement in Japan. Dulles presented a seven-point

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62 Notes of Meeting between Spender and Truman, 15 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 611.43/9-1550.

63 Spender Cablegram, 15 September 1950, DAFP: ANZUS, 21-22. Spender’s ideas for a Pacific Pact can be found in Spender, Exercises in Diplomacy, 34-36.
memorandum which outlined that the United States had plans to revitalise Japan as a military power that was friendly to the United States. According to Dulles, this was because Japan was no longer one single problem but part of a broader struggle against Communism. It was in America’s self-interest that “Japan should be denied to [Russia] and attracted to the side of the Western democracies.”64 Spender was not pleased by this memorandum. Recalling the meeting, John Allison, Director of Northeast Asian Affairs in the State Department, penned that “[Spender’s] face grew more and more suffused with colour. At one point, I thought he would burst a vessel.”65 Spender told Dulles that Australia could not subscribe to a Japanese treaty unless there were adequate assurances for Australia’s protection. In other words, to “allay Australia’s fears,” he wanted a “formal commitment by the United States.” In response, Dulles told Spender that Australia’s security was assured through a continued US presence in Japan. Nevertheless, he recognised Australian trepidations and suggested “some compromise might have to be found.”66

At the same time, Doidge surprisingly cooled towards the idea. Although Doidge had initially been a strong supporter of a Pacific Pact, his enthusiasm dropped once the war in Korea began. Again, unlike Spender, he also had no clear idea of what form a pact should take. In September 1950 Doidge proclaimed in the New Zealand Parliament

My own view now, and I think the view of the government, is the pact is not as necessary as we thought it was six months ago. It is unnecessary now because of what is happening in Korea. Today the United States of America

64 See Spender, Exercises in Diplomacy, 45.

65 John Allison, Ambassador from the Prairie or Allison Wonderland (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 151.

is in the Pacific. I think she is there now as a permanent partner in the policing of the Pacific.  

There was equally little enthusiasm by the New Zealand Department of External Affairs to collaborate with Australia on the matter. It was not a surprise that Spender complained that “even New Zealand displayed little active interest” in the pact proposals he made in late 1950.

Doidge, nevertheless, left for Washington in October to discuss a regional defence pact with the United States. While in Washington, New Zealand-American talks appeared to reignite Doidge’s interest in a pact but did not take the shape he had advocated previously. Doidge recalled that after the discussions in Washington, the US was still a crucial signatory to any regional agreement but suggested different treaty signatories than did Spender. He told Parliament on 2 November that there can be “no satisfactory pact without the United States, Canada and India,” and that the “Pacific pact should be the natural corollary to an Atlantic Pact.” This was not the same view he had several months earlier when he thought such a pact was unnecessary. A pact similar in scope to the Atlantic Pact would most likely entail a direct New Zealand military commitment to defend US interests in the region.

This was also not the pact Spender was suggesting. A month earlier, Spender had stressed to US Assistant Secretary of State John Hickerson in a meeting on 12 October that Indian inclusion was “unlikely” and that the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and possibly the Philippines were the only “essential” potential treaty signatories. Spender also dismissed Canada because it had “heavy obligations in Europe” and was “not deeply interested

68 Spender, Exercises in Diplomacy, 35.
Disagreement over the scope of membership aside, Spender’s impetus for pursuing a regional pact had an additional layer that Doidge was not considering. On top of reassuring against future Japanese aggression, Spender wanted a Pacific Pact because Australia was not associated with any “body of nations dealing with global strategy or similar questions.” If there were a Pacific Pact with Australia as a member, it could be “brought into consultation” with US military planning that the Pentagon was currently unwilling to share with Canberra.

Dulles’s task to find a solution in Japan became all the more urgent once Chinese forces intervened in the Korean War in late November 1950. With Chinese involvement in Korea and the situation fast deteriorating, Dulles informed New Zealand that he hoped to devise “some satisfactory means of assuring the government and people of New Zealand” as soon as possible. At the same time, the State Department told Spender that they were giving “active consideration” to his proposals for a Pacific Pact.

Further interest came from Undersecretary Dean Rusk, who appeared more sympathetic to Australia and New Zealand’s interest in securing US protection. As a means of enlisting Australian and New Zealand support for the Japanese Peace Treaty, Rusk proposed a plan for a Presidential Declaration that announced both countries were defensively tied to the United States. “There is merit in tightening our relationship with Australia and New Zealand,” Rusk told Deputy Under Secretary of Political Affairs Elbert Matthews on 9 October, and the US should consider “a more formal statement of mutual security commitments.” This statement,

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70 Spender, *Exercises in Diplomacy*, 33. See also Meeting between Spender and Truman, 1 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 611.43/9-150.

71 Note by Officer, 13 October 1950, NAA, A1838, 532/11 part I; NZ High Commissioner in Canberra to McIntosh, 27 October 1950, DNZER Vol. III, 548-550.

Rusk thought, would be welcomed by Spender and the Australian government. “It is unlikely that the Australians would press for more than this,” Rusk added, “[Australia and New Zealand] appear to be interested not so much in written assurances of military protection as in an opportunity to participate more closely in military and political planning.” Doidge and New Zealand would have been content with such a statement, but Spender wanted a more binding commitment. He later told Rusk that while he appreciated Rusk’s sincerity toward establishing a closer Australian-American relationship, a Presidential Statement was “not sufficient at all.” Australia, in Spender’s view, required “something of more substance.”

After Spender rejected a Presidential Statement, Allison suggested to Dulles in early December that he and the US should give greater consideration to a formal defence arrangement with Australia and New Zealand. For Allison, a security treaty was a worthwhile commitment to ensure a speedy Japanese settlement after the recent intervention of Chinese forces in the Korean War. “In my opinion,” Allison told Dulles, the United States should consider concluding “mutual defence arrangements with New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines.” Five days later, Allison again raised the pact idea with Dulles. Allison’s general proposal for a Pacific collective security pact would “have the dual purpose of defending Japan from Communist aggression and assuring our friends that Japan would be on their side and not a menace to them.” After these discussions, Dulles wrote to Acheson and stressed that the US

73 Rusk to Matthews, 9 October 1950, NARA, RG 59, 790.5/10-950; McNicol to Officer; 31 October 1950, NAA, A1838, 532/11 part i; Spender to Watt, 1 November 1950, A6768, EATS 77 part i.

74 Spender, *Exercises in Diplomacy*, 65; McNicol to Officer; 31 October 1950, NAA, A1838, 532/11 part i; Spender to Watt, 1 November 1950, A6768, EATS 77 part i; Spender to Watt, 3 November 1950, A1838, 535/6 part i.

75 Allison to Dulles, 2 December 1950, FRUS 1950 Vol. VI, 1354-1355.
must consider all measures that might hasten an acceptable settlement. In other words, Dulles thought that a Pacific Pact with Australia and New Zealand “may be necessary.”

Allison also told David McNicol, Australia’s Second Secretary in its Washington Embassy, that discussions for a formal defence arrangement were now being given greater consideration in the State Department. “There was now considerably more support in the State Department for a Pacific Island Pact,” he told McNicol confidentially on 9 December, adding that Dulles had “come around to the support of a Pacific Pact.” In response, Spender and the Australian government increased its demands for a pact with the United States in exchange for agreeing to the Japanese Peace Treaty and remilitarisation plans. After Spender was informed of Allison’s briefing, he announced publicly that the need for a regional pact has become “more urgent.” Australia was “not satisfied that Japan [could] be trusted with military power,” Spender said on 11 January 1951, because it was “too great a gamble for Australia to be asked to take [without] effective regional security.”

At the 1951 Prime Minister’s Conference in January, Australia continued to take a noticeably hard line toward the Japanese Peace Treaty. Australia was alarmed at the “tendency to slip into an easy treaty” Australian High Commissioner in London Eric Harrison said. Australia objected to the possibility of Japan’s military resurgence and distrusted Japan to remain a loyal ally. Australia, he said, needed security against future Japanese aggression. In London, New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland took a similar line but was more flexible than the Australians. While he conceded that New Zealand interests were “much the same” as

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76 Dulles to Acheson, 8 December 1950, FRUS 1950 Vol. VI, 1360.
77 Makin to Spender, 9 December 1950, NAA, A6768, EATS 77 part iv.
78 Spender Statement, 11 January 1951, NAA, A4534, 46/2/4 part ii.
Australia’s, its fear of Japanese aggression was “slightly less.” In terms of opposing a soft peace treaty for Japan, Holland was “not prepared to push this point too far.”

Holland’s reluctance to follow the Australian line in London and press hard for a comprehensive Pacific Pact reflected a growing belief in the External Affairs Department that New Zealand’s political and military interests would be best served by concluding as an informal an arrangement as possible with the United States. Shortly after the Prime Minister’s Conference, an External Affairs Department memorandum that was prepared for the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff in late January considered three possible types of arrangements with the United States in exchange for agreeing to the Japanese Peace Treaty. The report concluded that the disadvantages resulting in a comprehensive NATO-type pact that the Australians were pursuing would outweigh any advantages for Wellington, citing that it would “provide little reassurance against the long-term threat from Asia … and impair the ability of Australia and New Zealand to meet that threat.” Alternatively, the usefulness of a “limited” pact similar to the idea Berendsen proposed could not yet be determined because further studies needed to be made into New Zealand’s military capacity while its commitments continued in the Middle East. Dismissing these two possibilities, the report concluded that the best outcome was a declaration from President Truman that the United States would defend New Zealand, even though the Australian attitude to such an arrangement would be unfavourable. “Such an undertaking,” the report conceded, “would be insufficiently precise to afford Australia real assurance of American assistance in the event of hostilities in the Pacific.”


82 Ibid.
Meanwhile, the State Department proposed to the Australian and New Zealand External Affairs Departments that Dulles visit in mid-February to discuss the Japanese Peace Treaty and the question of a Pacific security arrangement. Holland and his External Affairs Department were unsure of whether Dulles would also stop in Wellington or whether there would be joint talks in Canberra. When his visit was first proposed, New Zealand got word that Dulles thought combined talks in Canberra would be better in case “time did not allow him to visit both countries.” As the weaker party, New Zealand thought joint talks were best and proposed that Doidge and the New Zealand delegation would meet Spender and Dulles in Canberra. From a New Zealand perspective, joint talks potentially disposed of the possibility that major policy differences between Australia and New Zealand would be noticeable to Dulles. There was also a danger that if Dulles met with Doidge after he did with Spender, Australia would make “impossible demands” and it would be difficult for Doidge or anyone else in New Zealand to argue against them. If the discussions proceeded independently in Canberra and Wellington, New Zealand could be faced with an agreement it did not like and which it would find difficulty in changing.

For their part, the Australians feared that having Doidge at the talks with Dulles would be inhibiting. While his presence might project solidarity between Australia and New Zealand, it could also prevent Spender from putting forward his point of view as forcefully. New Zealand had not, after all, shown the same level of opposition to Japanese rearmament at the recent Prime Ministers Conference in London. In other words, New Zealand and Australia did not

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83 External Affairs Minister to the NZ High Commissioner in Canberra, 27 January 1951, DNZER Vol. III, 555.
84 Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 152.
85 Shanahan to McIntosh, 26 January 1951, Archives NZ, EA 102/9/4.
approach the Dulles talks with the sense of solidarity and confidence in one another that might have been expected from two neighbouring countries importuning the United States.  

Allison drew up US plans for Dulles’s visit. These drafts were then forwarded from Dulles to US Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup. So far as membership for a pact was concerned, the draft proposed six signatories: the United States, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. Dulles explained in early January that one major consideration was to “give significant reassurance to Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines so that they will consent to a peace treaty with Japan which will not contain limitations upon rearmament.” To alleviate these fears, Dulles raised the possibility of a defence council, where Australia and New Zealand could be afforded a “voice in how Japan’s defence forces progressed.” Above all else, however, Dulles stressed that it was essential that the US “should not become committed to the Pact unless it is assured that the other Parties will agree to the kind of Japanese Peace Treaty the United States feels is necessary.”

Allison forwarded Dulles’s plans to Australian Second Secretary in Washington David McNicol on 21 January. The confidential brief emphasised strong US support for a Pacific Pact. The Department of Defense “favoured” a pact and some of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were “very keen.” The Far Eastern sub-committees of the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee also both approved of the idea. Allison stressed that Dulles had in mind “an arrangement not quite as formal as [NATO].” In other words, US thinking did not necessarily contemplate an “attack upon one, attack upon all provision” and an “organic link” with NATO.

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86 Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 152.

87 Allison to Jessup, 4 January 1951, FRUS 1951 Vol. VI, 132-134; Dulles to Jessup, 4 January 1951, FRUS 1951 Vol. VI, 134-137; Allison Memorandum, 11 January 1951, FRUS 1951 Vol. VI, 790-792.

88 Makin to Spender, 21 January 1951, NAA, A1838, TS250/7/10.
Meanwhile, the New Zealand military reconsidered the preferred structure and scope of a defence arrangement with Australia and the United States. It was concluded amongst the New Zealand Defence Chiefs that an informal guarantee of New Zealand’s security in the form of a Presidential announcement seemed to best suit its interests. In reaching this conclusion, it was decided that a formal pact could never be confined to the Southwest Pacific. Rather, a pact would only serve US interests in Northeast Asia and commit Australian and New Zealand forces there. “The United States cannot give a direct and precise guarantee to New Zealand and Australia which are in any case remote from the centre of the danger,” the Chiefs concluded, adding that “only in connection with [American] arrangements in the Philippines and Japan that sufficient Congressional and public support could be given for an extension of American commitments to Australia and New Zealand.”

As New Zealand policymakers decided that a formal defence arrangement with the United States did not meet their strategic interests, the External Affairs Department agreed that a Presidential Declaration announcing a US commitment to the defence of Australia and New Zealand was the best course of action. The Department suggested that Doidge should keep this possibility in mind during talks with Dulles later in February. Since Wellington did not feel “any immediate threat to New Zealand or the Pacific,” no formal pact was required. Instead, a “Presidential Statement would be useful.” Doidge left for Canberra with the proposal for a Presidential guarantee as his first preference.

Australia wanted no part in the Presidential Statement, nor could it accept any arrangement other than a formal commitment from the United States. In Spender’s view, any agreement

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90 Minutes of a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and Officers of the Department of External Affairs, 6 February 1951, DNZER Vol. III, 564-568.
91 Memorandum for Doidge, 8 February 1951, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3 part 3.
short of a formal guarantee of US protection in the Asia-Pacific would be “worthless” to meet its security needs.92 Spender argued that the preferred arrangement was a “treaty in solemn form.” Dulles’s visit might be the “last opportunity” Australia and New Zealand had to secure an American guarantee, he told Doidge, so it was imperative that they co-operated and did not squander the opportunity.93 In the end, it was agreed that it would be counterproductive to propose different things to Dulles. Spender and Doidge finally agreed to push for the same tripartite pact, to which Spender commented later that New Zealand had finally “seen the light.”94

After meeting with Japanese representatives in Tokyo to finalise the arrangements for a peace treaty, Dulles flew to Canberra where official talks began on 15 February. Dulles stressed immediately to both Spender and Doidge the US plans for post-occupied Japan and unlimited rearmament. According to Dulles, a continued US military presence in Japan should quell Australian and New Zealand concerns over revived Japanese aggression. Moreover, according to Dulles, any restrictions on Japanese rearmament were counterproductive for American efforts to prevent the spread of Communism. In Dulles’s words, the United States saw Japan’s role in the Cold War as a “screen of power” against Communist aggression in Northeast Asia, thereby justifying its plans for a speedy peace treaty that allowed for rearmament.95

Spender seemed unconvinced. Whether he truly disagreed with Dulles or was cunningly using “the negotiating value of Australia’s agreement to sign a peace treaty as a lever to obtain

92 The Dulles Visit to Canberra, DAFP: ANZUS, 77.
94 Spender, Exercises in Diplomacy, 124.
an effective security guarantee,” he told Dulles that Australia could not so easily accept a soft policy toward Japan. He argued that Australia needed adequate assurances that it was safe from any future Japanese aggression. “[Australia] is not satisfied that in the long-run, it was whole unlikely that [Japan] would not … present any menace to peace” Spender replied.96

New Zealand had always been more pessimistic about Australia and New Zealand’s chances of influencing a Japanese Peace Treaty. For example, in regards to Japan, McIntosh had long thought “all [New Zealand] could do is to plug the old line and see what, if anything can be salvaged.” For McIntosh, it seemed unrealistic to hope for the demilitarisation of Japan based purely on Australian and New Zealand objections. The only acceptable compromise was a “guarantee against Japanese aggression.”97 In a similar spirit, Doidge expressed New Zealand’s reservations about the long-term possibility of revived Japanese aggression. Doidge told Dulles that his explanation for the US plan for Japan in the short term was “highly convincing,” but it “did not seem to cover the long term possibilities.”98 Australia and New Zealand needed some other guarantee to cover themselves against the long-term prospects in Japan.

Doidge also raised concerns about New Zealand military commitments elsewhere. Holland had told him that he was concerned about what a Pacific Pact might mean for its obligations in the Middle East if its provisions did not adequately protect New Zealand’s security concerns closer to home. “We cannot do both,” Doidge said to Dulles passing on Holland’s reservations, “a Pacific Pact [cannot] lead us into obligations which would conflict with those we took to fulfil in the Middle East.” Doidge added that it was “folly of securing the front door and leaving

96 Spender to Harrison, 21 February 1951, NAA, A6768, EATS 77 Annex A. See also Spender, Exercises in Diplomacy, 121.

97 McIntosh to Berendsen, 12 April 1950, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 225.

the back door open.” New Zealand’s military commitment to global strategy could only be met, as Doidge stressed, with a “guarantee from the United States” in New Zealand’s “back door.”

As a possible compromise, talks moved towards a trilateral regional security pact. When Spender and Doidge argued for a pact on 16 February, Dulles spoke about the difficulties it would cause for the Philippines, which only had an informal US guarantee. He also raised Britain’s clear objections to a pact, as the British Foreign Office did not want to see a US treaty with two Commonwealth nations that excluded Britain as a signatory. Spender, who was unaware Britain had pressed the United States to reconsider discussions for a pact with Australia and New Zealand, protested vehemently. He pointed out that Britain was no longer a major Pacific power and its objections were not relevant. In Spender’s view, Australia needed a formal security arrangement as most in the fear that Japan might again become a “spearhead of aggression.”

After lengthy discussions, Dulles agreed to examine possible draft tripartite pacts. Ralph Harry, part of the Australian delegation during the talks, prepared a possible treaty. Harry had studied the NATO treaty and hoped to model his draft on its provisions, suggesting that Dulles was more likely to accept its clauses if “every point … [had a] precedent in some other treaty to which the US was a party.” Harry’s draft, although amended to meet Dulles’s more specific demands about the scope of any commitment, provided a solid base for discussions between Spender, Doidge and Dulles on 17 February. At the conclusion of the meeting, the

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99 Ibid., 599.

100 The United States formalised its own separate defence treaty with the Philippines on 30 August 1951.

101 The Dulles Visit to Canberra, DAFP: ANZUS, 77.

102 Memorandum by Robert Fearey, 14 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, Lot 54, D 423.

103 The Dulles Visit to Canberra, DAFP: ANZUS, 78.
three representatives agreed the draft should be presented to their respective governments for further consideration.\textsuperscript{104}

\textit{Potential Complications}

Even after a draft treaty was agreed upon, there were still three potential issues that threatened to derail the entire project. The first was getting the treaty through the US Senate. In the lead up to its presentation to the Senate, Spender and Berendsen were still discussing with Dulles changes to the wording. Berendsen was particularly apprehensive about what these discussions might entail. “Here we have been offered on a platter the greatest gift that the most powerful country in the world could offer to a small and comparatively helpless group of people and we persist in niggling and nagging about what seems to me to be the most ridiculous trifles,” Berendsen told McIntosh on 25 June. He added that this sort of “stupid pin-pricking” could “cost us very dearly.” Berendsen feared that late objections to the treaty’s provisions would prevent getting it through the Senate. “It is not Acheson, Rusk, Dulles, the President and the State Department that we need to worry about,” Berendsen suggested, “it is the Senate, and my mind is on the Senate all the time.” Senate approval, according to Berendsen, was the “most difficult hurdle,” and trying to get further assurances from Dulles could “ruin the whole thing.”\textsuperscript{105} It certainly appeared that Berendsen had come around to the idea of a more binding commitment with the United States.

The second issue was British objections to the conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty. From London’s perspective, ANZUS demonstrated that Britain was incapable of protecting

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. See also Alan Watt, \textit{The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy}, 181-182; Notes on the Australian-New Zealand-United States Talks in Canberra, 15-17 February 1951, 593- 613.

Commonwealth countries in the Pacific and potentially threatened its positions in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya. While British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Kenneth Younger said publicly that the treaty was “a most useful contribution to Commonwealth strategy,” the British Government deeply resented the conclusion of ANZUS and was disappointed that it was not a member. “We are most certainly a Pacific power,” British Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison argued, and “it would not have been unwelcome to us if we were included in the proposed pact.”

British efforts to stifle and undermine ANZUS came well before the treaty’s presentation to the Senate. While Dulles was in Tokyo finalising the peace treaty and post-occupied plans, Political Representative of the British Liaison Mission Sir Alvary Gascoigne told him that the UK Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to accept the US as Australia and New Zealand’s chief protector. “From the standpoint of the United Kingdom’s position as a world power,” he told Dulles on 2 February, the proposed Pacific Pact “would be interpreted in the Pacific and elsewhere as a renunciation of [Britain’s] responsibilities and possibly as evidence of [a] rift in policy between Britain and the United States.” He also argued that excluding Asian countries would encourage aggression in areas where Communist activity was highest.

Then, during ANZUS negotiations, Britain went to great lengths to prevent the US signing a formal agreement with Australia and New Zealand by voicing its strong discontent in Washington. London “hated” the idea of the ANZUS Treaty and had been doing its best to “head the Americans off and get them to substitute a Presidential Declaration,” McIntosh suggested in March 1951. The British also played on Dulles’s concerns over the inclusion of the Philippines. As McIntosh described shortly after Dulles’s visit to Canberra,

106 Spender Memorandum, 19 April 1951, Spender Papers, Box 1, NLA.

107 Dulles to Rusk, 2 February 1951, FRUS 1951 Vol VI Part I, 143-144.
The British are obviously doing their best to torpedo the whole thing and they want to represent to the Americans the undesirability of including the Philippines because of the adverse effect it would have on United Kingdom prestige, more particularly in United Kingdom territories like Borneo, Malaya, Hong Kong and so forth. The Australians are ropeable about the British. They say they have been doing everything they can before Dulles arrived and since he arrived to stop the treaty.\textsuperscript{108}

Although New Zealand still considered itself tied firmly to the Commonwealth and the British Empire, even the New Zealand External Affairs Department was upset with British efforts to stifle conclusion of the pact. Along with Britain’s sudden recognition of Communist China in January 1950 that caused a noticeable rift in Anglo-American relations, Berendsen argued to McIntosh in early April that Britain were “behaving like stupid children” and had done a “great deal of harm.”\textsuperscript{109}

Lastly, the final version and scope of the ANZUS Treaty had to be approved by the US military. Spender was particularly anxious about the military reaction to the ANZUS Treaty, as he hoped that it might provide a means for Australia to access US strategic planning and play a more direct role in global strategy. After Dulles left Canberra in February, Spender wrote to him on 8 March and said “I know you won’t mind me saying directly that we in this country are a metropolitan power in the Pacific and we hope that our view will be predominate.” He also hoped that closer ties with the United States might become a pretext for further US assistance in meeting Australia’s own defence production needs. In the same letter to Dulles, Spender wrote that “our objective is to get into full production, to increase our military forces

\textsuperscript{108} McIntosh to Berendsen, 16 March 1951, in \textit{Undiplomatic Dialogue}, 255.

\textsuperscript{109} Berendsen to McIntosh, 2 April 1951, in \textit{Undiplomatic Dialogue}, 257-259.
and to take steps necessary to ensure that defence needs have priority. The lead which the United States has given on these matters is an inspiration,” Spender added, but urged that Australia needed more assistance to deal with “serious industrial troubles.”

While the Department of Defense already indicated in January that the conclusion of the treaty was a favourable outcome for the United States, many top ranking US military officials now argued that the scope of American military and strategic consultation obligations should be as narrow as possible. In a combined State Department-Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting on 11 April, Chief of Naval Operations Forrest Sherman stressed the “value of informality in establishing joint planning” and indicated his preference for “leaving such arrangements out of the treaty.” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Omar Bradley agreed with Sherman’s conclusions. In Bradley’s estimation, combined planning was “theoretically all right but practically objectionable” because those countries which had access to US strategic plans would become “too wide.”

Two days after this meeting, Secretary of Defense George Marshall even suggested at this late stage that from a military perspective any formal commitment to Australia and New Zealand’s defence was not an ideal outcome for the United States. “Any trilateral agreement with Australia and New Zealand should be made a simple understanding or public declaration rather than a formal pact.” Marshall wrote to Acheson on 13 April. At the very least, Marshall argued that “if political considerations are so overriding that a formal pact must be made, the Joint Chiefs of Staff oppose the inclusion in the pact any reference to military plans, planning or organisations.”

110 Spender to Dulles, 8 March 1951, Spender Papers, Box 1, NLA.

111 Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 11 April 1951, NARA, RG 59, Lot 64, D 563.

Recognising that a formal treaty was necessary for Australian and New Zealand acquiescence to the Japanese Peace Treaty, Dulles and Acheson refused to make a public declaration rather than a formal commitment. However, they accepted these military views and made sure to omit any reference to intimate military planning under the ANZUS Treaty. “In the case of the trilateral arrangement with Australia and New Zealand,” Dulles told Acheson, “we can, I think, make it clear that any organisation thereunder will not have the right to demand knowledge of and to participate in planning.”\(^{113}\) Issues surrounding Australian and New Zealand access to US and NATO planning through ANZUS will be explored further in Chapter Three.

**Conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty**

Despite these uncertainties, the US Senate approved the ANZUS Treaty. Several days before the Japanese Peace Treaty was signed formally, Acheson, along with Australian and New Zealand representatives Percy Spender and Carl Berendsen, signed the ANZUS Treaty at a ceremony at The Presidio in San Francisco on 1 September 1951. The treaty was planned to enter into force on 29 April 1952. Australia, New Zealand and the United States were now allied formally and agreed to respond to mutual dangers in the Asia-Pacific. As Acheson announced at the ceremony on 1 September, ANZUS represented “our common desire for peace” and suggested that “the treaty formally binds our peoples together in new ties of friendship and cooperation.”\(^ {114}\)

After securing the agreement with the Americans, Spender similarly declared that ANZUS was a momentous landmark in Australian history. In his view, ANZUS did more than express formally the close ties of comradeship between the parties; it also marked “the first step in

\(^{113}\) Dulles to Acheson, 13 April 1951, FRUS 1951 Vol. VI Part I, 203.

building of the ramparts of freedom in the vast and increasingly important area of the Pacific Ocean.” He added that the treaty was “directed to regional security in the Pacific” and took the
"first step towards what we hope will prove to be an ever widening system of peaceful security in the vital area.”¹¹⁵

Spender’s New Zealand counterpart, Frederick Doidge, also welcomed the conclusion of the treaty but appeared less convinced about its significance. The treaty represented “nothing new in the relationship of the three countries,” Doidge announced to the New Zealand House of Representatives on 13 July, as there was already “a deep and firm understanding on security between the United States and ourselves.” Unlike the other ANZUS powers, Doidge also alluded to the possibility of future British membership or consultation. In the same address, Doidge announced that “the New Zealand Government looks forward, in giving effect to the provisions of this treaty, to the closest consultation with the United Kingdom and other powers concerned with the security of the Pacific … both New Zealand and Australia have special obligations in defence as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”¹¹⁶ The issue of British membership in ANZUS will be explored further in Chapter Three.

Doidge’s comments aside, the ANZUS Treaty undoubtedly signalled a crucial new era of Australian-New Zealand-American relations. In finalising its conclusion, Spender achieved what most people thought might be impossible. Given the circumstances, he could not have secured a more binding commitment from the United States at the time. Dulles certainly meant what he said when he told Spender’s wife Jean that “there would have been no ANZUS without Percy.” Indeed, even in the face of active opposition in the United States, Britain and most of


the Commonwealth, it was probably the “most remarkable feat accomplished in the realm of international affairs by any Australian minister.”

Conclusion

The conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty overshadowed the consistent disagreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States about mutual security issues and the overall nature of the relationship. The United States only seriously considered signing such a treaty after the outbreak of the Korean War and an increased need to secure trans-Tasman support for a Japanese Peace Treaty. Australia, on the other hand, wanted as binding a commitment as possible that was similar in scope to NATO. New Zealand preferably wanted a Presidential Declaration that outlined the United States was prepared to defend Australia and New Zealand if attacked. Even then, a formal defence pact allowed New Zealand to continue its military commitments to the British cause in the Middle East. Disagreement between the ANZUS powers, however, did not end with the treaty’s conclusion. The next chapter explores post-treaty issues as well as contrasting views toward developments in Southeast Asia between 1952 and 1954.

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Conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty was a watershed moment in Australian and New Zealand history. After the 1944 Australia-New Zealand Pact, ANZUS was the first major international treaty that Australia and New Zealand signed which did not include Britain as a member. While policymakers in Canberra and Wellington stressed that its conclusion would not weaken their country’s ties to the British Commonwealth, ANZUS testified to Australia’s and New Zealand’s newfound security reliance on the United States during the early Cold War. Although it was a far less historic event in Washington, ANZUS enabled the United States to finalise the Japanese Peace Treaty and provide further support to its defence structure along the Pacific Rim. Even allowing for this difference, ANZUS was important for all three countries.

This chapter examines relations between the ANZUS powers in the aftermath of the treaty’s conclusion from 1952 to 1954. The first section examines issues surrounding the treaty’s operation in-force, including its proposed machinery, the possibility of British membership, and potential multilateral treaties in Southeast Asia that could supersede ANZUS. It also explores changes in US national security strategies when Dwight Eisenhower replaced Truman as US President and how these changes affected ANZUS relations. An examination into these issues suggest that the ANZUS powers were still divided about the way in which the United
States would take a leading role in this relationship and where, if at all, Britain might play an intimate role in this partnership.

The second section of this chapter examines responses to the 1954 Indochina Crisis. Recent historical works have outlined that the United States seriously contemplated intervening militarily during this crisis to stop the Communist advance in Southeast Asia. Yet in order to curb domestic concerns that the United States would become embroiled in another protracted and costly war, the Eisenhower Administration planned for military action through the guise of a multilateral intervention plan. Most historians suggest that this proposal was primarily directed towards gathering British support for military action (and in turn allaying domestic concerns about a potential US military response).\(^1\) Instead, this chapter argues that through additionally consulting with Australia and New Zealand on the plan for multilateral intervention, the United States (intentionally or otherwise) enabled these countries to play a more influential role in shaping US strategy than would otherwise be the case. During this crisis, US consultation with senior Australian and New Zealand ministerial officials not only aimed to gather support for the US plan but also aimed to get Canberra and Wellington to convince London to participate. As Fredrik Logevall pointed out in 2012, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles hoped that by “taking Canberra and Wellington into his confidence he could meaningfully alter London’s policy” during the crisis.\(^2\)

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By shifting the focus from US policy and Anglo-American relations to the Australian-New Zealand-American relationship during the crisis, this chapter also demonstrates that Britain’s unwillingness to participate in the “United Action” plan ultimately stifled agreement between the ANZUS powers on jointly responding with military action in Indochina. While Australian policies generally followed the US position, general elections scheduled for May prevented Canberra from committing to the proposal. Moreover, policymakers in Canberra were also reluctant to act in Indochina without British support. Across the Tasman, New Zealand policy toward the crisis hinged almost entirely upon the British position. Wellington repeatedly stressed that it could not contemplate sending troops to Indochina unless London also committed forces. When Britain, Australia and New Zealand all confirmed that they could not participate in the plan, the proposal fell apart. Finally, this chapter explores Australian-New Zealand-American views toward the creation of the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in the crisis’s aftermath. The failure of the “United Action” plan demonstrated to US policymakers that Britain must participate in SEATO. Moreover, as Australia and New Zealand both hoped for British participation, this section additionally argues that close trans-Tasman ties to Britain continued to shape the nature of the ANZUS relationship.

Post-Treaty Issues

Once ANZUS came into effect, there were still four key post-treaty issues that the signatories needed to address. Firstly, opinions were divided over the proposed machinery of the treaty. While New Zealand had no issues with the ANZUS consultation and discussion process, Australia wanted greater access to strategic and military planning done by NATO and the Pentagon. The Americans, however, were unwilling to provide such access. Secondly, opinions were also divided over the question of British membership. New Zealand wanted Britain to be included as a member of ANZUS, the United States opposed British inclusion, and Australia
remained ambivalent. Thirdly, once it was clear that Britain would not become a treaty member, planning began for a separate defence arrangement for Southeast Asia through the Five Power Staff Agency. Again hoping to include Britain, New Zealand thought that this new mechanism might be a means to merge ANZUS with Commonwealth defence planning in Southeast Asia. Australia, on the other hand, remained aloof until its diplomats received confirmation from Washington that ANZUS would not be superseded by these new defence arrangements. Washington did not intend to replace ANZUS with a broader defence mechanism in Southeast Asia, but major US commitments were put on hold until after the 1952 elections. Finally, uncertainty over the future of ANZUS ensued after Dwight Eisenhower replaced Truman as US President in January 1953. In Australia and New Zealand, policymakers were concerned by new US national security strategies and whether the Eisenhower Administration viewed ANZUS as a serious commitment. This section explores Australian, New Zealand and American views towards these issues.

The ANZUS Machinery

After the ANZUS Treaty was finalised and presented to the public, Spender was replaced as Australian External Affairs Minister and reassigned as Australian Ambassador to the United States in April 1951. As he played an instrumental role in concluding the treaty, Spender thought he was best placed to influence decision making in Washington and look after Australian interests. “I believe the next two or three years will be critical years in the history of civilisation,” Spender wrote to former US Ambassador in Canberra Myron Cowen on 5 April, “and it is in Washington that the decisions affecting the free world will be made.” Spender added that “I believe I can serve my country and the cause of peace in the world better
in the USA than I can in any capacity at the moment in Australia.”³ His replacement as External Affairs Minister, Richard Casey, was tasked with ensuring Spender’s efforts to secure the ANZUS Treaty was not in vain and worked to serve Australian interests; namely, greater Australian-American strategic co-operation and military information exchange from the Pentagon. He was a more than capable successor to Spender. Serving previously as Australia’s first Minister to Washington and a Cabinet Minister during the ANZUS negotiations, Casey’s thirty years of experience in international affairs made his appointment as External Affairs Minister a role “for which his whole life seemed to have prepared him.”⁴

Even for Casey, it was not an easy assignment. ANZUS made no determination that American policymakers had to share its own strategies with Australia and New Zealand, nor did it specify that Canberra or Wellington must be informed of US intentions before any decisions were made. Annual ANZUS Council meetings between External Affairs and State Department officers as well as a small representation from the US military became the basic mechanism for trilateral discussions, yet these meetings were designed mostly for the Americans to outline already made plans rather than to consult with Australia and New Zealand over their perspectives, objections and interests. US Secretary of State Dean Acheson later recalled:

> Instead of starving the Australians and New Zealanders, we would give them indigestion. For two days we went over the situation in the world, political and military, with the utmost frankness and fullness. At the end they were

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³ Spender to Cowen, 5 April 1951, Spender Papers, Box 1, NLA.

very happy with political liaison through the Council and military planning through the Commander in Chief Pacific.⁵

At the insistence of United States military officials, discussions should be mostly political nor offer Australia and New Zealand any concrete information on military planning other than through the US Chief Commander in the Pacific. Joint military planning would mean “serious and far-reaching disadvantages to the present and projected state of United States planning for a global war,” the US Joint Chiefs of Staff advised Acheson, adding later that ANZUS should not “pressure the United States to a military effort which is disproportionate to its overall responsibilities and commitments.”⁶

Members of the New Zealand External Affairs Department generally accepted this structure. As one adviser told Secretary McIntosh less than two weeks before the first ANZUS meeting in Honolulu during early August 1952, New Zealand “did not share the long-standing Australian objective of infiltration into the world’s policy-making hierarchy. Australia badly wanted to become the principal consultant of the United States,” the recommendation continued, “and at Honolulu her delegation [came] as near as demanding this outright.”⁷ Instead, Frank Corner suggested that all that New Zealand was seeking from the United States was basic consultation in Far Eastern matters rather than the high level military and political discussions for which Spender had hoped. “What in fact we are all seeking to establish,” Corner

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⁵ Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (W.W. Norton, 1987), 876-878.

⁶ Marshall to Acheson, 16 January 1951, FRUS 1951 vol. VI, 141; Lovett to Acheson, 4 September 1952, FRUS 1952 vol. XII, 216-218.

told McIntosh, is ANZUS as a kind of “Dominion status with the United States, [and] a right
to be consulted in Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs.”

George Laking, another New Zealand External Affairs Officer, was not even convinced that
ANZUS was in any way useful for New Zealand. “The plain fact is we are getting nothing at
all from the Americans, who have a childish faith in their ability to fox one and all,” Laking
complained to Secretary McIntosh on 25 June 1951. “The chances of our knowing the right
answers before the press are five to four against,” he added, and “the secret of it all [was] that
the Americans don’t know the answers themselves until it happens.” McIntosh certainly
sympathised with Laking’s reservations. Along with Foss Shanahan and Joseph Wilson, two
of New Zealand’s External Affairs Officers, McIntosh conceded that New Zealand “never
wanted the damn Pacific Pact in the first place.”

Before the first ANZUS meetings even began in August 1952, Casey recognised the
difficulties that ANZUS posed for Australia and New Zealand. “ANZUS represents [two]
difficulties: the fact that there is one very strong partner and two others very much less strong,
and that any threat to which [Australia] may be exposed must come from the southward
expansionist ambitions of Communist China which must come by land,” Casey penned in his
diary on 1 August. He added that “the fact that the US will not even consider any further land
obligations on the Asian mainland makes for an obviously anomalous position.” Unfortunately
for Casey, he knew that there was little Australia could offer the United States in return for a

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8 Corner to McIntosh, 20 February 1953, Archives NZ, EA, 316/4/1.
9 Laking to McIntosh, 25 June 1951, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 76.
10 McIntosh to Corner, 3 October 1952, in Unofficial Channels, 106.
greater commitment in Southeast Asia. “There are a many great things that we could ask the Americans for,” Casey conceded, but “few things that we could offer them in exchange.”¹¹

Spender, the architect of ANZUS, was having similar problems in Washington. He wrote to Casey in March that he had been “much concerned in the last two or three weeks by the obvious attempts which are being made at the Pentagon to diminish the importance of [ANZUS].” According to Spender, even Australia’s former enemies—Germany, Italy and Japan—had “the opportunity of consultation on vital matters in a manner which so far has been denied to Australia.”¹² “We need to put flesh on the bones of the Pacific Pact,” Spender argued to Casey, suggesting that the powers needed to agree on a “wide flung strategy” and not ignore the needs of home defence.¹³ Much to Spender’s frustration, as Australia was not a NATO member, ANZUS was not allowing Australia to get its voice heard in any of NATO discussions. For Spender, this was important for Australia’s general strategic planning. “NATO decisions affect everyone and Australia should have the right to be heard, not only with respect to general strategic considerations but especially on matters directly affecting Australia,” Spender said in a State Department meeting on 20 May 1952. Spender, in other words, was “not content to be the hair on the tail of the dog.” He felt that Australia should at least be “part of the hide of the dog itself.”¹⁴

Acheson was unprepared to meet Spender’s demands. Brushing off these concerns, Acheson proposed that “if the Australians wanted real contact with the American Government and its thinking on world problems, it was highly desirable that they keep in touch with the Department

¹² Spender to Casey, 18 March 1952, Spender Papers, Box 1, NLA.
¹³ Spender to Casey, 25 June 1952, Spender Papers, Box 1, NLA.
¹⁴ Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, 20 May 1952, Secretary of State File, Acheson Papers, TL.
of State and not continue to attempt to establish themselves in liaison with the Pentagon.” He added that “with particular regard to Pacific defence and its problems, the real planning was being done by Admiral Radford (US Chief Commander in the Pacific) and his staff in Hawaii. If the Australians and New Zealanders really wanted contact with US military planning operations, this was the place for it.”15 In short, Acheson advised that the Australians and New Zealanders should stick with their present contacts with the Department for information relating to global strategic plans. The ANZUS Council meetings were Australia and New Zealand’s supposed “door of entry” to information on US global planning, but not to NATO.16

It was simply not possible for Australia and New Zealand to expect any greater access to the Pentagon through ANZUS. If the ANZUS meetings got through the organizational steps in good order, however, Acheson offered that he would present a total picture that would give them “plenty to think about and work on.”17 It was certainly not the consultation for which Australia had hoped. New Zealand diplomats, on the other hand, believed this method of consultation was appropriate. New Zealand delegates at the first ANZUS Council meeting in Hawaii described the trilateral talks as “a most successful one.”18

British Membership of ANZUS

ANZUS was complicated further by the question of British membership. For the first time in Australian and New Zealand history, the two former British colonies signed a major international defence treaty that did not include Britain as a member. London argued that its

15 Memorandum of Conversation, 4 August 1952, Secretary of State File, Acheson Papers, TL.

16 Watt to McIntosh, 12 July 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3/1 part 8.

17 Ibid.

exclusion was a blow to its international prestige, signalled a clear military weakness in the Commonwealth, and might cause a serious rift in Anglo-American relations. On these grounds, British policymakers ignored Australian and New Zealand representations and strongly objected to ANZUS. After the Foreign Office was initially unable to prevent the treaty’s conclusion in late early to mid-1951, British policy changed to press upon the ANZUS powers the need for British membership either directly as a signatory or indirectly as an observer to Council meetings. British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden argued on 19 April 1951 that Britain should be included in the alliance because “any threat to either Australia or New Zealand must always be calculated as a threat to [Britain].” He went on to suggest that British interests in Malaya “make it essentially a Pacific Power.”19

The Australians were divided over British membership. Given his long predisposition to support Britain and its policies abroad, Menzies was receptive to Eden’s reasoning and agreed that London should be included in ANZUS in some capacity. He told British officials on 5 June that he was “very much in favour” of closer association with the United Kingdom through ANZUS.20 He then told Casey and Spender that “[Australia] should not place any obstacle in United Kingdom efforts” to join ANZUS Council meetings as an observer … provided the Americans are willing to play and provided the United Kingdom request does not involve our acceptance of a string of other countries in the same capacity.”21 These last two points were crucial for Menzies. Firstly, Menzies recognised that American agreement to British observer status was a key condition. This suggests that Menzies had moved away from the idea of British leadership and recognised the need to rely upon the US position. Secondly, if the United States


20 Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to UK High Commission in New Zealand, 5 June 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3/6 part 1.

21 Menzies to Casey and Spender, 5 June 1952, NAA, 5954/1, 1418/3.
agreed to British observer status, Menzies was willing to consider British consultation but feared that its inclusion meant that ANZUS might be expanded to include other Commonwealth countries. He did not want Australia becoming responsible for defending areas outside of its strategic interests.

Spender was unconvinced. He feared British inclusion might strain Anglo-American relations and Britain’s relations with other Commonwealth countries. Most importantly for Australia, British inclusion might dilute the usefulness of ANZUS meetings to consult with the United States on matters of regional and global strategy. If the United States and Britain were both present at ANZUS meetings and squabbled over their own disagreements, Australia’s voice might become increasingly marginalised. Before Britain could be considered as an observer seriously, he told Eden that it was “absolutely essential that the United States and United Kingdom get their lines straightened out and agree upon a common approach” towards pressing disagreements between Washington and London.22 Spender also told Menzies on 6 June 1952 that “while I appreciate the strength of [your observations] … before any questions of ‘observers’ or any extension of the Pact to include other nations should arise, the Council should be first established.”23

Casey was more sympathetic to British concerns over exclusion from ANZUS. He recognised that the British were “very concerned about their being excluded from any official contact with the ANZUS Council.” He was also determined not to pursue closer US consultation at the expense of Australia’s relationship with Britain. Casey wrote at the outset of the first ANZUS Council meeting that “Australian relations with the US are close and confident, but I always have in mind the effect of any accord on the British. It would be counter-

22 Spender to Eden, 15 March 1952, Spender Papers, NLA.
23 Spender to Menzies, 6 June 1952, NAA, A1838/276, 686/6, part 1A.
productive if our good relations with [the] US were at the expense of bad UK-US relations.”

Along the lines of Menzies’s suggestion, he thought he might be able to work in “UK people into the ANZUS Council as British Liaison Officers,” even though he recognised that Australia must execute “caution in extending ‘observer’ rights to the United Kingdom or other countries.” Even if Britain did not become associated with ANZUS, Casey went as far as suggesting that Australia and New Zealand were already acting as British representatives for Commonwealth interests in the Asia-Pacific through ANZUS. “ANZUS [was] only a local manifestation of closer British-American relations,” Casey told the Australian Parliament in September 1952. In other words, Australia and New Zealand would retain their roles as British outposts in the Pacific.

While the Australians were overall divided over the question of British membership, the New Zealanders agreed almost unanimously that Britain must be included in some capacity. New Zealand External Affairs Minister Thomas Clifton Webb thought that while “the Australians saw great difficulty for the United Kingdom to be associated with the Council,” New Zealand was “anxious to have the closest consultation with the United Kingdom on operation of [ANZUS].” Wellington had always been reluctant to adjust to American leadership in the Pacific because of its sentimental ties with Britain. Britain’s inclusion, even as an observer, was greatly appealing to Wellington.

Including Britain also countered concerns in New Zealand that Australia and the US would dominate ANZUS discussions. “From New Zealand’s point of view,” a brief for the New Zealand delegation to the ANZUS Council meeting stated on 25 July 1952,

24 Richard Casey, 3 August 1952, Casey Diaries, 85. See also Casey Statement, undated, Archives NZ, EA, 10/7/4.


27 Webb to Holland, 8 June 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3/6 part 1.
British participation would be a most useful counter-weight which would help to guard against [ANZUS] being influenced too much by Australia or the United States or both. United Kingdom would undoubtedly give a stability to the Council which might otherwise be lacking.\textsuperscript{28}

In short, while the Australians were primarily concerned that British inclusion might prevent closer consultation with the United States through ANZUS, the New Zealanders wanted British inclusion precisely because it would prevent Australia and the United States from dominating ANZUS discussions.

After the first ANZUS meeting in August, McIntosh and Corner both expressed their concerns about British exclusion. On 3 October, McIntosh told Corner that he had “always wanted to have the United Kingdom in.” He even complained that during ANZUS meetings External Affairs Minister Webb “did not put up any fight whatsoever to have the United Kingdom in as observers.”\textsuperscript{29} In response, Corner replied that the real problem was US objections to British inclusion. “It seems to me,” Corner wrote to McIntosh in December 1952, that

The American unwillingness to include Britain in ANZUS springs from a refusal to share real power in the Pacific with any other country. They will talk to Australia and New Zealand, and will be most forthcoming with us, because we are so unequal and represent no real challenge to their right of

\textsuperscript{28} Brief for the Council Meeting: Relationship with the United Kingdom, 25 July 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3/24.

\textsuperscript{29} McIntosh to Corner, 3 October 1952, in Unofficial Channels, 106.
decision. But the British are a different proposition and if they were admitted they would bring much greater weight and prestige and would require that America shared its power of decision.³⁰

Corner’s concerns about US opposition to admitting Britain into ANZUS proved to be correct. Casey told Acheson in the first ANZUS meeting in early August that he was under considerable pressure from the British to have them brought into ANZUS planning. He said that British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden “feels very deeply” on this question and had pressed Casey to push the British case. Acheson, in response, said he felt that this was “completely impossible.”³¹

The United States, preferring to “go it alone” in the Pacific rather than including Britain, had no interest whatsoever in including it in ANZUS in any capacity. While Acheson told Menzies that he thought the ANZUS powers should “keep no secrets” from the United Kingdom, he was not prepared to offer them “any special consideration” through ANZUS.³² After informing Eden of his decision in August 1952, Acheson’s stern comments ended any further serious discussion about British membership. Acheson was determined to assert that the United States was indeed the dominant power in the relationship and would not accept changes to the treaty that did not suit US interests. Unable to sway American opinion, British policymakers eventually conceded that “Australia and New Zealand had grown up” and London would not be directly associated with ANZUS in any capacity.³³

³⁰ Corner to McIntosh, 17 December 1952, in Unofficial Channels, 112.

³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, 4 August 1952, Secretary of State File, Acheson Papers, TL.


³³ Corner to McIntosh, 11 December 1952, in Unofficial Channels, 109.
The Five-Power Staff Agency

After being rejected from ANZUS as an observer or otherwise, Britain instead pushed for the conclusion of a Five-Power Staff Agency between the United States, Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand for the collective defence of Southeast Asia. In December 1952, British, American and French representatives met in Paris and agreed in principle to a coalition for liaison on intelligence and other defence matters in the region. In a follow-up meeting in London, Churchill stressed that “it was unreasonable for ANZUS staff planners to deal with the Pacific and Southeast Asia without direct assistance from the British.”

Then, in a separate meeting with Dominion representatives, Churchill told Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers Robert Menzies and Sidney Holland that the Agency would essentially be a revitalised and widened version of previous ANZAM defence arrangements between their three countries. He handed both Menzies and Holland a newly revised British defence policy document called “The Future of ANZAM,” which outlined Britain’s plans for the Agency as well as a new focus on defending Malaya from Communist aggression. This plan, in short, aimed to expand previous Australian-New Zealand-British cooperation into a defence arrangement for Southeast Asia that also included the United States and France. In so doing, this arrangement would effectively “diminish [the] significance” of ANZUS and enable Britain to be as closely involved as possible in the defence planning for the region.

New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland was particularly excited at the prospect of creating a Staff Agency. If the United States agreed to take part in the Agency, Holland thought

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35 Meeting between Churchill, Menzies and Holland, 12 December 1952, NAA, A5954/1, 1424/1.
it was a fantastic opportunity to incorporate Britain in Pacific defence planning after their attempts to join ANZUS were blocked by the State Department. It would be a “marriage of ANZUS and ANZAM,” Holland said, adding that the Agency could become a prelude to a joint machinery in the whole Pacific.\textsuperscript{37} In other words, Holland hoped to reignite discussions over including Britain as an ANZUS partner.

Support for the proposal was less forthcoming in Wellington. For New Zealand, Frank Corner contemplated that French membership and the deteriorating situation in Indochina made the Agency appear primarily for multilateral defence discussions in Vietnam. He then questioned whether a focus on Indochina was in New Zealand’s best interest. The Agency aimed to deal primarily with the “vital problems in Indochina” and “raise French morale,” Corner told McIntosh, and similarly thought the Pentagon was only interested in the Agency for “considering practical problems relating to Indochina.”\textsuperscript{38} His greatest concern, in short, was that a joint Agency would increase the risk that New Zealand might become involved in an unwanted war in Indochina.

In the Australian External Affairs Department, however, Casey and Spender were greatly concerned that the creation of a joint Staff Agency for the defence of Southeast Asia would undermine the importance of ANZUS. Similarly, they were also concerned that an Agency would prevent Canberra from consulting directly with Washington on security issues in the region. As Truman’s second term as US President was soon scheduled to end, Casey and Spender thought that Australia should push for an ANZUS Council meeting with the Americans shortly after new President-elect Dwight Eisenhower took office to gauge his Administration’s views on the subject. In order to “offset any danger” that the Agency might

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Corner to McIntosh, 20 February 1953, in Unofficial Channels, 125.
undermine ANZUS military planning, Spender urged Casey to call an ANZUS meeting shortly after Eisenhower took office.\(^{39}\)

Fearing the political effect it would have in London, New Zealand responded unfavourably to an ANZUS meeting. Webb told the Australians shortly after the meeting was proposed that it was untimely “to press for an early ANZUS meeting at least at this juncture” because it might aggravate the British.\(^{40}\) Secretary in the Australian Commissioner’s Office in Wellington J.S. Cumpston then tried to urge New Zealand to reconsider. In meeting with Shanahan and McIntosh in late February, Cumpston attempted to persuade both men of the need for an early ANZUS meeting with the Americans. Their response, however, was again unresponsive due to concerns about the effect an early ANZUS meeting would have in London.\(^{41}\) Wellington dismissed subsequent Australian efforts to urge New Zealand to support an earlier ANZUS meeting in March.

Meanwhile, after initial consultation with London, the United States agreed in principle to the establishment of a Five-Power Staff Agency for the defence of Southeast Asia. While the arrangement did not specifically commit any country to military action, it did provide a basic framework for joint-defence planning in the region. Delegates agreed that each country would appoint a military representative to coordinate defence plans with one another, as well as exchange all available intelligence information useful to the defence of Southeast Asia. As Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs John Allison advised Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in late January, “I cannot conceive how we can engage in efficient planning for the

\(^{39}\) Spender to Casey, 2 January 1953, NAA, A5954/1, 1424/1.

\(^{40}\) Webb to Casey, 21 January 1953, NAA, A5461/1, 1/4/2A Part 3.

\(^{41}\) Cumpston to Plimsoll, 25 February 1953, NAA, A816/51, 11/301/867.
military defence of the Pacific without engaging in some form of joint planning with our allies.”

Allison argued that the Agency must take a different form to ANZUS for two reasons. Firstly, he thought that an enlargement of ANZUS would entail an unwanted US commitment to Hong Kong, Malaya and Indochina. Secondly, he urged Dulles that the Agency was most because it would help prevent Chinese aggression in the region. US policymakers such as Allison, in other words, had no intention of expanding ANZUS nor merely mollifying British concerns about defence planning for the region. Instead, the United States primarily saw the Agency as a means to prevent Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia. The Agency “offered the best prospect of causing Communist China to cease an aggression,” the State Department concluded on 17 February.

In Australia, policymakers continued to be concerned that the military function of ANZUS would be substantially absorbed into the Staff Agency. Australian Defence Minister Philip McBride told Menzies one week after the Conference that “the accent on planning for South East Asia has been transferred from an ANZUS to a Five Power basis.” He added that he was concerned that the Staff Agency might subsume ANZUS and ANZAM in the long-term future. Members of the Australian External Affairs Department were also anxious as to what the Agency would mean for the future of ANZUS military discussions. Assistant External Affairs Secretary Ralph Harry argued that the development of the Agency would lead to “the suspension by ANZUS of its military planning and concentration on political consultation,” mainly because the Agency’s proposed plan of studies would “seem to render redundant at

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43 Ibid.


least some of the current ANZUS military planning.” Again, the primary Australian concern was that the Agency would make ANZUS obsolete.

Given New Zealand’s great reluctance to hold an ANZUS Council meeting on the subject, Australia stepped up its own diplomatic efforts to obtain US views. In late May, Minister of the Australian Embassy in Washington Arthur Tange conferred with US Director of the Office of the British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs Andrew Foster. Foster made it clear that given the Pentagon’s reluctance to underwrite the security of mainland Asia, the US did not think the Staff Agency should be “a formal and elaborate organisation.” The Agency should “rest on an ad hoc, on call-need-to-know basis.” He assured the Australians that there was no prospect that the Agency would supplant ANZUS and ANZAM machineries. In regards to the concept of an ANZUS-ANZAM linkage, Foster claimed the US could not establish a firm position until it “learn[s] of any ideas that may come out of conversations” among the Commonwealth states on the reformation of ANZAM.” At least for now, Australian concerns about the future of ANZUS had been allayed.

_The Eisenhower Administration and its Implications for ANZUS_

As discussions surrounding ANZUS and the Five-Power Staff Agency took place in late 1952 and early 1953, major political changes in the United States complicated the future of defence arrangements in the Asia-Pacific. President Truman’s second term as US President was scheduled to end in January 1953, and in turn, a US federal election was planned for November 1952 to decide his replacement. After almost twenty years of Democrat control of the White House, the Republican Party’s Presidential candidate, Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower, won the election by campaigning on major changes to US foreign policy. While Ike strongly criticised

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47 Foster to Matthews, 29 May 1953, NARA, RG 59, 790.5/5-2953.
Truman for plunging the United States into a costly and protracted war, Eisenhower promised he would end the war in Korea and reduce the financial deficit from over-spending on the military.

On taking office, Eisenhower’s first major foreign policy initiative was appointing John Foster Dulles as his Secretary of State. Given his experience in international affairs, Eisenhower believed that Dulles was an “obvious” choice for the position.48 He even commented later that even though they did not always see completely eye to eye on all foreign policy issues, Dulles was a “truly great Secretary of State.”49 In Australia and New Zealand, Dulles’s appointment was especially important because both countries had experience in dealing with him during the ANZUS negotiations in early 1951.

Eisenhower’s most immediate foreign policy problem was ending a protracted and costly war in Korea. “Of the manifold problems confronting me early in 1953,” Eisenhower penned in his memoirs, “none required more urgent attention than the war in Korea.”50 He had famously visited Korea in late 1952, but had no precise idea about how to end the war. Fortunately for Eisenhower, in March US negotiators achieved a breakthrough with their North Korean-Chinese counterparts over an exchange of prisoners of war. After restraining South Korean President Syngman Rhee from continuing the war and accepting a compromise


49 Eisenhower to Robinson, 12 March 1954, Dwight David Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, Diary Series, Box 6, EL.

50 Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, 171.
demarcation at the 38th parallel, an armistice was signed on 27 July 1953 which brought the Korean War to an end.51

The Eisenhower Administration also needed new national security strategies. After much deliberation, the National Security Council produced the NSC 162/2 report in late 1953, a formal statement that outlined Eisenhower’s “New Look” approach to foreign policy.52 NSC 162/2 aimed to achieve the same goals as Truman’s national defence policies, but would do so through more cost effective means; namely, through a reliance on nuclear weapons, an appeared willingness to use them and its subsequent deterrent effect on the belligerent Soviet bloc. It also relied on forming a number of defence pacts with Allied powers—often referred to as Eisenhower and Dulles’s “pactomania”—that aimed to ensure the United States would not again have to shoulder the burden of an entire military effort like it did in Korea.53

Part of this plan encompassed a continued commitment to the ANZUS treaty. In September, the second round of ANZUS Council meetings were held in Washington. During these meetings JCS Chairman Arthur Radford confirmed this sustained commitment to the ANZUS partners, emphasising both his “continued interest in ANZUS” and the treaty’s overall “importance and value” to US defence planning in the Pacific. Commander of the US Pacific Fleet Admiral Felix Stump expressed similar sentiments. He outlined that ANZUS military


discussions would be used as “background material to national plans” in the Pacific theatre, particularly in relation to Five-Power Agency defence discussions in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{54} ANZUS, in other words, would provide one basis for US defence planning in the region. The Australians and New Zealanders welcomed this arrangement, yet similar issues to those presented during the first Council meetings one year earlier re-emerged. Casey again raised the possibility of British membership in ANZUS, asking whether “any link could be created” to satisfying British membership demands. Spender also continued to express his discontent at the “insufficient planning and coordination” between the ANZUS partners in the event of a worldwide war and suggested the smaller ANZUS partners should be privy to US global war plans. Both of these suggestions, however, were dismissed by US representatives.\textsuperscript{55} In short, the United States remained committed to ANZUS under Eisenhower, but it was not prepared to change the membership or consultative arrangements of the alliance.

Outside of these ANZUS discussions, Australian and New Zealand policymakers were seriously concerned by the Eisenhower Administration’s new national security policies. On the one hand, an increased US commitment to its formal allies suggests Eisenhower and Dulles were prepared to take ANZUS and the Five-Power Staff Agency seriously and consult more closely with Canberra and Wellington. On the other hand, a reliance on nuclear weapons opened up further the serious possibility of another world war in which Australia and New Zealand would undoubtedly have been involved. New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Leslie Munro suggested that the new Administration would follow a “conservative line.” To his mind, this meant that Eisenhower was looking to cut military spending and reduce direct US military involvement overseas during the 1950s. Such a policy, according to Munro, was

\textsuperscript{54} Minutes of the ANZUS Council Meeting, 9-10 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 60, D 627, CF 163.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
not ideal for New Zealand, particularly for Western defence positions in the Pacific. In terms of broader US strategy, there were similar concerns in New Zealand that Eisenhower’s proposed brinkmanship foreign policy could be disastrous for the West. Many New Zealand diplomats regarded these policies as “misguided,” “misconceived” or “extreme.”

While still concerned about the potential for global nuclear war, policymakers in Canberra were more optimistic about Eisenhower’s new national security strategies. Many officers within the Australian External Affairs Department hoped that a new US reliance on its defence pacts would increase American involvement in the Asia-Pacific. If used cautiously, they were also optimistic that US nuclear diplomacy could prevent further Communist advances. Casey, for one, was hopeful that the “major re-appraisal of US foreign policy” would benefit Australia because it would involve greater US interest in defending a region close to Australian borders. He thought, in turn, that Australia must capitalise on this unprecedented US interest in Southeast Asia and demonstrate that Canberra was a reliable US ally. “It would be bad value,” Casey later wrote in his diary, “to give Washington the impression that it was “contemplating retreat from [its] obligations.”

**Crisis in Southeast Asia: The Siege at Dien Bien Phu and the Formation of SEATO**

As Australian and New Zealand diplomats contemplated the repercussions of new US national security strategies during the early stages of the Eisenhower Administration, a Communist offensive in North Indochina threatened the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in early 1954 and raised questions about US involvement in Southeast Asia. The United States seriously

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58 Casey Diary Entry, 16 September 1954, Casey’s Diaries, 186.
contemplated military action through the guise of allied support for multilateral intervention through the “United Action” proposal. While Australia was especially excited that the United States was consulting more closely with Canberra and taking a greater interest in the defence of Southeast Asia, Australian policymakers suggested they could not agree to the proposal while the Menzies Government prepared for an election in May. The Australians were also reluctant to participate if Britain refused to join the multilateral intervention plan. Similarly, New Zealand would not commit until Britain confirmed its participation. Ultimately, after London refused to participate, the proposal fell apart.

In the aftermath of this crisis, the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was formed. While the United States suggested it would only take part in this treaty if it specifically outlined that it was designed to respond to Communist aggression, US participation in SEATO confirmed that the Eisenhower Administration was prepared to build alliance networks in the Asia-Pacific and consult more closely with its allies in responding to mutual security threats. Australia hoped for a broader scope to the treaty, but was nevertheless pleased that the United States had committed to the defence of Southeast Asia in some capacity. Again, both Australia and New Zealand were excited that British participation in SEATO might lead to a convergence of Anglo-American interests in the region. New Zealand policymakers in fact specifically outlined it would not commit until Britain committed to the treaty. This section examines these policy differences on the Indochina Crisis and SEATO and suggests that British policy had a decisive impact on ANZUS relations.

The 1954 Indochina Crisis and the Proposal for United Action

Before the outbreak of fighting at Dien Bien Phu in March 1954, Communist revolutionaries and the remnants of French colonial forces had been locked in a power struggle over Indochina for almost one decade. To a large extent, Eisenhower’s policy options toward this struggle were
constrained by the choices of his predecessor. Under Truman, the United States had explicitly stated that France had a right to retake control of Indochina after the Japanese occupation after World War II. From 1950 onwards, the Truman Administration actively aided the French war-effort after its position in the region looked increasingly unstable. After promising an unwavering commitment to stop the spread of Communist aggression during the 1952 election campaign, Eisenhower had little choice other than to continue supporting the French cause in Indochina even if Paris could not continue to hold its position alone. As Fredrik Logevall pointed out, the Eisenhower Administration opted to continue supporting the French and “hope for the best rather than face the unpleasant task of initiating a fundamental change in policy.”

Similarly, the Menzies and Holland governments had been long-concerned about the deteriorating situation in Indochina and outlined a firm commitment to defending Communist aggression. In March 1950, Australian External Affairs Minister Percy Spender thought that Indochina represented the “greatest present danger point” in Southeast Asia. Policymakers in Wellington reached similar conclusions. By 1953, New Zealand High Commissioner in London Frank Corner was convinced Indochina was the “key” to Southeast Asia. He argued that if the Communists were successful in Indochina, Malaya, Burma and Siam would also fall under Communist control. Corner was also hopeful that New Zealand might be able to work closely with Australia on Southeast Asian issues, even though he complained that “the Australians are often more interested in having a voice than solving practical problems.”


61 Corner to McIntosh, 20 February 1953, in Unofficial Channels, 122-127.
On 13 March 1954, tensions in Indochina reached a climax after Vietminh forces led an assault against the French fortress at Dien Bien Phu. The siege caused a major strain in Anglo-American relations, prompting Australia and New Zealand to seriously reconsider how closely, if at all, the respective External Affairs departments were prepared to align its policies with Washington. Moreover, even though the security of both countries rested on the future of Southeast Asia, there was no certainty that Australia and New Zealand could reach common ground as to the most appropriate response. To the contrary, two days after the first day of the siege, Frank Corner warned External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh that New Zealand should not involve itself in the conflict purely to protect Australian strategic interests. He also doubted whether the future of Southeast Asia was in fact a vital interest for New Zealand. Predicting that Australia would push for joint intervention in Southeast Asia, Corner wrote on 15 March that New Zealand “should resist being dragged by the Australians … into premature involvement in Southeast Asia.” He concluded that he felt “very dubious about bustling into commitments in Southeast Asia … there is no good future for us there.”

In Washington, JCS Chairman Arthur Radford warned Eisenhower that the United States must be prepared to intervene militarily in order to prevent the loss of all Indochina. In Radford’s own words, the United States “must be prepared … to act promptly and in force possibly to a frantic and belated request by the French for US intervention.” Dulles, however, disagreed with Radford’s proposal. He feared that the United States might get embroiled in another protracted and costly war. He also thought that even if the Administration wanted to act unilaterally, Congress would be unlikely to authorise such action. At the time, the Eisenhower Administration was under constant attack from hard-line democratic Senators such as Joseph McCarthy who argued strongly that the United States was not doing anywhere near

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62 Corner to McIntosh, 15 March 1954, in Unofficial Channels, 158.

63 Radford to Eisenhower, 24 March 1954, NARA, RG 59, 751.00/3-2454.
enough to combat Communism at home and abroad. Much to Eisenhower’s annoyance, these attacks separated the House of Representatives and Senate on almost every issue and often froze Congress into an impractical and unmanageable sector of government. In short, Congressional backing for any short-term policy in Indochina was close to impossible. “It is close to disgusting,” Eisenhower wrote angrily, “it saddens me that I must feel ashamed for the United States Senate.” Already in his own fight with Congress, the President wrote in frustration several days later on 18 March that the Indochina Crisis was “just another of the problems dumped on [his] lap.”

In an effort to alleviate any domestic criticisms of US inaction, Eisenhower outlined publicly that his government was committed to preventing the spread of Communism. He warned that the loss of French Indochina would have a “domino effect” that would leave the rest of Southeast Asia vulnerable to Communist control. In order to respond to this threat as well as curb domestic concerns of unilateral action, Dulles then proposed that the United States should act jointly with its allies in preventing the loss of Indochina to Communist forces. Advising the NSC that “there was no need” for immediate unilateral action, Dulles suggested making US multilateral intervention provisional on whether US allies would be willing to support multilateral action. After Eisenhower agreed to this approach, Dulles followed up the “domino theory” speech with his own public call for a multilateral response to Indochina. Privately, plans were also made between Eisenhower and Dulles to use ANZUS meetings as a means to consult with Australia and New Zealand. Knowing Canberra’s earnest desire for closer

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64 Eisenhower to Hazlett, 18 March 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, EL.

consultation with the United States, Eisenhower commented that this plan would make the Australians “terribly excited.”

In an effort to convince Canberra and Wellington that their participation in Indochina was important, Dulles urged the respective Australians and New Zealand Ambassadors in Washington Percy Spender and Leslie Munro that the loss of Indochina would directly threaten the security of both of their countries. “If Indochina goes,” Dulles told Spender and Munro, “Australia and New Zealand will be directly threatened.”

Concerned that London would not be willing to participate in multilateral intervention, Dulles also requested that American Ambassador in Canberra Amos Peaslee make similar efforts to persuade policymakers in Canberra to support the American plan rather than aligning with British policy. “I hope you will take appropriate occasion to spell out our views in discussions with top officials,” Dulles told the US Embassy in Canberra, as he was concerned that the Australians would take a “similar line to [the] British.” Dulles, however, remained hopeful that Australia and New Zealand could convince policymakers in London to participate. Whilst predicting there would be “great difficulties” in securing British support due to an upcoming public debate surrounding the production of the hydrogen bomb, Dulles thought that Australia and New Zealand would be “willing to urge the British in the right direction.”

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66 Eisenhower-Dulles Conversation Memorandum, 3 April 1954 Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 6, EL.


68 Ibid.

69 Conversation between Dulles, Bonnet, MacArthur and Bonbright, 3 April 1954, FRUS 1954 Vol. XIII Part I, 1228. During the early 1950s, Britain planned to test hydrogen bombs in the Pacific. These tests were eventually carried out in 1957 and 1958. See Lorna Arnold and Katherine Pyne, Britain and the H-Bomb (Palgrave, 2001); Robert Self, British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Changing World (Palgrave, 2010), 192-203.
On 5 April, Dulles formally proposed the “ad hoc coalition” to Spender and Munro. Echoing Eisenhower’s earlier words, Dulles stressed that if Australia and New Zealand were not prepared to be “excited” by the coalition then the United States would not take action.\(^\text{70}\) Again, Dulles stressed that British participation in this plan was crucial. He told both Spender and Dulles that a new military force was needed in Indochina and it “had to include Britain.” That being the case, Dulles asked both men to meet with diplomats in the British Embassy in Washington and urge them that the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand must all unite for the defence of Indochina in order to repel the Communist advance in Southeast Asia.\(^\text{71}\)

As far as the Australian position was concerned, Spender told Dulles that he could not commit his government while it faced a general election for the House of Representatives which was set for 29 May. Another Australian concern was the recent development of the Petrov Affair in early April, an event that saw Third Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Canberra Vladmir Petrov offer details of Soviet espionage in Australia in exchange for political asylum. The Petrov Affair sparked considerable public outcry in Australia that the Menzies Government must do more to combat Communist threats domestically instead of focusing solely on overseas developments in Indochina. As one American report concluded, Petrov’s defection was the “biggest story of its kind that has ever happened in Australia.” As a result, Indochina had been “all but shoved of [the] front pages of newspapers by [the] Petrov Affair.”\(^\text{72}\)

\(^{70}\) Memorandum of Meeting with Dulles, Spender and Munro, 4 April 1954, NARA, RG 59, 751.00/4-454.

\(^{71}\) Logevall, *Embers of War*, 470-471.

Once Spender described his conversation with Dulles to Casey, however, he urged that Australia should accept this proposal as a means to ensure that US interest in defending Southeast Asia increased. As he told Casey,

One of the primary aims of our policy over recent years has been, as I understand it, to achieve the acceptance by the USA of responsibility for [South East] Asia. It is for consideration whether, if we fail to respond at all to the opportunity now presented, what US reactions are likely to be if and when areas closer to Australia are in jeopardy.\(^73\)

Casey agreed it was crucial for Australia to support the US position in Indochina. As he penned in his diary one day after receiving Spender’s message, the United States “won’t go in alone” in Indochina and if “Australia and others don’t respond they may change their South-East Asia attitude.”\(^74\) As the defence of Southeast Asia was crucial to Australian security, any decline in US interest in the region was a very serious concern. Casey tried to urge the seriousness of the Indochina situation to the Australian public in the event that Australia might have to follow the United States into a war in Indochina. Gathering public support was crucial, as a large segment of the Australian public were still “puzzled” about what United Action entailed and what Australia’s role would be in such a plan.\(^75\) “If Indochina were to fall to the Communists the whole of Southeast Asia would be threatened,” Casey proclaimed in the House

\(^73\) Spender to Casey, 6 April 1954, NAA, A5462/1, 2/4/1 Part 2.

\(^74\) Casey Diary Entry, 7 April 1954, NAA, M1153, 34.

\(^75\) Report by the United States Naval Attaché in Melbourne to the Department of the Army, April 1954, NARA, RG 59, 743.00W/4-954.
of Representatives on 7 April.\textsuperscript{76} This statement mirrored Eisenhower’s sentiments about the loss of Indochina having a potential domino-like effect on the rest of Southeast Asia.

Yet despite how seriously Casey feared the deteriorating situation in Indochina and any decline in US interest in Southeast Asia, he was not convinced that the “United Action” proposal was the best course of action. After speaking with British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden on 15 April, Casey was convinced that Britain would not participate in the plan. Furthermore, Casey thought that were substantial risks involved if Australia participated in joint military intervention without Britain. Describing the American plan for mass intervention as “wrong,” Casey stressed that United Action would not stop the fall of Dien Bien Phu and risked putting Australia “in the wrong with world opinion particularly in Asia.” He also thought such action could potentially risk war with China.\textsuperscript{77} For these reasons, Casey thought that United Action should not be pursued.

Casey’s arguments won the day and the Australian government agreed that it could not commit to the “United Action” proposal. While the Cabinet concluded that Australia should encourage the French to continue fighting and support US military involvement in the region, it could not commit to Dulles’s plan for multilateral intervention because of the political pressures leading up to a general election in May. The Cabinet also concluded that because Australia had defence arrangements with Britain in the region it would be unfavourable to join in a US military response if Britain did not participate. Overall, Cabinet decided Australia could not commit to the plan but still must somehow show the United States that it was “not lukewarm in supporting proposals designed to ensure that Communism in Southeast Asia is checked.”\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{77} Casey Diary Entry, 15 April 1954, NAA, M1153, 34.

\textsuperscript{78} Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 6 April 1954, NAA, A1838/276, TS383/4/1 Part 1.
With regards to Indochina and US interest in Southeast Asia, Australia simply wanted to have its cake and eat it too.

Meanwhile, policymakers in New Zealand wanted to know the British response before they made any decision. Writing to the New Zealand High Commission in London, McIntosh told Corner that his personal preference was New Zealand should “tell the Americans we will join them on the understanding that the British … come in also.”

In Washington, New Zealand Ambassador Leslie Munro suggested that Dulles’s plea for “United Action” signalled a new course of American policy in Indochina that the United States could not accept under any circumstances that Indochina fall completely to the Communists. As a result, Munro concluded that New Zealand “had little alternative but to join the coalition” because New Zealand valued its close relations with the United States especially due to Indochina’s proximity to Australia and New Zealand. Munro, however, thought along similar lines to McIntosh and attached one very important condition to New Zealand participation: the United Kingdom “must also participate.”

McIntosh also thought that New Zealand should encourage the French to commit to the US plan for multilateral intervention. He reasoned that this response would prevent New Zealand from falling out with the Americans while simultaneously stopping New Zealand from committing without British support.

On 7 April, Australia and New Zealand exchanged their policy conclusions with respect to Indochina. The Australian position determined that every effort must be made to strengthen the will of the French. It also determined that “Australia should also encourage Indochina governments to reach agreements with the French in establishing their independence and

79 McIntosh to Corner, 12 April 1954, in Unofficial Channels, 164.

80 Munro to Corner, 6 April 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 316/4/1 Part 6; Munro to Webb, 6 April 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 316/4/1 Part 6.

81 McIntosh to Corner, 12 April 1954, in Unofficial Channels, 164-165.
continue the Communist resistance.” In order to achieve this objective, the policy document concluded that “Australia should participate in United Action because doing otherwise might compromise the present helpful trend of American policy towards the security of the Pacific.”

In short, Canberra outlined a two-fold objective in the Indochina Crisis: encourage the French to continue fighting, and assure the Americans that Australia was committed to the defence of Southeast Asia even though upcoming elections delayed an immediate public response. British participation was desirable for the Australians, but not essential.

In contrast, the New Zealand policy document on Indochina revolved around British participation, UN involvement and avoiding a confrontation with China. It determined that New Zealand would only participate in United Action “under the condition that Britain [was] also a participant” and such a coalition fell under the “aegis of the United Nations.” Moreover, due to concerns that intervention might escalate into a wider war, the document outlined that a Western multilateral response must make “every effort to avoid confrontation with China.”

Australia and New Zealand greatly differed in their assessments about the possibility of Chinese intervention. The Australians knew that New Zealand was reluctant to defend Indochina because of fears that doing so may spark a war with China. New Zealand’s policy position was that “armed intervention in Indochina may lead to involvement with China and possibly even with the Soviet Union itself,” an Australian Joint Intelligence Committee report concluded, adding that Wellington was “more doubtful whether it could be possible to avoid conflict with China.” Australia predicted instead that it “was not likely that the Chinese would

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82 Australian Policy on Indochina, 7 April 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 316/4/1 Part 2. See also Joint Intelligence Committee Report, 14 April 1954, NAA, A5954, 2298/2.

abandon their profitable policy for one of open intervention which carries the risk of retaliation.”

Irrespective of whether China would act in Indochina after possible Western intervention, the British strongly opposed to the United Action proposal. As part of his initial pursuit of United Action, Dulles met with British Ambassador Roger Makins on 2 April. During the meeting, Anglo-American differences over supporting French action in Indochina were sharply exposed. While Dulles warned against the “dangers of a French collapse” and that “French accepting a settlement would be disastrous for the free world,” Makins responded that his government regarded “the deteriorating situation in Indochina in more pessimistic terms” and was inclined to accept a settlement in Indochina.

Shortly thereafter, Eisenhower wrote to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and declared that his Administration had no intention of searching for a peaceful solution. Churchill, however, was reluctant to commit to any action. Churchill told Eisenhower directly that he feared multilateral intervention would lead to a wider war and threaten British interests in Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore. In short, Churchill said that the US plan for multilateral action simply “raised too many problems” for Britain. Privately, Churchill confessed that he had no interest in putting British troops “in the jungle” and thought that Malaya could still be held even if Indochina fell.

As the weeks passed and the US mustered little support for United Action, the situation in Indochina worsened. On 23 April, Eisenhower received a deflating brief of the situation in

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84 Joint Intelligence Committee Report, 14 April 1954, NAA, A5954, 2298/2.
86 Churchill to Eisenhower, 7 April 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, EL.
Indochina, which stated that “the situation here is tragic. France is almost visibly collapsing under our eyes … if Dien Bien Phu falls, the [French] government will be taken over.”

Eisenhower again wrote to Churchill, hoping that the British might reconsider their position on Indochina as the Geneva Conference approached. “I am deeply concerned by the seemingly wide differences in the conclusions developed in our respective governments,” Eisenhower wrote to Churchill on 26 April, “especially as these conclusions relate to such events as the war in Indochina.”

Even though France was quickly losing control over Indochina, Eisenhower had problems convincing the French to consider multilateral support for their position. “For more than three years I have been urging upon successive French governments the advisability of finding some way of ‘internationalising’ the war,” Eisenhower confessed, but

The reply has always been vague, containing references to national prestige, Constitutional limitations, inevitable effects upon the Moroccan and Tunisian peoples, and dissertations on plain political difficulties and battles within the French Parliament. The result has been that the French have failed entirely to produce any enthusiasm on the part of the Vietnamese for participation in the war.

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88 Carroll to Whitman, 23 April 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, EL.

89 Eisenhower to Churchill, 26 April 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, EL.

90 Eisenhower to Hazlett, 27 April 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, EL.
Eisenhower concluded that the situation in Indochina had gotten to a point where “the French have used weasel words in promising independence and through this one reason as much as anything else, have suffered reverses that have really been inexcusable.”

As American frustrations with British and French policies toward Indochina increased, the possibility of unilateral action resurfaced in Washington. During an NSC meeting on 29 April, Vice President Richard Nixon and Director of the Mutual Security Agency Harold Stassen argued that the United States “should not let the British have a veto over our freedom of action.” Eisenhower disagreed, believing that the United States was not in a position to be the non-Communist world’s sole policeman and would be looked upon unfavourably by the rest of the world if it took unilateral action. “To go in unilaterally in Indochina,” Eisenhower said, “amounted to an attempt to police the entire world.” He added that if the United States attempted such a course of action, “we should everywhere be accused of imperialistic ambitions.”

Meanwhile, the Geneva Conference began on 26 April 1954. Two weeks into the Conference, after the US refused to act unilaterally and did not gather support for United Action, Dien Bien Phu fell to the Communists. Although American delegates continued to press the British for joint military action and urged the French to continue fighting, by June the Eisenhower Administration abandoned its plans for multilateral intervention and instead looked towards finding a diplomatic solution to Indochina. Similar to the post-war split-up of Korea, delegates at Geneva agreed that Indochina would be divided into two regions, with the Vietminh occupying the North and the French occupying the South. The decision awarded the Soviet bloc a major diplomatic victory in the face of French defeat. Likewise, the decision was a major blow to Western prestige. After having failed to defend Dien Bien Phu, the Eisenhower

91 Ibid.

92 NSC Meeting, 29 April 1954, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, EL.
Administration then turned its attention to the possibility of a collective defence arrangement in Southeast Asia.

The Creation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO)

Having to resort to reaching a diplomatic solution in Indochina was disappointing for US policymakers. After sending the French $2.6 billion in military assistance between 1950 and 1954, Washington’s failure to prevent a Vietminh victory in Indochina damaged Eisenhower’s credibility in fulfilling his promise to limit Communist expansion. Nevertheless, the end of the fighting and the formalisation of a North Vietnamese Communist state enabled the Eisenhower Administration to pursue a broader collective security pact for Southeast Asia, especially because the Five-Power Staff Agency talks had produced few tangible results since its inception a year earlier. As Dulles said, rather than dwell on the loss of Indochina, the United States should “seize the opportunity” to deter the enlargement of Communism in Asia through a regional defence arrangement.93

Discussions for a regional defence arrangement in Southeast Asia began in the National Security Council. From a military point of view, questions were raised about the desirability of a pact when few states in the region were capable of defending themselves. At an NSC meeting on 23 July, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Arthur Radford said that “we [the United States] are now talking about an area where there are no developed military forces.” He added that the US could build military power in the region, but “only at considerable cost.” Overall, he argued that the United States “should take a good look at the idea of a defence

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alliance for this area to be sure we are not making a mistake … from a military point of view a Southeast Asia defence pact seems undesirable and unwise.”

The State Department, however, saw clear advantages in concluding a defence pact. Such a pact would signal a clear US willingness to prevent the spread of Communism and ensure that countries at risk of Communist subversion would be provided with American assistance. At a follow-up meeting for American policy toward Southeast Asia on 24 July, Dulles argued that a defence pact would have two clear advantages: it would give Eisenhower discretionary authority (which he did not already have) to use in the event of overt Chinese aggression in the area, and it would ensure that Washington had the support of other nations in any action it might be forced to take. Moreover, as a means to offset Radford’s concerns about an undesirable military commitment, Dulles suggested that the treaty would not be drafted in such a way “so as to lead other signatories to expect large amounts of US military assistance.” In order for such a pact to be effective, it would require support from other countries willing to enter into the agreement.

Most importantly for the prospects of concluding a regional defence treaty, Britain quickly signalled its willingness to enter into a defence pact despite sharp differences with the Americans over Indochina in Geneva. Fearing that British bases in Malaya and Hong Kong were at risk, Churchill wrote to Eisenhower on 21 June stating that Britain and the United States should “establish a firm front against Communism in the Pacific sphere.” More specifically, Churchill suggested that there should be a Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) similar in structure and purpose to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for Europe.

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94 Memorandum of a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 23 July 1954, NARA, RG 59, Lot 61, D 417.

95 Minutes of a Meeting on Southeast Asia, 24 July 1954, NARA RG 59, Lot 60, D 627, CF 348.

Concerned that the Communist diplomatic victory in Geneva might spur further aggression in the region, there was a clear sense of urgency about Churchill’s efforts to secure the treaty. New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Leslie Munro reported to Wellington that at a luncheon meeting in Washington a week later, Churchill said that plans for the defence of Southeast Asia would be “pressed forward now, immediately.”

Meanwhile, an ANZUS meeting took place in Washington on 30 June. Dulles told Casey and Munro that as agreements for Indochina took place in Geneva, the United States was “very deeply concerned” about developments in the area. Moreover, he stressed that the United States could not “fight their own way into the area, alone, and under conditions by no means clear.” Dulles then suggested that it would be especially useful for the United States to be briefed on Australian and New Zealand views on Indochina, because France was “fading away” and Britain was “badly overextended.”

In response, Casey suggested that reaching a SEATO-type arrangement would be useful for Australia. Casey, however, thought that a temporary “ad-hoc SEATO” would be practical until a formal multilateral agreement could be agreed upon by Washington and London. He proposed a public non-aggression pact with as many Asian countries as possible. “Such a document would have no teeth and involve no obligations for its parties,” Casey conceded, but once a more binding agreement could be reached, he thought that “the teeth of an alliance would be in SEATO.” Casey, in short, was in favour of an immediate defence structure for Southeast Asia that included countries in that region and hoped both Britain and the United States would be involved. “We could not be belligerent while the United Kingdom was not,” Casey wrote in his diary after the meeting. He added, almost excitedly, that by Australia being

97 Munro to Holland, 30 June 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 434/8/1 Part 4.
98 Notes of the ANZUS Meeting, 30 June 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 434/8/1 Part 4
99 Ibid.
“poised rather delicately” between the United States and Britain in international affairs, Canberra was “in a position to exercise some influence on each.”  

Speaking on New Zealand’s behalf, Munro mirrored Casey’s sentiments and suggested Wellington was in favour of an immediate defence arrangement in Southeast Asia. He noted New Zealand’s concerns about Communist aggression in the area and argued that his country would “firmly resist” any further advances. However, he made two unique points. Firstly, he thought that any immediate aggression before SEATO could be established should be referred to the United Nations rather than through Casey’s proposed temporary non-aggression pact. Secondly, he reiterated that New Zealand would only participate in SEATO if Britain was also a member. “It was a principle of our policy and negotiation that [Britain] should be a party to the SEATO arrangement.” Munro told Dulles on 30 June 1954.  

Dulles, however, made it clear that the United States would only commit to an arrangement that specifically aimed to stop Communist aggression. “The United States would be prepared to take positive action if there were any substantial extension of Communist power,” Dulles said to Casey and Munro, but he stressed “there would be nothing in the nature of a blanket commitment.” He repeated these views later on 28 July to US Ambassador to the United Kingdom Roger Aldrich, requesting he make it clear to London that the United States “did not envisage the Southeast Asia pact developing into a NATO-type organisation with [a] large permanent machinery [and] substantial US financial support.” The US military supported this limited commitment. The SEATO machinery “should be similar to the ANZUS arrangements,” US Acting Secretary of Defense Robert Anderson told the State Department,

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100 Casey Diary Entry, 30 June 1954, NAA, M1153, 34.
102 Ibid.
insofar as it should function more as a “consultative arrangement” rather than definitive American military commitments in Southeast Asia. Anderson went on to suggest that these views reflected “the thinking of this Department at this time.”

While Australia and New Zealand reasoned that their influence on US policy was perhaps greater than it had ever been, neither government could convince Washington to sign a less specific defence treaty. The United States, in short, would only commit to respond to Communist aggression. The South East Asia Treaty Organisation was subsequently signed into effect on the 8 September 1954 at the Manila Conference between the ANZUS powers as well as Britain, France, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan. The three Associated States, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, were also awarded observer status and included under the area protected. Its scope was very similar to ANZUS, stating that all signatories would respond to “meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.” Overall, however, SEATO’s conclusion was ultimately born out of Western failure in Indochina and concerns about further Communist aggression in the area. It had a number of weaknesses: its scope was limited, and there was no clear machinery for intelligence cooperation or military consultation between the signatories.

Conclusion
This examination into post-treaty issues and responses to the 1954 Indochina Crisis demonstrated that the ANZUS powers were still divided about the way in which the United States would take a leading role in this relationship and where, if at all, Britain might play a

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role in this partnership. In the treaty’s initial aftermath, Australia was hopeful that ANZUS might entail greater access to US military and strategic planning, whereas New Zealand hoped that Britain might be involved in ANZUS even as an observer to trilateral meetings. The United States, however, was unwilling to entertain these possibilities. Then, once Dwight Eisenhower took office and the French position in Indochina became seriously threatened in 1954, Australia and New Zealand were uniquely placed to play a more important role in US strategy. Australia and New Zealand were closely consulted during this crisis in the hope that they might exercise some influence on the British response. Washington also thought that Australian and New Zealand support for United Action and SEATO would be highly favourable. As Australia and New Zealand began to play more important roles in US strategy and the contours of the relationship slowly shifted, another crisis between Communist and Nationalist China broke out in the Taiwan Straits in September 1954. The next chapter explores the Australian, New Zealand and American response to this crisis, as well as broader considerations between these powers over the possibility of recognising Communist China.
Chapter Four

China and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, 1954-1955

While Australian, New Zealand and American delegates met in Manila to finalise SEATO in September 1954, another crisis broke out in the Taiwan Straits after the People’s Republic of China (PRC) began shelling the Nationalist-held offshore islands Quemoy and Matsu. Unsure as to whether these attacks were a precursor to a full-scale invasion of Taiwan, the United States responded with the conclusion of the US-Taiwan Mutual Defence Treaty as well as the threat of nuclear retaliation. Possible escalation greatly concerned US allies such as Australia and New Zealand, both of which played unique roles throughout the crisis. Australia was very active diplomatically in both Washington and London, hoping to avoid a serious rift in Anglo-American relations over China. New Zealand, on the other hand, was heavily involved in a US and UK sponsored United Nations resolution which called for a cessation of fighting in the Taiwan Strait.

This chapter contains two sections. Firstly, in order to put Australian-New Zealand-American responses into context, this chapter examines trilateral views over whether or not to recognise the PRC from late 1949 to mid-1954. While all countries shared similar ideological views that tended to oppose awarding recognition to mainland China, this section suggests that Australia and New Zealand were more willing to reconsider recognition as a means to prevent future Chinese aggression and reach greater policy solidarity with Britain (despite US
protestations, Britain formally recognised the PRC in early 1950). Following these disagreements, the second section explores Australian, New Zealand and American responses to the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. This section demonstrates that while the Eisenhower Administration consulted more closely with Australia and New Zealand during this crisis, the Tasman powers generally supported the British position and were extremely reluctant to commit to the US plan of defending the offshore islands. Overall, this chapter suggests that divergent policies between the ANZUS powers on China largely stemmed from tensions in the Anglo-American relationship over China. Tensions were also caused by concerns in Australia and New Zealand that the Eisenhower Administration’s brinkmanship-like approach to rebuffing Chinese aggression could spark a major war. Ultimately, however, continued Australian and New Zealand support for the US position on Taiwan and the non-recognition of mainland China demonstrated that the Tasman countries were not in a position to seriously challenge American policy on China. In other words, despite trans-Tasman concerns about the US approach to China and growing support for British views, Australia and New Zealand were unprepared to risk isolating themselves from the United States and compromise the US commitment to the ANZUS Treaty. This chapter analyses these complications, and in so doing, points out that there were clear limits to unequivocal Australian and New Zealand support for either US or British policies.

A Prelude to Crisis: Australian, New Zealand and US Views towards the PRC and Recognition, 1949-1954

After a protracted civil war between the Chinese Communist Party and the Republic of China (ROC), PRC Chairman Mao Zedong announced the establishment of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October 1949. The defeated Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, fled to the island of Formosa (Taiwan). As Cold War tensions continued to rise between the United States and
the Soviet Union, a major Communist Government in Northeast Asia presented an uncertain and disruptive challenge for the West. Mao’s victory especially provoked extensive debate in Australia, New Zealand and the United States over whether to continue supporting Chiang’s Government, or instead recognise the PRC by opening diplomatic relations in Beijing and supporting its claim for China’s seat in the United Nations. On the one hand, the ROC appeared fragile, corrupt, and struggled to justify seriously its claim to being representative of all of China while its government only controlled the island of Formosa. On the other hand, Western governments feared that awarding recognition to the PRC would strengthen the Soviet bloc and encourage further aggression from mainland China.

For the United States, peaceful co-existence with the PRC and subsequent recognition remained a possibility in late 1949 to early 1950. This was because there was a lingering hope that Mao might avoid aligning China with the Soviet Union.\(^1\) However, in the immediate aftermath of Mao’s October 1949 announcement, the State Department looked set to shape its policies toward the PRC on the premise that mainland China was entrenched firmly in Soviet bloc and should not yet be awarded recognition. In an address to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 12 October, Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated that the “Chinese Government is really a tool of Russian Imperialism in China. That gives us our fundamental starting point in regards to our relations with China.”\(^2\)

While Acheson’s comments made prospective US recognition policies for China appear somewhat straightforward, the decision was complicated by many American policymakers (including Acheson) continuing to doubt whether US diplomatic support for Chiang was useful. In his own words, Acheson argued at a later Committee meeting that the United States had “got

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2 Supplemental Notes on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 12 October 1949, Harry Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files, Box 140, TL.
to a point where in fact there is nothing more constructive that is coming out of this [Nationalist] Government.” As both a stalling tactic and short-term compromise between these options, Acheson suggested that the US should adopt a “wait, look, and see policy” toward China. In other words, the Truman Administration determined that immediate recognition of mainland China was not an option while the future of Taiwan appeared uncertain.

Australia and New Zealand held their own bilateral talks over whether or not to recognise the PRC in November 1949. During these discussions, New Zealand Secretary of External Affairs McIntosh noted with frustration that the trans-Tasman talks appeared aimed only to increase Australia’s international prestige and to encourage New Zealand to support Australian views on China. “It was a typical Australian show,” McIntosh wrote to Berendsen on 18 November, “the object was publicity for Evatt, External Affairs and Australia in that order.” According to McIntosh, Australian Secretary of External Affairs John Burton organised the talks as a “publicity stunt.” Burton, convinced recognition was “necessary and inevitable,” continually pressed McIntosh and the New Zealanders about supporting the Australian position.

Indeed, the Australians appeared entirely ready and willing to abandon the Nationalists and instead recognise Mao’s government on mainland China. Even before the Australian-New Zealand talks began in November, Canberra already recalled its diplomatic mission in Nanking. Some of the Australian staff returned to Canberra, while other staff members established a temporary post in Hong Kong that could be quickly moved to Beijing once recognition was granted. The Department of External Affairs also called a meeting shortly after its Nanking

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3 Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 229.


5 McIntosh to Berendsen, 18 November 1949, in Undiplomatic Dialogue, 186-187.
Mission was recalled, agreeing unanimously that the PRC be recognised.\(^6\) “Personally,” Australian External Affairs Minister Evatt wrote to British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin only three days after Mao’s announcement, “I do not see why [mainland China] should not be recognised.” In Evatt’s view, Australia and the rest of the Commonwealth could take the lead in recognising Beijing. He told Bevin that Mao’s government could be recognised as the legitimate government of mainland China, whereas the Nationalists could similarly retain recognition of their government on Taiwan.\(^7\)

McIntosh did not think that Australia and New Zealand should take the lead in recognising the PRC. He did, however, think that there might be substantial benefits of recognition. He thought that doing so would prevent the PRC from acting aggressively and counter Russian influence in China. Moreover, if for no other reason, McIntosh concluded that on legal grounds the PRC should be awarded recognition because it already controlled mainland China. This view was similar to thinking in Britain, which was moving closer to awarding recognition to the PRC.\(^8\) Overall, McIntosh was inclined to “follow the British line” on recognition but the government stalled any decision because Prime Minister Peter Fraser was reluctant to recognise the PRC.\(^9\)

On 6 January 1950, Britain formally announced that it officially recognised the PRC as the legitimate government of China. However, despite suggestions that Canberra was preparing to recognise the PRC in mid to late 1949, Australia chose not to follow Britain’s decision. Robert Menzies replaced Ben Chifley as Australian Prime Minister after the 1949 Federal election and did not support immediate recognition. On 20 December 1949, the Menzies government sent a


\(^7\) Evatt to Bevin, 4 October 1949, NAA, A1838/278, 494/2/10 Part I.

\(^8\) Kaufman, *Confronting Communism*, 21-30.

cablegram to Britain that outlined Australia “was not in favour” of recognition. The main reason, according to the Australian message, was that the country was “not convinced that recognition would offer [Australia] any compensating advantages for what appear to be certain obvious disadvantages,” citing its belief that the PRC will act recklessly and in defiance of international law.\(^{10}\)

In New Zealand, policymakers concluded that Western countries and the United Nations should consider moral principles in addition to any legal grounds for awarding recognition. “I think it is time we abandoned the automatic recognition of a government merely because it has proved its capacity to govern … I think it is time we incorporate moral elements into such things,” Berendsen said to McIntosh on 12 January. As a result, New Zealand chose not to recognise the PRC even after the British announcement. The issue of Chinese recognition was an interesting instance where Wellington was decidedly in favour of the American position over the British position. Yet while moral considerations tended to push the New Zealanders towards the American line of thinking, supporting the US position also had clear security benefits for New Zealand. If New Zealand followed the British line on China, New Zealand External Affairs Minister Frederick Doidge feared that it could also “irritate and antagonise the United States, and increase American determination to strengthen Japan at the expense of the security of Australia and New Zealand.”\(^{11}\)

New Zealand’s major issue with the British announcement was its timing, which came just days before the scheduled Commonwealth Conference in Colombo. The British announcement stimulated significant intra-Commonwealth division on the question of China during the Conference: Britain, India, Pakistan and Ceylon all recognised the PRC, while New Zealand,

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\(^{10}\) Baker to UK Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, 20 December 1949, NAA, A1838, TS3107/33/1/1 part I.

Australia and Canada did not. “The British did a very stupid and a very wrong thing in recognising the [PRC] when they did,” Berendsen complained after the Conference to McIntosh, “it was wrong, stupid and indeed insulting.”\(^\text{12}\) Australian External Affairs Minister Percy Spender made similar comments. “It had been embarrassing to us to be confronted with the United Kingdom’s decision [to recognise the PRC],” Spender wrote to Menzies during the Conference on 11 January.\(^\text{13}\)

American-Australian-New Zealand views against recognition hardened considerably after the Korean War began in June 1950, and further again when the PRC intervened later in November. It confirmed fears in Washington, Canberra and Wellington that Communism was an aggressive threat to free world nations. US President Harry Truman responded by completely rejecting any possibility of recognition and instead approved a National Security Council (NSC) recommendation to impose “strict political and economic sanctions” on the PRC. In addition, the Truman Administration threw its support behind Chiang as the legitimate government of China.\(^\text{14}\) Fighting alongside American forces in Korea, respective Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers Robert Menzies and Sidney Holland enforced similar sanctions and publicly declared their support for Chiang’s embattled regime.

The possibility of recognising Beijing in the short-term future was dismissed. In Australia, Spender feared that recognising the PRC after its intervention in Korea would encourage Beijing to act aggressively elsewhere. “If Communist Chinese demands for Formosa and recognition are accepted,” Spender asked fellow Australian diplomat Keith Officer rhetorically on 11 December, “what guarantee is there that she [China] will not press in Indochina or elsewhere?” In spite of these concerns, Spender thought that recognition should not be

\(^\text{12}\) Berendsen to McIntosh, 14 February 1950, in *Undiplomatic Dialogue*, 213.

\(^\text{13}\) Spender to Menzies, 11 January 1950, NAA, A1838, 494/2/10 part IV.

completely ruled out. He told Officer that “on the question of ultimate recognition of Communist China, the door should not be barred.” In other words, Spender thought that “if a reasonable settlement can be arranged regarding Korea, the question of recognition will be reconsidered.”\(^\text{15}\)

Meanwhile, as the Korean situation worsened, a number of UN countries introduced a draft resolution in the First Committee of the General Assembly on 12 December to form a separate committee that would work towards reaching a cease-fire. This committee also decided to vote upon whether the PRC should be admitted as a temporary UN member to assist in reaching an immediate cease-fire. During these negotiations, another tussle broke out between Australian and New Zealand representatives after Australia tried to pressure New Zealand into abstaining from voting. Berendsen, who was representing New Zealand, was “infuriated” when Australian delegate Keith Officer told him that “he (Officer) intended to vote for [Beijing’s] admission” temporarily to work towards reaching a cease-fire, and “hoped that I (Berendsen) would abstain.” “I could scarcely believe my ears,” Berendsen told McIntosh after hearing that Australia wanted New Zealand to simply step aside and not get in the way of its own decisions. “The long and short of it is I don’t understand the Australians any more than I understand the British” on Chinese matters, Berendsen complained.\(^\text{16}\)

Although his reasons for wanting to New Zealand to abstain while he voted for Beijing’s temporary seating are unclear, it is clear that Officer questioned whether hard-line US policies were prudent in mitigating hostilities in Korea and subduing Chinese aggression. “My own view is that the attitude of the United States at the moment is quite unreal,” he wrote to Spender,\(^\text{15}\) Spender to Officer, 11 December 1950, NAA, A11537 Part I.  
“I can see few practical arguments against a cease-fire.”

It is possible that Officer’s demands on the committee issue were part of a broader Australian concern that New Zealand, with strong British ties and a demonstrated propensity to consider PRC recognition, saw the committee as part of a step toward potential recognition without consultation with Australia. Any such move would be disastrous for Australia, especially because at the time Spender was working hard towards reaching a formal defence arrangement with the United States. “The question of recognition should not be included amongst the actual terms or conditions of a cease-fire,” Spender told Officer, as “it is necessary to make sure that the United States does not feel either that we do not stand with them in their difficulties or that we fail to understand them.”

Although Spender was eventually able to finalise the ANZUS Treaty, Australian concerns over a lack of trans-Tasman cooperation on Chinese issues increased after Thomas Clifton Webb became New Zealand External Affairs Minister in mid-1951. Webb thought that Australia and New Zealand should have recognised the PRC when Britain did in early 1950 and hoped that the two countries might be able to change their stance toward the PRC once a cease-fire could be reached in Korea. “I think it is a pity all nations did not get into line and do it [recognise the PRC] a couple of years ago,” Webb wrote on 31 October 1951. In turn, he believed that recognition should be considered when a cease-fire was reached in Korea.

Australia’s real concern was that Webb might push New Zealand towards recognition without prior consultation with Australia and the United States rather than any serious objection to consider recognition. In Australia, views towards opposing recognising China had in fact


18 Spender to Officer, 20 December 1950, NAA, A1838, 852/20/4/2 part 1.

softened during 1951. Spender’s replacement as External Affairs Minister, Richard Casey, contemplated similarly after he took over the portfolio in April that Australian interests might be served better by recognising the PRC rather than continuing to support the Nationalists. “I think that [recognising the PRC] probably would ease the acid attitude of Beijing,” Casey wrote in his diary shortly after Chinese intervention in the Korean War.\textsuperscript{20} For Casey, Australian recognition of the PRC was unlikely because of the effect it would have on Australia’s relationship with the United States. This was a reflection in the shift in strategic thinking within External Affairs and more widely in Australian government circles.

In Casey’s estimation, the United States was taking a hard-line towards the Chinese because of domestic pressures. “It seems impossible,” Casey penned on 8 December 1951, “that any State Department man of consequence still believes in Nationalist China … they are all bound up in the toils of domestic politics.”\textsuperscript{21} Truman’s domestic troubles with its China policy were indeed serious. Problems began with Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, who tirelessly charged that the Truman Administration was soft on China and facilitated Mao’s victory in the Chinese Civil War. Support for McCarthy’s tough anti-Communism stance was supported by the China Lobby, a loose coalition of businessmen, labor leaders, journalists, scholars, missionaries and politicians that opposed any form of recognition of the PRC and demanded strong support for Nationalist China. While McCarthy and the China Lobby continued to hold strong political influence in the United States, American recognition of the PRC appeared unlikely.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Casey Diary Entry, 8 December 1951, NAA, M1153, 49A.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Truman Memorandum, 11 June 1951, Harry Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files, Box 140, TL; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, \textit{The China Threat: Memories, Myths and Realities in the 1950s} (Columbia University Press, 2012), 44, 50-51.
Across the Pacific, the Menzies and Holland Government did not have similar problems with domestic opinion on China. There was simply no substantial public outcry in Australia or New Zealand to stand firmly against the PRC and support the ROC. Instead, like Casey, the Australian and New Zealand public appeared to support movement toward recognising the PRC in the hope that it might mitigate hostilities in Korea. For instance, Australian newspaper articles published in The Courier-Mail, Newcastle Morning Herald, Daily Advertiser, The Mercury and The Canberra Times between 1949 and 1953 suggested that PRC recognition was either “likely,” “expected” or even “inevitable.”

Much like public opinion on recognition, there were discernible differences between official Australian, New Zealand and American trade policies with the PRC. While the United States continued to oppose all trade with the PRC as part of its non-recognition policy, Australia traded with the PRC trade in the absence of diplomatic relations. The trade of strategic materials was banned under a 1951 UN resolution, but other major materials were traded including wool, wheat, kitchenware, toys and agricultural machinery. Henry Albinski described Australian-Chinese trade without diplomatic ties as a “very successful exercise in realpolitik.” A stiff strategic materials policy helped “placate” the Americans and their hard-line position on China, yet the continued trade of non-strategic goods became simply a case of Australia “having [its] cake and eating it too.”

New Zealand, on the other hand, complied with US demands for a complete economic blockade of China. Along with non-recognition, Wellington publicly supported the American position on trade until the embargo was later lifted in 1956. Yet while official government

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policy remained supportive of the US position, there were strong indications that New Zealand was open to changing these policies as Wellington became more accommodating of a Communist government on mainland China. As Anne-Marie Brady observed in 2008, government policies such as New Zealand citizens visiting China and the early resumption of New Zealand-China trade in 1956 show that “there was considerable divergence between the New Zealand position on China and that of the United States.”

After an armistice was signed in Korea on 27 July 1953, the United States continued to support Chiang in the hope that it would put further pressure on the PRC. The new Republican Administration—led by Dwight Eisenhower—followed the previous Administration’s example and remained steadfast in its determination to keep Formosa out of Communist hands. According to an NSC policy statement on 6 November, keeping Chiang’s regime afloat continued to be a high US priority for three important reasons: support for the Nationalists strained Sino-Soviet relations and put considerable pressure on the PRC, Formosa served as a vital base for both covert operations on the Chinese mainland and for the defence of South Korea and Japan, and continued American support for the Nationalists kept morale high on Formosa and in other non-Communist governments. With these considerations in mind, Formosa formed an “essential element” of the US defence position in Northeast Asia.

The Australians, however, did not consider Formosa to be a high strategic priority. So far as Canberra was concerned, any strategic importance Formosa held was because Chiang’s presence focused the PRC’s attention across the strait rather than near Australian defence interests in Southeast Asia. In other words, so long as Formosa remained in Nationalist hands, the PRC could not pose a significant threat closer to Australian borders. An underwhelming


26 Statement of Policy by the National Security Council, 6 November 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 63, D 351.
brief for the Australian delegation at the 1954 Geneva Conference demonstrated this position clearly, concluding that Formosa was merely “of value,” and added that

In enemy hands, Formosa would facilitate a Communist advance into the Philippines. In the hands of the Chinese Nationalists, it is a continuing threat to the Chinese Communists who find it necessary to retain substantial armed forces on the adjacent mainland.27

In terms of recognition, Casey concluded that in light of the end of the Korean War, the prospects of recognising the PRC were more palatable. Within weeks of the signing of the Armistice, Casey discussed in the Australian Cabinet how to approach China. He felt that it was becoming increasingly important to open a dialogue with the Communist regime in order to prevent Mao from moving “closer into the arms of Moscow.”28

Across the Tasman, Webb also thought that the end of the Korean War signalled a new chance to reconsider recognising the PRC and thereby reduce tensions in East Asia. He was “evidently so impressed with [China’s] conciliatory attitude” during armistice negotiations in Korea that he decided that the PRC was indeed “working its passage” to membership of the United Nations and that the West should now cease giving China the “cold-shoulder.” “Whether we like it or not, the PRC controls mainland China,” Webb said in mid-1953, adding that New Zealand and other countries had already in effect given de facto recognition to the PRC through participating in Korean cease-fire negotiations at Panmunjom during early to mid-1953.29

28 Cabinet Submission, 14 August 1953. NAA, A1838, 3107/33/1, Part 1.
On 6 July, Webb made his thoughts on recognising China public. In an address to the New Zealand Parliament, he announced that the “absence of the Chinese Communists from the United Nations prevents the lessening of international tensions” and that admitting Beijing instead of Taipei to the United Nations should be reconsidered. Three days after Webb’s address, New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Leslie Munro reported that the speech had gravely concerned policymakers in Washington. The remarks “caused distress” in the United States, Munro told Webb on 9 July. Munro was especially concerned that it might affect New Zealand’s relationship with the United States and suggested that in the future New Zealand should publicly support the US position on China. As Munro warned, comments like Webb’s “gravely disturbed the Americans.”

Webb’s address was indeed perplexing. He certainly understood American opinion on China. Less than three months beforehand, US Under Secretary of State Bedell Smith told Webb on 13 May that American recognition of the PRC and admission into the UN was “absolutely politically impossible.” He also understood that if New Zealand showed signs that it was moving towards recognising the PRC it might compromise continued US support and protection for his own country. This reality was made clear on 15 June, when American Ambassador in New Zealand Robert Scotten gave Webb a memorandum that outlined the United States would oppose strongly any moves from its allies toward recognising the PRC after the conclusion of the Korean armistice. Webb was not pleased with American pressure.

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31 Munro to Webb, 9 July 1953, Archives NZ, EA, 264/3/14/1 Part 10; Munro to Webb 31 July 1953, Archives NZ, EA, 264/3/14/1 Part 8.
on New Zealand to fall into line on its China policy, responding that “sooner or later Communist China would have to be admitted to the United Nations.”

Webb was also displeased with a section in the US memorandum that declared the United States would veto any proposed UN resolution to admit the PRC instead of the Nationalists. Webb thought that this part of the memorandum was “very shaky.” “It was ridiculous to maintain the fiction that Chiang Kai-Shek … could be regarded as being representative of 460 million Chinese,” Webb told several diplomats in the External Affairs Department, “if we persisted in deferring recognition, we would only tend to drive them further into the arms of the Russians.”

Webb had undoubtedly put New Zealand in an awkward position with the United States. His efforts to convince the Americans and other New Zealanders to reconsider hard-line policies toward the PRC ultimately failed, and in the process had harmed New Zealand’s relationship with the United States. His comments even surprised the Australians. Although Webb thought that Australia was “inclined to take the American view” on China, McIntosh told Corner that his comments caused a “dislocation of the eyebrows in American and Australian circles.”

According to McIntosh, Australia’s major concern was that Webb might push New Zealand towards recognising China without prior consultation. This suggests that there was little trans-Tasman communication or cooperation toward the issue of Chinese diplomatic recognition.

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33 Webb Memorandum, 15 June 1953, Archives NZ, 264/3/14/1 Part 8.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid; Webb to Scotten, 7 July 1953, Archives NZ, EA, 264/3/14/1 Part 8; McIntosh to Corner, 7 August 1953, in Unofficial Channels, 147-148.
36 Ibid.
By mid-1954, there were clear differences of opinion between the ANZUS partners over the usefulness of continued isolationist policies toward the PRC, the possibility of future PRC aggression should it not be recognised, the timing of potential recognition in the future, and the importance of awarding recognition collectively if and when the time came. These trilateral differences on approaches toward China were further exposed during the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. The United States responded with the conclusion of the US-Taiwan Mutual Defence Treaty and a secret commitment to defend the offshore islands. New Zealand focused on submitting a UN cease-fire resolution codenamed Operation “Oracle” in a bid to end the crisis. As part of this resolution, New Zealand worked closely with British and US diplomats with the hope that a peaceful resolution could be reached despite Anglo-American disagreements. Australia, which was not privy to Oracle discussions, consistently opposed US plans to defend the offshore islands and instead favoured the British position of not committing to the defence of the offshore islands. Policymakers in Canberra also considered adopting the British position on PRC recognition as a possible means to reduce tensions in the Taiwan Straits. Intentionally or otherwise, British policy was again causing divisions between the ANZUS powers even though Australia and New Zealand did not go as far as publicly rejecting US policy on Taiwan and the PRC.

On 3 September 1954 PRC forces began shelling Quemoy and Matsu, two small Nationalist-held islands adjacent to the Chinese mainland. Even though by sheer geographical size and position alone it would be unthinkable that a global war might erupt over such small islands, there was a very real possibility that any miscalculation by the United States could spark a war
with China, and by extension, the Soviet Union. American policy long established its determination to prevent Formosa and the Pescadores falling into Communist hands, but to do this, Eisenhower’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) thought it was important that these lesser offshore islands also remain in Nationalist hands. Others, such as Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the majority of the American public, were not convinced. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, for one, described them as “a bunch of rocks.”

Less than nine months before the PRC shelled Quemoy, Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson approved a JCS recommendation to loan US naval vessels to the Nationalists to assist in the defence of the offshore islands. These loans included two destroyers, ten patrol crafts, two landing repair ships, and less than one hundred small landing crafts. Approving these loans meant that, at the very least, Eisenhower and his military staff hoped that the Nationalists could hold these islands if hostilities broke out in the immediate future. Yet once the crisis began, Eisenhower was certain that the offshore islands could not possibly be defended by the United States. After Dulles presented the “horrible dilemma” that confronted the United States to the NSC on 12 September, Eisenhower stressed that “Quemoy is not our ship.” According to the former General, defending Quemoy by force would lead to war with China. Public opinion seemed to support this position. Eisenhower went on to tell the NSC that he had constantly been receiving letters from the American public saying “please do not send our boys to war.”

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and “do we really care what happens to those yellow people out there?” Eisenhower shared this racist view toward Chinese people. As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argued in 2012, Eisenhower views all “non-whites as underlings, not equals.”

Political opinion aside, most US military planners argued that the offshore islands were important to the defence of Formosa. A JCS report, submitted to the President on the afternoon of 3 September, recommended that current American policy towards the Taiwan Strait area be changed to assist in the defence of Quemoy as well as nine other offshore islands. The JCS Chairman Arthur Radford, a strong-minded former admiral with a wealth of experience in Pacific naval planning, argued particularly strongly for the defence of the islands. He recommended to the State Department that the United States commit to defending Quemoy and Matsu even with the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Not all of the Chiefs of Staff agreed with Radford’s radical approach, but along with the Chief of the Air Force Nathan Twinning and Chief of Naval Operations Robert Carney, the JCS majority opinion concluded that defending the offshore islands was important and any withdrawal would have a considerable psychological effect on Nationalist morale. In opposition, Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgeway and Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson thought that any psychological effect did not outweigh the alarming consequences that could ensue if the United States committed to defending these islands. Ridgeway argued that defending Quemoy was “not substantially related to the defence of Formosa,” whereas Wilson simply saw no worthwhile reason for the US to defend those “doggoned little islands.”

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40 NSC Meeting, 12 September 1954, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 6, EL.
41 Tucker, The China Threat, 45.
42 Anderson to Eisenhower, 3 September 1954, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 3, EL.
43 NSC Meeting Notes, 10 September 1954, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 6, EL.
In Canberra, opinion was unanimous that defending the offshore islands was out of the question. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, Casey drew a line between the defence of Formosa and the offshore islands. On 25 August he told Spender that there was a “distinction” between the two and “hoped that the US could see that.”

Thomas Critchley, Head of Australia’s East Asia Section in the Department of External Affairs, echoed Casey’s concerns over American policy. According to Critchley, “[the offshore islands] problem was critical … because of the dangers of US involvement.” He was particularly concerned that ANZUS obliged Australia to respond if the United States was attacked in the Taiwan Strait. In this event, any Australian failure to respond would be catastrophic for its relationship with the United States, even if Canberra was “left free” of any strict military obligation to defend the offshore islands.

Casey and Critchley’s position did not change once the attacks began. In fact, Australian policy closely matched British policy toward the islands. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden told Dulles on 17 September that Quemoy and the other offshore islands had “no conceivable strategic importance,” and hoped to keep “as much water as possible” between the PRC and ROC. To achieve this, Eden argued that Chiang should evacuate Nationalist troops stationed on the offshore islands. Although the Australians did not express their disagreement as openly to the United States in mid-September, there was a strong feeling in Canberra that Australian interests were best served by following the British example. “We agree with the United Kingdom,” Attorney-General John Spicer told Casey on 16 September, “with the proximity of

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46 Critchley Memorandum, 19 October 1954, NAA, A1838, 519/3/1 Part 1.
47 Australian High Commissioner’s Office to Canberra, 17 September 1954, NAA, A5954, 1415/3.
the offshore islands to the Chinese mainland … fighting [for the islands] would be difficult to justify.”

New Zealand and Operation “Oracle”

Although the United States and Britain did not agree on the defensibility or otherwise of the offshore islands, they did agree that war must be avoided at all costs. With this thought in mind, Eden and Dulles met in London during September to plan for a potential UN resolution that would call for a cease-fire in the strait. Eden felt that it would be best if the United States did not itself initiate action in the United Nations, fearing that the PRC might respond aggressively. Instead, Eden suggested that New Zealand might propose the resolution because at the time it was a temporary member of the Security Council. Moreover, as New Zealand was a much smaller power than the United States or Britain, a call for cease-fire from Wellington was far less likely to provoke a strong international backlash from China or the Soviet Union. Dulles agreed with Eden’s recommendation, believing that a UN resolution had substantial political benefits. He had told the NSC before he left for London that if a joint US-UK resolution could be reached in the Taiwan Straits, it may lead to a “coming together” of Anglo-American policy in the Far East. In Dulles’s view, it had an additional benefit. If the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution, it would demonstrate the aggressive and dangerous threat that Communism posed and spur allied support. If Moscow supported the resolution, it would mean the PRC was acting “against the will of the majority in the UN.”

48 Spicer to Casey, 16 September 1954, NAA, A5954, 1415/3.
49 Dulles to Eisenhower, 18 September 1954, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 9, EL.
50 NSC Meeting, 12 September 1954, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 6, EL.
51 Ibid.
Dulles and Eden proposed a UN resolution codenamed “Oracle” to New Zealand’s Acting High Commissioner in London Richard Campbell on 29 September. Interestingly, they both stressed the “extreme secrecy” of the proposal. In other words, even with an ANZUS Council meeting scheduled in less than a month, the Australians were not to be told. Upon hearing about the proposal, New Zealand policymakers were excited by the opportunity to assist in an international crisis. They were also hopeful that a resolution might encourage US-U.K rapprochement vis-à-vis China. New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland believed that his government should accept responsibility and move ahead with the UN resolution as it presented New Zealand with an “opportunity of playing a constructive role in further joint US-U.K policy in Far Eastern policy.”

New Zealand External Affairs Minister Tom MacDonald agreed, but emphasised that New Zealand should not commit beyond the introduction of the resolution to the United Nations unless the United States and Britain were certain they could cooperate. Failing to do so, as MacDonald outlined, might place New Zealand in an immensely difficult position if the United States and British differences on China were exposed publicly once the resolution was presented to the Security Council. “We may find ourselves able to play a useful part,” MacDonald told Munro on 1 October, “but my inclination is not to commit ourselves to any particular course in the UN beyond initiation of the debate.”

Nevertheless, these concerns were put aside and the next day New Zealand notified the United States and Britain that it was prepared to assist in the project and propose Oracle to the United Nations. All states agreed to submit it under Article VI of the UN Charter, declaring that the crisis threatened international peace and security. As for when the resolution should be submitted, Under Secretary of State W. Bedell Smith told New Zealand Ambassador in

52 Campbell to MacDonald, 30 September 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 1.
53 Holland to Munro, 30 September 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 1.
54 MacDonald to Munro, 1 October 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 1.
Washington Leslie Munro that the submission must wait until after the US mid-term elections in November.\textsuperscript{55}

MacDonald also asked Munro to find out whether the United States would object to briefing the Australians on the resolution. MacDonald suggested that it would be “highly embarrassing” if Casey found out at the upcoming ANZUS Council meeting in October that American-New Zealand discussions had been taking place without Australia even knowing about them. MacDonald, in short, thought that it might be best to include Australia in these plans before proceeding to the Security Council.\textsuperscript{56} When asked about informing the Australians, Dulles told Munro that he preferred that Australia not yet be told but would not object if New Zealand thought it absolutely imperative. On further reflection, Munro seemed to agree with Dulles that Australia should not be told until the last possible moment. “There is always the risk of Australian intervention at an inappropriate stage and pursued by Spender in his own peculiar style,” Munro told MacDonald, “I do not like the risks that involves.”\textsuperscript{57}

Despite reservations from Munro and Dulles, Casey was told about the Oracle project in mid-October as part of preparations for the ANZUS Council meeting in Washington. Upon being briefed by New Zealand, Casey had immediate objections. He did not understand why his American and New Zealand counterparts could not see that potentially serious issues could occur if a UN resolution was pursued. For one, Casey thought the prospects of a successful UN submission would be “so remote as to throw in doubt value of [the] exercise.” Even in the unlikely event that a resolution was passed, it was neither clear how the full co-operation of


\textsuperscript{56} MacDonald to Munro, 7 October 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 1.

\textsuperscript{57} Munro to MacDonald, 9 October 1954, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 1.
the Nationalists in neutralising the islands could be obtained nor how it would be implemented. So far as Casey was concerned, there was also a disconcerting possibility that a Soviet veto could “stimulate pressure” in the United States to defend the offshore islands.\textsuperscript{58} In short, although Casey wanted a cease-fire in the Taiwan Straits as soon as possible, he did not agree that the New Zealand-American-British UN resolution was the most appropriate action to achieve that objective.

\textit{The Mutual Defence Treaty, the Tachen Attacks and Revised U.S Policies}

By late 1954, the United States was also moving ahead with the conclusion of a binding commitment to defend Formosa and the nearby Pescadores. Due to the close US-New Zealand cooperation surrounding the Oracle project, the Americans told the New Zealanders about this plan before the Australians and left it to New Zealand to “keep Australia adequately informed if and when a decision seemed likely.” Once the Australians were briefed about this plan, Spender immediately called a meeting with Dulles on 31 October to express his dissatisfaction with the proposed treaty and the lack of consultation with Australia. During the meeting Spender “expressed some annoyance that the Australians had not been brought into these talks” for the mutual defence pact with Formosa. He also suggested that a pact would be “unwise” because it would “compel a clarification of the situation with reference to the offshore islands and that a somewhat indeterminate status was preferable.”\textsuperscript{59} In other words, Spender thought that the United States should avoid a clear-cut commitment and instead keep the PRC guessing as to American intentions in the Taiwan Straits.

Nonetheless, a mutual security treaty between the United States and the Nationalist Government was eventually signed on 2 December 1954. This treaty guaranteed that the United

\textsuperscript{58} Casey to Spender, 5 November 1954, NAA, A5954, 1415/3.

\textsuperscript{59} Memorandum of Conversation between Spender and Dulles, 31 October 1954, NARA, RG 59, 611.43/10-3154.
States would defend Formosa, potentially even with the use of nuclear weapons. It also required Chiang to consult with the United States before launching any attack on the Chinese mainland. This provision ensured that the Nationalists could not drag the United States into an unwanted war over mainland China. As Dulles had hoped, the wording over the commitment to defend the offshore islands was left unclear. Eisenhower stressed later that the decision to defend Formosa’s “closely related territories” would be decided by the President. Once the treaty was put into force, Dulles hoped to clear up this fuzziness with American allies. He spoke with New Zealand Ambassador Leslie Munro and British Ambassador Roger Makins about the US preparedness to commit privately defending Quemoy and Matsu even with the use of nuclear weapons. Neither government was pleased with this new American policy. Upon hearing about the new US policy, Eden went one step further and suggested that Oracle not be pursued until the United States gave up its proposal to defend Quemoy.

In Australia, once Eisenhower announced publicly his intention to defend Formosa—and, if he thought it necessary for Formosa’s defence, its “closely related territories”—Casey grew concerned that a war over the offshore islands may eventuate. For the mindful External Affairs Minister, it was just as dangerous as a possible UN resolution. “We are considerably concerned,” Casey told Spender, “it seems equally foolish and dangerous to contemplate [war] in the defence of islands whose security value is, to say the least, doubtful.” In summation, he “[did] not regard these islands as worth the risk of war.” Cas"y, a long-time advocate of a more realistic approach to China, explored alternatively the possibility of recognising the PRC


61 NSC Memorandum, 2 November 1954, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 6, EL.


63 Casey to Spender, 21 January 1955, NAA. A5954, 1415/3.
in an effort to reduce tensions. He wrote to Menzies on 10 December suggesting that on balance, the “majority of the Australian press seemed to be in favour for recognition” of the PRC. He also stressed that even though free world nations should not condone Communist aggression, current relations with Beijing were not on a satisfactory basis.64

Casey’s connection between recognizing the PRC and tensions in the Taiwan Strait continued. When drafting an announcement on the current situation in East Asia, Casey reasoned that “the conduct of international affairs is made more difficult so long as the PRC is not recognised and so it would be logical to change this situation.”65 Although Casey concluded that the offshore island crisis should be settled first and then consider “recognition later,” he clearly thought that recognising the PRC might in some way reduce tensions or prevent future Chinese aggression. This part of his statement was never publicised, as Menzies opposed any suggestion that Australia was at the time considering changing its public opposition to recognising the PRC. Nevertheless, policymakers such as Casey appeared willing to consider the possibility of recognition far more openly than policymakers in the United States.

There was strong support in Australia for Casey’s suggestion. From both the public and the federal opposition, Casey was encouraged to pursue recognition in exchange for a cease-fire in the straits. For example, an article written by journalist John Bennetts published in the Sunday Times in early 1955 suggested that Australia, the United States and Nationalist China should abandon any interest in the offshore islands as a quid pro quo for recognition of the PRC. For “assurances and demonstrations of goodwill and peaceful intentions” in the Taiwan Straits, Bennetts wrote that Communist China should be “offered eventual membership of the United Nations and general recognition as the lawful Government of mainland China in return.”66

64 Letter from Casey to Menzies, 10 December 1954, DAFP: China, 87.


Reports emerged later that Labor backbencher Allan Fraser accused Casey of not “seeking to exploit every opportunity for negotiation with Red China” while the offshore island crisis remained unresolved. Casey should be “prompting the recognition of the Chinese mainland Government,” Fraser told the press, “as a means to pave the way for a long-term settlement.”

On mainland China, Mao’s response to the recent US-ROC defence treaty was particularly aggressive. On 10 January 1955, he ordered an attack on the Tachen Islands. Eight days later, PRC forces also attacked and captured nearby Ichiang Island. The Tachens themselves were approximately 320 kilometres north of Formosa, far outside the original area the US considered strategically important for defending Formosa. Nonetheless, Eisenhower and Radford thought these attacks indicated the PRC’s “clear intent” to capture all offshore islands, with the ultimate purpose of taking Formosa and the Pescadores. To combat this, the US convinced a reluctant Chiang to evacuate the Tachens in exchange for a private commitment to defend Quemoy and Matsu in the event of a full scale attack. This drastic change in American policy confirmed that Dulles’s original plans had “backfired.” As Wilson told the NSC on 20 January, US “diplomatic efforts … had failed.”

With diplomatic efforts failing, military options were revisited. Earlier on 20 January, a meeting was held between the State Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff and several Congressmen to brief Capitol Hill on new developments in the Taiwan Straits. Dulles said that the situation in the Formosa area was developing “in an acute way which seems to call for a sounder defensive concept. There is no doubt in [my] mind that the ultimate purpose of the Communist Chinese is to try and take Formosa and the Pescadores,” Dulles stressed, “the problem had reached such magnitude that it had to be dealt with in a comprehensive way.” On the advice of

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69 NSC Meeting, 20 January 1955, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 7, EL.
Admiral Radford, Dulles said that there would be a regrouping of Nationalists forces and with help from the United States they would hold the remaining islands (Quemoy and Matsu). Hoping to secure Congressional support for such action, Dulles argued that “it would be criminal folly on our part to sit and watch these islands be taken which could be held with minor help on our part.” Most of the Congressmen agreed with this approach, but they wanted Eisenhower to make it extremely clear that US military action was limited only to reorganising Nationalist forces on Quemoy and Matsu and defending these islands in the possibility that they were attacked. As Senator Earle Clements told Dulles, the President must make clear “what we are willing to defend, where we will draw the line, and where we will retreat no further.”

In Canberra, the Tachen attacks presented an increasingly dangerous and uncertain period for Australian policymakers. Yet instead of making any immediate public statement, the Australian Department of External Affairs kept their policies behind closed doors in the belief that the State Department was best placed to handle the crisis. The ever tactful Casey reasoned that his Government’s interests were best served by simply staying quiet, because announcing that Australia saw a clear distinction between Formosa and the offshore islands could only complicate the situation for the United States. “The attitude I have been taking,” Casey penned in his diary on 28 January, “is not to talk unless it would do more good than harm.” He also recommended against an ANZUS meeting on the crisis, thinking that at the present time Australia had “nothing positive to suggest that had not already been considered by the US.”

Escalating tensions, however, forced him to outline Australian policy publicly. In an address coming almost a month after the Tachens were first shelled, Casey stated the Australian

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70 Meeting of Secretary with Congressional Leaders, 20 January 1955, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 2, EL.

71 Casey Diary Entry, 28 January 1955, Casey’s Diaries, 200.
Government’s desire for “disengagement” from the offshore islands as these were clearly part of Chinese territory. This position sat uneasily with his US counterparts, who had determined so recently to hold Quemoy and Matsu. It was also no coincidence that Casey’s statement came after Eisenhower’s address to Congress on 24 January that outlined only the President had the power to decide whether the US would defend Formosa’s “closely related territories.” Though Casey recognized in his statement that the situation was “in the hands of President Eisenhower more than anyone else,” his timing affirmed Australian discontent over defending the islands.72

Although New Zealand shared Australian concerns over the Tachen attacks and recent changes to American policy in the Taiwan Straits, the New Zealand External Affairs Department still believed that Oracle should be pursued rather than defending the offshore islands or pursuing recognition as a quid pro quo for the cessation of PRC aggression. “The Government has no intention of entering into any sort of commitment involving New Zealand in developments around Formosa,” New Zealand External Affairs Minister Thomas McDonald announced on 27 January. Instead, McDonald suggested that New Zealand was “anxious that the threat to peace which appears to be developing in that area should be dealt with by the normal machinery of the United Nations.”73

In Washington, Munro agreed wholeheartedly with McDonald’s announcement. He certainly did not agree with the US decision to secure a formal defence treaty for Taiwan and its efforts to create uncertainty over a potential American response to attacks on the offshore islands, describing both responses as the “two worst courses of action.” “I must say I am seriously disturbed by the American course of conduct,” he told MacDonald on 21 January 1955.74 Munro still believed Oracle could still serve a useful purpose, but could only proceed

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74 Munro to MacDonald, 21 January 1955, Archives NZ, EA, 264/2/2 Part 2.
if the US and UK could agree to support the resolution. This seemed increasingly unlikely once Britain signalled its complete opposition to America’s commitment to defend Formosa and possibly the offshore islands. After Dulles informed British Ambassador in Washington Roger Makins on 19 January that the United States would assist in the defence of Quemoy, Makins responded a day later with British views on the subject. Its message was clear: “the British government is disturbed by developments,” Makins told Dulles on 20 January, and “the Cabinet did not like the idea of a ‘provisional guarantee’ of Quemoy.”

Upon receiving word that Britain was unlikely to support a UN resolution while the United States committed privately to the defence of Quemoy and Matsu, Dulles backed down and agreed to reconsider presenting Oracle to the UN instead of committing to defend Quemoy and Matsu. American, British and New Zealand delegates met on 23 January to decide how the resolution might be proposed. It was decided that Britain should inform Beijing and Moscow of Oracle, then New Zealand would invite China to attend UN discussions after the presentation of the resolution. On 31 January the United Nations invited China to attend the debate on the offshore islands, but Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai rejected the invitation. He stated that Oracle opened the door to the possibility of “two China’s” and was an illegal intervention into Chinese internal affairs.

Once the PRC declared that it was unwilling to discuss the offshore island problem in the United Nations, Commonwealth countries grew further concerned that the United States would defend the offshore islands if an invasion took place. These issues were discussed at length during the Prime Minister’s Conference in London from 31 January to 8 February 1955. Aside from discussions over the insurgence of Communist forces in Malaya, delegates discussed

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75 Memorandum of Conversation, 20 January 1955, NARA, RG 59, 793.5/3-2958.

76 Kaufman, “Operation Oracle,” 118. See also Williamson, Separate Agendas, 121.
reaching an agreement on the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. Menzies was especially determined to influence British opinion when relaying at the conference that his Cabinet agreed unanimously that the Nationalists should disengage from the offshore islands. Eden agreed firmly with disengaging from the offshore islands. A disengagement policy reflected what he told Dulles previously about the offshore islands holding “no conceivable strategic importance.” Feeling that this summarised neatly the “consensus of opinion” from the conference, Eden asked Menzies to write to Dulles and outline the position of the Commonwealth nations. The letter stressed that delegates at the Prime Minister’s Conference were convinced that “further resolutions and debate in the Security Council at present would do harm” and that “Australia and Britain were very much opposed to the risk of war over the offshore islands.”

Menzies’s letter provided the State Department with a clear warning that Britain and Australia were moving away from supporting a UN solution to the crisis. Even New Zealand Prime Minister Holland, who had been a strong supporter of Oracle and was concerned by American action in the Taiwan Straits, pledged his support to Australian and British efforts to at least delay Oracle. In response, Eisenhower wrote to Churchill and noted that while he appreciated British efforts to avoid a rift in Anglo-American relations, he argued that the British did not understand fully the Communist’s “constant pressing on the Asian frontier.” Churchill, however, remained steadfast on his government’s position on China and later informed Washington that Whitehall no longer supported Oracle. With London no longer supporting Oracle, the United States could not realistically hope to find a long term solution or even a temporary cease-fire through the UN.

77 Aldrich to Department of State, 4 February 1955, NARA, RG 59, 793.5/2-455.
78 U.S. Embassy in London to State Department, 1 February 1955, NARA, RG 59, 741.13/2-155.
79 Eisenhower to Churchill, 10 February 1955, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 9, EL.
During the Prime Minister’s Conference, Spender cabled Menzies on 6 February to offer a more detailed assessment of the situation as it stood in the Taiwan Strait. Even though he was unaware the importance the American JCS attached to holding the offshore islands, he told Menzies the problem was because of a continued Nationalist military presence on the islands rather than American insistence that they were essential. Believing that Chiang would be a difficult man to convince, he proposed that in return for a Nationalist withdrawal from the islands, Australia and other Commonwealth countries should declare their intention to defend Formosa if attacked. Although Menzies did not take up Spender’s suggestion immediately—like many Australians, Menzies was reluctant to commit to Chiang’s defence and only considered doing so in the hope that it might prevent a wider war with China—it did form the basis for a later proposal Menzies submitted to the United States after the crisis came to an end.80

In any event, Spender had more pressing matters on his agenda. Following the Prime Ministers Conference, Dulles held an important meeting with Spender on 11 February to discuss the Australian and Commonwealth position on Formosa and the offshore islands. Spender opened the meeting by first relaying the consensus of opinion reached in London. In outlining the Australian position, he stressed that:

It is causing us deep concern … we cannot see that [the offshore islands] are either vital, or even important, to Formosa-Pescadores defence. It is, therefore, hard for us to see why they are made a policy issue. Our view is that the correct aim is

disengagement from the islands … these views are not dissimilar to those already expressed by Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{81}

Dulles appreciated Spender’s open yet firm expression of Australian and Commonwealth policy. He told Spender that “none of his colleagues had so clearly or so categorically” been as helpful on the offshore island issue. Australia was “more engaged in the area than others,” Dulles added, “Australia is not a country on the sidelines.”\textsuperscript{82}

Dulles was not surprised by the Australian position. It was, as he pointed out, not too dissimilar from the views reached in the NSC meeting in mid-September 1954. Nevertheless, he told Spender that the US now considered that withdrawing from the offshore islands would have a substantial psychological effect on Formosa and nearby areas. Dulles also shared with Spender that the JCS thought the islands held strategic importance because (1) it blocked two natural harbours and, (2) its proximity to the Chinese mainland made it a useful staging area for potential counterattacks. In short, Dulles stressed that the United States had been “reluctantly compelled” to move from its original position (which generally coincided with current Australian policy) to its present position.\textsuperscript{83}

Neither Spender nor Dulles wanted war in the strait. They both agreed on the strategic necessity of keeping Formosa and the Pescadores out of Communist hands, but disagreed on the way that it should be done. For Dulles, it was important to highlight that although the US had determined Quemoy and Matsu be defended, there was considerable flexibility in any decision to do so. In his view, the decision “was entirely ours.”\textsuperscript{84} Spender—and, for that matter,

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\item \textsuperscript{81} Spender to Canberra, 12 February 1955, NAA, A1838, TS519/3/1 Part 3.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
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almost all other Commonwealth nations—seemed unconvinced by this reasoning. Though Spender well understood Dulles’s arguments for the defence of the offshore islands and sympathised with his awkward position, Menzies’s recent letter to Washington best captured the majority of Australian opinion over American involvement in the strait. American Ambassador to the United Kingdom Winthrop Aldrich also informed Washington that Australia and Britain were deeply concerned that they might be dragged into an unwanted and unnecessary war. He told the State Department that a recent Walter Lippman article called “Towards a Cease-fire”—based on the agreements reached at the Prime Ministers Conference—argued that “sound American policy would be to do what is being done in the Tachens to Quemoy and Matsu.” In other words, Australia and Britain believed the ROC and US should evacuate all offshore islands. This, according to Aldrich, summarised the Commonwealth position to an “extraordinarily exact degree.”

Consistent with the summary Aldrich gave to the State Department, Eden rejected flatly Dulles’s view that evacuating the offshore islands would seriously affect Nationalist morale. Even if it did, he told Dulles on 26 February that “further deterioration in morale is preferable to breaking up the [Anglo-American] alliance.” This presumably meant that if push came to shove, London would not support Washington on the offshore island issue. Fearing further rifts between Washington and its allies, Dulles took the opportunity to remind Casey and NZ External Affairs Minister McDonald that “if fighting broke out in the future over Formosa (which he certainly did not exclude as a possibility), Australia and New Zealand would be concerned as partners of ANZUS.” It was a disconcerting situation for Australia to be in. If Canberra supported Washington, it risked isolating itself from Britain and the Commonwealth.

85 Aldrich to the Department of State, 11 February 1955, NARA, RG 59, 793.00/2-1155.
86 Barclay, Friends in High Places, 77.
87 Casey Diary Entry, 26 February 1955, Casey’s Diaries, 206-207.
It also risked placing itself on the front-lines of a nuclear war over islands that Australians policymakers consistently determined were strategically insignificant. However, if Canberra supported London, it would both marginalise its relationship with Washington and question the usefulness of ANZUS.

Prompted by these Australian-American-British divisions, Menzies visited Washington to discuss possibilities for bringing the crisis to an end. In a meeting with Dulles on 14 March, his first agenda item was to gather US financial and military support for the defence of Malaya, one of Australia’s most important strategic interests. As part of Australia’s forward defence policy in Southeast Asia, Australian and British defence talks had been moving recently towards creating a Far East Strategic Reserve (which came into effect later in April) that would entail a joint military force stationed in the region to protect Malaya and other Commonwealth interests. Unfortunately for Menzies, he convinced neither Dulles nor the American JCS to commit to Malaya’s defence or a broader defence scheme outside of SEATO.88

Next, talks moved to the escalating situation in the Taiwan Straits. He first asked Dulles to explain the difference between his position and that of Casey and Eden’s. According to Dulles, there were two elements informing these differences: a misunderstanding of the US approach and questions of judgment as to the best way to achieve the same objective. Dulles stressed that the British House of Commons did not understand that psychological and political factors were just as important as military considerations and that these factors were shaping the US position. He also suggested that there could be no categorical assertion whether the US would or would not defend the islands.89 Menzies sympathised with Dulles’s difficult position. However, American ambiguity ultimately sat uneasily with Australian policy. There was little doubt in Canberra that efforts should be made to ensure Formosa did not fall into PRC hands,

but the offshore islands presented an entirely different question. Menzies, who believed that
the “unconditional surrender of offshore islands would intensify Communist truculence,” asked
Dulles about the possibility of a ROC withdrawal from the islands in exchange for a group of
nations guaranteeing the defence of Formosa (Australia, Britain, New Zealand, and any other
Commonwealth nation willing to commit to this scheme).  
Dulles quite liked this idea. He
thought the suggestion had “merit” and would “give further thought” to the proposition. He
even told Menzies that he had proposed a similar idea to Eden previously, but had received no
response. The unfortunate reality was that Chiang was unlikely to agree. The Generalissimo
had already secured a guarantee from the United States, and any offshore island evacuation
would work against his plans to recover the Chinese mainland. Drawing upon new archival
documents, Hsiao-Ting Lin confirmed in 2013 that Chiang’s primary goal was the “means by
which to rearm his forces so as to strengthen his position to launch a military recovery of the
mainland.”

Even if a Commonwealth guarantee could not be reached, Menzies wanted to make sure
that Dulles understood how the Australian public viewed the situation. While the Australian
public might support holding Formosa if a broader war broke out, he told Dulles that there
would be no support whatsoever for a war fought over the offshore islands. In Menzies’s view,

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90 Memorandum for the President, 27 June 1955, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Box 28, EL;
Menzies, Cablegram to Canberra, 17 March 1955, DAFP: China, 99. On 7 April, Canadian representatives told
the Department of External Affairs that they were “very interested” in their idea. See Plimsoll Memorandum, 7


92 Lin, “US-Taiwan Military Diplomacy Revisited,” 972. Chiang’s persistence notwithstanding, the British
Foreign Office also made it clear that it did not favour Menzies’s proposal. London cabled Canberra in mid-April,
stating that the proposal’s “disadvantages outweighed its advantages.” This reply, according to Tange, was
particularly “depressing.” See U.K Views on Guarantee for Formosa, 13 April 1955, NAA, A816, 19/306/244.
there was only support for larger efforts to prevent aggressive Communist behaviour. “The Australian public would support a war in the defence of freedom,” Menzies stated, “but not of Governments per se (such as Chiang’s regime) or offshore islands.” Dulles could at least be certain of Australia’s commitment if war eventuated, but did not find the agreement on offshore island policy he was looking for.

While Spender and Menzies met with Dulles in an attempt to find a resolution to the crisis, New Zealand policymakers continued to debate whether pursuing Oracle might still serve a useful purpose despite Zhou’s rejection in late January. In March, Ambassador Munro wrote to MacDonald and explained his thoughts on the project. In his mind, New Zealand could either introduce the Oracle resolution on its own or jettison the idea entirely. Munro appeared to favour the first option, fearing that if New Zealand postponed Oracle and then the United States went ahead with the resolution it would make New Zealand’s “position in the operation … very invidious.” Concerned by this prospect, Munro suggested to Dulles that while New Zealand was not prepared to abandon the Oracle project, it made sense to delay a decision to see whether tensions could be relieved on their own.

In response, Dulles suggested to Munro on 23 March that New Zealand’s role in the Oracle project was still important and that its presentation to the United Nations should not be delayed. He argued that while tensions had calmed in recent weeks there was no telling when the PRC might mount another attack, especially after Washington received intelligence several days beforehand that the PRC was installing approximately 250 new gun turrets near

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Moreover, in April the Soviet Union would assume the Security Council presidency, making it even more difficult to proceed with Oracle. Pressure from Dulles to introduce the resolution concerned Munro. According to Munro, it forced New Zealand to “choose between the British and American points of view in an area where action by the United States, our chief bulwark in the Pacific, might not be supported by the United Kingdom.”

Fortunately for the Oracle sponsors, tensions eased on 23 April 1955 when PRC Premier Zhou Enlai announced that China did not want war with the United States and was willing to enter into negotiations. Zhou’s announcement meant that Oracle would not have to be introduced in the United Nations in order to resolve the crisis. Though sceptical of Chinese intentions, the Americans agreed and entered into ambassadorial talks in Geneva from August 1955. Realising the weight of domestic and international opinion against any American action in the defence of the offshore islands, President Eisenhower was surely relieved that he never had to decide between whether to intervene militarily or concede defeat to a Communist government. At least for now, the United States had avoided the “inevitable moment of decision between two unacceptable choices” in the Taiwan Straits.

Aftermath: An Australian Proposal and Revised China Policies

Alongside American trepidations, Menzies could not be certain whether Zhou’s offer to negotiate was genuine or not. Either way, he thought that future hostilities with the PRC were still likely. Similar to when Casey considered recognition might prevent recurring PRC

95 Notes of Meeting between Eisenhower and Dulles, 11 March 1955, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 2, EL.
96 Kaufman, “Operation Oracle,” 120.
98 Eisenhower to Dulles, 5 April 1955, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 5, EL.
aggression, Menzies thought future tensions in the Taiwan Strait could be settled if the PRC was part of an international discussion towards recognition. He took this idea one step further, proposing to the State Department that the PRC attend a Four Power Conference to address current Sino-American differences. Menzies’s proposal outlined that there was a clear “danger of fighting over the offshore islands [because it] could develop into a major war.” Due to “the difficulty of doing anything about the offshore islands while an atmosphere existed of Communist threats to attack the offshore islands and Formosa,” recognising the PRC should be reconsidered.\footnote{Record of Conversation between Tange, Critchley and Peterson, 5 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/5035.} Washington, however, was not convinced that Menzies’s proposal addressed its own interests. Dulles first told Spender on 3 May that the idea was “unfavourable” and the American public would be very much opposed.\footnote{Cablegram to Canberra, 3 May 1955, DAFP: China, p.103.} US Ambassador to Australia Amos Peaslee was even more vocal about his dislike for the plan, stating that he was “astonished” and “disturbed.” According to Peaslee, the Australian Government was “180º off course” with this idea.\footnote{Record of Conversation between Tange, Critchley and Peterson, 5 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/5035.}

After Menzies’s failed proposal, the Australian Joint Planning Committee (JPC) reconsidered formally Formosa’s strategic importance for future defence planning. Offshore island policy was not in question: as late as May, the Australian Government continued to draw a distinction between Formosa and the offshore islands, claiming that the latter were “not regarded as important.”\footnote{Department Memorandum, 13 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/4844.} Yet as far as Formosa was concerned, the JPC report concluded it was now more strategically important because of its proximity to China and the control it afforded over the Formosa Straits. More importantly for Australian strategy, the report reasoned that the PRC could only “concentrate their military effort at one point at a time.” In

\footnote{Record of Conversation between Tange, Critchley and Peterson, 5 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/5035.}

\footnote{Cablegram to Canberra, 3 May 1955, DAFP: China, p.103.}

\footnote{Record of Conversation between Tange, Critchley and Peterson, 5 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/5035.}

\footnote{Department Memorandum, 13 May 1955, NAA, A1209, 1957/4844.}
other words, as long as the PRC’s attention was drawn to Formosa, it acted as a “constant deterrent to further Chinese Communist adventure in Southeast Asia.” These JPC findings saw several reasons why Formosa was, in fact, an important regional base that had to be kept out of Communist hands, but its strategic importance was considered only in light of Australian interests in Southeast Asia rather than from co-ordinating defence policy with the United States.

Moreover, the Department of External Affairs did not agree with American policy or that even continuing to hold Formosa was in Australia’s best interests. Casey, for one, told Plimsoll on 13 April that “we’re not as convinced as the Americans are of Chiang and his forces.” He suggested further that American policy was based on a “lie” and that they were “prisoners of their past attitudes.” “For Chiang and his Formosa forces,” Casey stated bluntly, “common-sense prompts one to believe that they must be a factor of declining importance in the scheme of things … as time goes on, Formosa will decline.” Convinced that the External Affairs Department should reconsider its China policy, Casey commissioned a major study for the Cabinet in June 1955 titled “The Situation in East Asia: Formosa and Recognition of China.” Although the report concluded that Australia was not yet in a position to recognise the PRC due to the US position, it stated that the prospects of finding long term peace in the Far East through potential recognition were now greater than they had ever been. This was due at least in part to Beijing’s recent softer diplomacy, which suggested a “genuine [Chinese] desire for a policy of live and let live.” In other words, Casey thought that even after the PRC initiation of the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, Mao’s Government was beginning to act more responsibly and Western powers should award recognition together accordingly in the short-term future. “So


104 Casey to Plimsoll, 13 April 1955, NAA, A1838, TS519/3/1/ Part 4; Casey to Plimsoll, 12 April 1955, NAA, A1838, TS519/3/1/ Part 4.
far as recognition and representation in the United Nations is concerned,” Casey’s report concluded, the issue was “perhaps now one of timing rather than of principle.”

**Conclusion**

In the immediate aftermath of the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, Australian, New Zealand and American policymakers were certainly relieved that the crisis did not escalate into a wider war. Nevertheless, there were heightened concerns in these countries that their respective relationships with Beijing were not working and that opposing recognition might in fact be encouraging further aggression in East Asia. This was especially true in Canberra and Wellington, where recognition was discussed before, during and after the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis despite much stronger opposition to recognising the PRC in the United States. Even then, trans-Tasman views vis-à-vis China were by no means identical. As this chapter pointed out, Australia, New Zealand and the United States differences in views toward China stemmed from both the British position and general concerns in Australia and New Zealand that the Eisenhower Administration might act recklessly in the Taiwan Straits. Nevertheless, despite trans-Tasman concerns about the US approach to China and growing support for British views, Australia and New Zealand were unprepared to risk isolating themselves from the United States and compromise the US commitment to the ANZUS Treaty. This demonstrates that there were clear limits to unequivocal Australian and New Zealand support for either US or British policies in regards to China. Policy differences between the ANZUS powers, however, soon manifested elsewhere. As the next chapter explores, Australian, New Zealand and American views toward the Middle East and the 1956 Suez Crisis were similarly divergent. In this regard, it will demonstrate that the ANZUS relationship was strained due to trans-Tasman British ties

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105 The Situation in East Asia: Formosa and Recognition of China, 29 June 1955, NAA, A4906, 404.
and competing views surrounding the most appropriate US response during the 1956 Suez Crisis.
Defending the Middle East and the 1956 Suez Crisis

Shortly after an uneasy peace settlement was reached in the Taiwan Straits, longstanding tensions erupted into open conflict between Egypt and Anglo-French-Israeli forces during the 1956 Suez Crisis. Responding to Western pressure, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956 which prompted an Israeli invasion in late October that was followed by an Anglo-French intervention plot. The American response, which condemned military action, pressured Britain and France into an embarrassing withdrawal. The crisis publicly exposed a bitter rift in Anglo-American relations and essentially confirmed the end of British world leadership. It also exposed noticeable policy differences between Australia, New Zealand and the United States over Britain’s role in world affairs.

This chapter contains two sections. The first examines Australian, New Zealand and American security interests in the region prior to the Suez Crisis. While Australia was originally committed to the defence of the Middle East (depending on the situation in Southeast Asia) and agreed in principle to the formation of a Middle East Command (see Chapter Two), by the mid-1950s Australian defence and strategic policy centred increasingly away from the Middle East and toward the Asia-Pacific. New Zealand followed a similar trajectory, except Wellington remained more committed to the defence of the Middle East and strongly supported British dominance in the region. Across the Pacific, US post-war interests in the region
increased gradually. By the mid-1950s, the United States had two primary interests in the region: defending the Middle East from Soviet control, and maintaining a free flow of resources (primarily oil) through the region to the West.

The second section examines responses by the ANZUS powers to Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the Anglo-French Israeli invasion in mid to late 1956. While US President Dwight Eisenhower condemned Nasser’s actions and wanted the Suez Canal to remain under international control, he hoped to achieve this through peaceful means. In contrast, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden favoured a more direct and aggressive approach. In collusion with France and Israel, Eden secretly planned to invade the Sinai Peninsula in order to topple Nasser and retain international control of the Canal. Australia and New Zealand held similar views by publicly supporting British action even though in private many diplomats were horrified by British recklessness. The invasion ultimately failed after American pressure forced a British, French and Israeli withdrawal from Egypt. In this context, Australian-New Zealand-American responses to the crisis provide an interesting insight into contrasting views between the ANZUS powers toward Britain’s post-war role in world affairs. Moreover, it demonstrates a turning point in alliance diplomacy for both Canberra and Wellington. In this instance, Australia and New Zealand held similar views and were not prepared to defer to US leadership (as in the case of non-recognition of China discussed in the previous chapter) when vital British interests were at stake. For the trans-Tasman countries, Suez starkly exposed the limitations to supporting Britain when London’s views were at odds with those in Washington.
The Middle East Command and Trilateral Defence Interests in the Middle East before the 1956 Suez Crisis

Australian, New Zealand and American interests in the Middle East changed quite considerably over the years between the end of World War II and the 1956 Suez Crisis. In the immediate post-war period Australia was prepared to defend the Middle East and participate in a Middle East Command, yet its participation hinged on the situation in Southeast Asia. Across the Tasman, New Zealand’s post-war defence plans centred on sending its forces back to fight for the British cause in the Middle East. Its participation in a defence arrangement in the region also hinged upon British inclusion. By the mid-1950s, policymakers in Australia and New Zealand had turned their focus to the Asia-Pacific instead of the Middle East. US interest in the Middle East grew gradually and in accordance with an increased threat of Soviet influence and the waning of British influence. US interest also stemmed from a perceived need to deny the Communist bloc access to key war-related resources in the region such as oil.

Australia and New Zealand shared similar post-war interests in the security of the Middle East. For both countries, the Suez Canal was the major shipping route to Britain and the rest of Europe. Access to the region’s oil reserves was also especially important for both country’s post-war industrial development schemes. As discussed in Chapter One, over and above these economic interests, Australia and New Zealand also had secret contingency plans to send forces to the Middle East in the event of another world war. In New Zealand’s case, defence plans in the event of global war were made in conjunction with British Defence Chiefs.1 Canberra was also prepared its own forces back to the Middle East, but only if there was no immediate threat from Southeast Asia.2

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1 Chiefs of Staff Minutes, 24 September 1948, Archives NZ, EA, 85/1/1 Part 3.
2 The Strategic Position of Australia, September 1947, NAA, 5954, 1628/3; Joint Intelligence Committee Appreciation, 27 March 1947, DAFP 1947 vol. XII, 277.
Across the Pacific, the United States had vital post-war interests in the Middle East. As the Cold War escalated in the late 1940s, policymakers in Washington concluded that the region had to be defended in order to protect Western interests and prevent Arab countries from falling under Soviet influence. “The fact is that because of clear Soviet aspirations in the Middle East,” the State Department concluded, “it is essential that Soviet expansion in that area be contained.” Washington was also concerned by waning British influence in Egypt. Successive post-war Egyptian Nationalists had threatened to terminate the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that outlined the terms of a continued British military presence near the Suez Canal. If the treaty was terminated, the West would be denied access to military facilities in the region.

Against this backdrop, in the late 1940s and early 1950s the United States and Britain considered forming a Middle East Defence Command. Under this arrangement, the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France, Egypt and several other countries would jointly commit to the defence of the Middle East. The United States was primarily determined to support this Command in an effort to deny Soviet access to the region and prevent further aggression in Europe. As Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs George McGhee outlined on 27 December 1950, the Soviet Union “could never consolidate a conquest of Europe” without access to Middle Eastern oil reserves. Moreover, Washington was determined to participate in the Command to prevent the “loss of American prestige in the area” and to ensure that American firms could continue to access oil regional reserves. In short, US participation in the Command would project a positive image of the American commitment to defending Communism while simultaneously supporting US regional economic interests.

Despite these interests, US participation aimed to award primary responsibility for creating and implementing the Command to Britain. This strategy suggests that the early identification

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3 Memorandum prepared in the Department of State, undated, FRUS 1951 Vol. V, 24-25.

of the Middle East as a primary US interest was somewhat rhetorical or perfunctory. The United States concluded it would only provide “token amounts” of arms to the Command in an effort to “minimise the cost” to the greatest extent possible. Most importantly, London must gather Commonwealth support for the Command on its own accord. The Command structure, in other words, would not alter the fact that the “UK and the Commonwealth have primary responsibility for the defence of the area.”5 It was London’s responsibility to convince Canberra and Wellington to participate.

Britain contacted Australia and New Zealand about the possibility of forming a Middle East Command in mid-1951. Given that its global war defence plans already centred on sending forces back to the Middle East, New Zealand unsurprisingly supported the proposed arrangement in principle. For both its own survival and the general survival of the West, the Holland government had outlined clear benefits in defending the Middle East through a Command-type structure as early as late 1950. A report from a Commonwealth Conference in December 1950 concluded that the Middle East lay “in a direct line of communication between the United Kingdom and the Pacific Dominions.” Moreover, the region was “economically vital to the West and to the British Commonwealth as a source of oil, particularly as American oilfields [became] exhausted.”6 The Middle East, in other words, was the “frontier zone” between East and West. The Holland government concluded it must be denied to the Soviets at all costs.

Much to the concern of diplomats in Wellington, once New Zealand was officially approached about the Command in August 1951 the proposal did not offer small powers (such as New Zealand) an opportunity to influence policy and defence decisions. For New Zealand Deputy External Affairs Secretary Foss Shanahan, this was unacceptable. It was important for

5 Ibid.

New Zealand to ensure that such an arrangement allowed its own officers to be a part of the Command structure and influence the decision-making process. A report produced by Shanahan listed these concerns very clearly: “though the Command arrangements are from a military point of view generally acceptable,” Shanahan said, “New Zealand authorities would first wish … to have assurance that [an] opportunity will exist for the appointment of selected and suitably qualified New Zealand officers.”

Shanahan was also concerned that there was no clear political structure or consultation body to discuss policy problems between the Command powers. “The New Zealand government are concerned by the lack of a higher political direction for the Middle East Command Organisation,” Shanahan argued, “there should be more adequate opportunity for consultation for other foreign powers participating in the Command arrangement.” Shanahan expressed these concerns to Acting British High Commissioner in New Zealand Alexander Morley on 18 September. Morley reassured New Zealand officials that Britain would work towards accommodating New Zealand concerns, responding that New Zealand indeed “had a part to play in overall strategy” in the Middle East. Once Britain told policymakers in Wellington that their voices would be heard in the arrangement, New Zealand accepted a formal British invitation to participate in the Middle East Defence Command.

Australia, on the other hand, was far less forthcoming in its support for a defence commitment to the Middle East. While Canberra “agreed in principle” to the Command and

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7 Report on the Middle East Command by Foss Shanahan, 7 September 1951, Archives NZ, EA, 111/39/2 Part 1. Malcom Templeton suggests that Foss Shanahan was in fact the officer “most closely involved” with the formation of the Command in New Zealand. See Templeton, Ties of Blood and Empire, 12.

8 Ibid.


10 Ibid.
was willing to participate in discussions, the Australian External Affairs Department stressed that its agreement “[did] not involve any commitment to provide forces to the Middle East.” Its final position on the Command would be “substantially affected by arrangements for higher political direction and by views which are worked out as to the place of Southeast Asia in those elements of strategy which are relevant to Australia.”\textsuperscript{11} Australian military planners agreed with this assessment. It was desirable for Australia to observe planning efforts in the Middle East, but in the event of a global war, deploying Australian defence forces to Southeast Asia was more important than assisting in the defence of the Middle East. As the Australian Defence Committee concluded after the Commonwealth Defence Ministers Conference in June 1951:

The Australian authorities consider that as Australia’s main defence effort in war would be in the ANZAM region and the general area of Southeast Asia, full participation in the military planning studies for the defence of the Middle East is not necessary … Australia’s primary objective in global war should therefore now be in the security of Malaya.\textsuperscript{12}

It was especially revealing that, even after both governments saw similar problems relating to the Command, there was no trans-Tasman consultation on the matter. “No advice had been received as to the views of the Australian government,” Shanahan pointed out as late as September 1951.\textsuperscript{13} Australia and New Zealand did, however, express similar concerns about Egypt’s role in the Command. London had told both Canberra and Wellington that it was

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\textsuperscript{11} Middle East Command Report, 11 October 1951, NAA, A4462, 439/1/10 Part 1.
\textsuperscript{12} Coordination of Middle East Defence Planning, 3 August 1951, NAA, A816, 14/301/510.
\textsuperscript{13} Report on the Middle East Command by Foss Shanahan, 7 September 1951, Archives NZ, EA, 111/39/2 Part 1.
\end{flushright}
desirable to associate Egypt with the Command in order to make the Suez region available as a base and break the deadlock in negotiations over the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. While the Foreign Office made it clear to Australia and New Zealand that the United States and Britain only meant for Egypt to take on little more than an advisory role in the Command, both governments responded that they did not support such action. New Zealand was far more vocal in expressing its dissatisfaction, especially after the Egyptian government signalled it refusal to participate in the Command in October 1951 and instead terminated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. After hearing about the Egyptian response, Holland addressed the New Zealand Parliament on 9 November and declared New Zealand fully supported the creation of the Command regardless of the Egyptian reaction:

The New Zealand government supports and accepts the proposals for the Middle East Defence Organisation. This area of the world is of vital importance not only to the security of the Commonwealth, but to the fortunes of the free world. Historically, it is an area of special interest to the United Kingdom and to New Zealand also as was demonstrated by the actions of our forces there in two world wars. The Middle East has been and will remain one of the decisive theatres.\footnote{Holland Statement, 9 November 1951, NZFP: SD, 292-293.}

Australia, on the other hand, chose not make a similar statement. Australian External Affairs Minister Richard Casey told his New Zealand counterpart Thomas Clifton Webb that doing so would be “taken publicly as involving Australia in a commitment to the Middle East … such a decision could not possibly be made on such short notice.” He explained Australia’s reasons for
choosing not to publicly back the Command: Australia’s participation was “inevitably affected by future circumstances in Southeast Asia and the general strategic position which may exist in the event of global war.” That being the case, Casey and the Australians were not prepared to publicly commit the country to the defence of the Middle East. Privately, however, Casey did make contact with Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs Salah El Din to stress that Australia generally supported British action in the region. “I got across [to El Din] that we were just as British as the UK” and supported British action, Casey penned in his diary on 31 October.

After Egypt refused to participate in the Command and abrogated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the United States continued to contemplate the formation of a Middle East Command. “The Command is important to the achievement of our political goals in the Middle East,” the State Department concluded in January 1952, and to “delay in its establishment will further prejudice the Western political position in that area.” As far as the formation of a Command was concerned, the NSC concluded that the United States should still “persuade other nations,” in conjunction with Britain, to provide armed forces for the defence of the Middle East. More specifically, Washington expected that Australia and New Zealand would be active contributors. An NSC report concluded that in order to achieve this objective the United States should make “every appropriate effort to obtain at least a token force from Australia and New Zealand.” Top level US military officials agreed. US Army Chief of Staff Joseph Collins suggested later at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting on 18 June that

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15 Casey to Webb, 8 November 1951, NAA, A1838, 181/1 Part 3.
16 Casey Diary Entry, 31 October 1951, NAA, M1153, 61.
17 State Department Memorandum, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, Lot 59, D 95.
18 NSC Policy Statement, 24 April 1952, NARA, RG 59, Lot 63, D 351.
We have committed ourselves to the defence of Australia and New Zealand. We have guaranteed them against an invasion. We have done all of this precisely to free up Australian and New Zealand forces for the Middle East.¹⁹

Indeed, while ANZUS was originally designed to protect mutual security threats solely in the Pacific theatre, US military planners began to suggest that Australia and New Zealand should also be prepared to commit their forces to defending the Middle East. During another joint State Department-JCS meeting in late November, JCS Chairman Omar Bradley concluded that it would be “good performance” for Australia and New Zealand to commit infantry divisions to any future hostilities in the Middle East.²⁰ By JCS estimates, this trans-Tasman contribution would assist in meeting the “ground force deficiencies” under current American contingency plans for war with the Soviet Union in the region. For Bradley, Australian and New Zealand military contributions to the Middle East (as well as contributions from other countries) should still come under the guise of a joint defence Command. There was a “need for the early establishment” of the Middle East Defence Command, Bradley concluded, as this organisation would undertake the joint military planning required to defend the region from Soviet control.²¹

By this stage, however, the Australians had cooled even further towards the idea of the formation of a Command. Australian External Affairs Secretary Alan Watt expressed serious reservations about the Command because it offered Australia absolutely no method of influencing the decision-making process. According to Watt, the proposed Command structure

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¹⁹ Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 18 June 1952, NARA, RG 59, Lot 61, D 417.
²⁰ Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 28 November 1952, RG 59, NARA, Lot 61, D 417.
²¹ Ibid.
did not give Australia “an adequate political voice in [the] political direction of the Middle East Command.” There was also little Australian support for a commitment to the Middle East because policymakers in Canberra believed that the security of the Pacific region was far more important. As New Zealand External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh reported from his trip to Canberra on 6 May 1952, “the Australians felt that there was a large element of unreality about the Middle East Command.” He suggested that the Australians “preferred a Pacific approach, and the construction of a relationship with the Americans, through a Pacific Defence Council.”

For different reasons, New Zealand began to reconsider the usefulness of a Command. McIntosh and Shanahan conceded on 13 June 1952 that “there will probably be some military secrets from which we will be excluded,” but did not think this prevented New Zealand from actively supporting the Command. According to McIntosh and Shanahan, there were other more pressing issues about the arrangement that brought its usefulness into question. For one, they both thought that “serious differences in views between the United States and Britain” in the Middle East—such as the make-up of the Command personnel, US policies toward Egypt and the Suez Canal, and British intentions for nearby Sudan—made the proposed Command a potential disaster for Western interests in the region. They also concluded that tense relations with Egypt over British bases near Suez presented a complicated situation to address for the Command powers, especially in the wake of Cairo’s rejection to participate.

By the time of Eisenhower’s inauguration in January 1953, Egyptian General Gamal Abdel Nasser had already overthrown the Egyptian government led by King Farouk and later declared

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22 Middle East Command – Australian Views, 22 May 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/39/2 Part 3; Meeting between Watt and McIntosh, 6 May 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/39/2 Part 3.


24 Meeting between McIntosh and Shanahan, 13 June 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/39/2 Part 3. See also Templeton, Ties of Blood and Empires, 13-25.
Egypt a Republic in June. These dramatic events convinced the Eisenhower Administration that a Command structure was no longer an appropriate means for the defence of the Middle East. “We had decided to put the [Command] concept on the shelf,” US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs John Jernegan told Counselor of the British Embassy in Washington Harold Beeley on 17 June, citing political instability in the region as the major reason for US reluctance to participate.25 Beeley replied that the British Foreign Office had a similar view and supported the idea to instead work closely with individual countries that appeared willing to defend Western interests in the region. At Beeley’s insistence, this included Australia and New Zealand.26

In a NSC meeting, American policymakers confirmed that a formal multilateral defence arrangement was no longer the best way to protect US interests in the Middle East. The Command was “no longer played up as a likely defense arrangement in the future,” US National Security Advisor Robert Cutler told the NSC on 9 July, and “Egypt was no longer considered to be the nucleus of an area defence organisation.” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles agreed. “The [Command] was too complicated, too much like NATO, and it obviously would not work,” Dulles said to Cutler, adding that “something less formal and grandiose was needed as a substitute.”27 The meeting concluded by agreeing that the United States should support Britain “to the greatest extent practical, but reserving the right to act with others or alone.”28 In other words, the United States remained committed to the defence of the Middle East, but it wanted greater flexibility in a future response if a serious crisis developed.

25 Memorandum by Jernegan, 17 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 780.3/6-1753.
26 Ibid.
27 National Security Council Meeting Minutes, 9 July 1953, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 3, EL.
28 Ibid.
By 1953, New Zealand likewise reconsidered its commitments to the region. Secretary of External Affairs Alister McIntosh thought that it was useful for New Zealand to continue its commitment to the Middle East but only because it provided an excuse not to commit its forces to the Far East. As he told Frank Corner on 30 March, “one of the reasons why we welcomed the Middle East commitment was that we really did not want to get involved in dangerously unwise hostilities in the Far East, and, to that extent, the Middle East provided a useful alibi.” He added that “it may well be that we will prefer to stick to our Middle East commitment as a bargaining counter until we can make terms on the acceptance of some alternative sphere of action.”

Corner, on the other hand, was convinced that it was becoming increasingly impractical for New Zealand to continue its commitments to the Middle East. Writing his own thoughts on the subject in a lengthy letter back to McIntosh in July, he made some astute points about the future of New Zealand’s defence and foreign policies. “Some years ago it was reasonable, helpful, and indeed inevitable for New Zealand to agree that her forces should be disposed in the Middle East in war,” Corner told McIntosh on 13 July 1953. Yet, as Europe stabilised and tensions grew in the Far East, this situation was now changing.

In no uncertain terms, Corner concluded that the Middle East should not be a primary New Zealand interest. “The Middle East is of no direct importance to New Zealand,” he argued, adding that even continuing to defend the Suez area might be unnecessary because other shipping routes, such as the Panama Canal, could be just as useful. As far as New Zealand’s continued defence interests in the Middle East were concerned, Corner concluded that it was completely unsatisfactory “to be committed to fight in an area where we have no representation, no way of making an independent appraisal of conditions in the country where our troops will be placed.”

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29 McIntosh to Corner, 30 March 1953, in Unofficial Channels, 129.

30 Corner to McIntosh, 13 July 1953, in Unofficial Channels, 133-145.
[and] no way of influencing the governments.” Overall, for these reasons, Corner concluded that New Zealand should “loosen its commitment to the Middle East.”

In similar circumstances, Australian policymakers began a marked strategic shift away from the Middle East. At Prime Minister Robert Menzies’s request, the Australian Defence Committee produced a report called “A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy” on 8 January 1953 to review this new direction in strategic thinking. The Australian report concluded that “the threat to Southeast Asia is greater than that to the Middle East … Southeast Asia should be given priority.” After Menzies approved these new defence plans, the Australian Embassy in Washington notified the State Department that Australia would no longer assist in the defence of the Middle East. “Australian troops would not be required in the Middle East theatre,” Australian Counsellor in Washington Frederick Blakeney told US Deputy Director of Near Eastern Affairs Stephen Dorsey on 22 January 1954, adding that “Australian troops in such an emergency was to be restricted to Southeast Asia.” Dorsey accepted these Australian plans, remarking that “Washington’s recent aid to Pakistan would in any case diminish the need for Australian troops in the event of a global war.” It appeared, at least from Dorsey’s remarks, that US policymakers had no issues with Australia accepting a greater military responsibility in the Pacific instead of committing to Middle East.

While Australia and New Zealand reorientated its defence commitments to the Middle East in favour of the Asia-Pacific, the United States and Britain continued to be heavily involved in the region. Such involvement came in a number of capacities: in August 1953, Eisenhower authorised a covert CIA operation (with British assistance) to overthrow Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh after he nationalised British oil reserves in the country and threatened

31 Ibid.
32 A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, 8 January 1953, NAA, A5954, 1353/2.
33 Australian Troops and the Middle East, 22 January 1954, NAA, A5462, 217/1/5 Part 1.
to align Iran with the Soviet bloc. US aid was also offered and accepted by Iraq in April 1954 in an American bid to maintain political influence over King Faisal II and the Iraqi government. Similarly in Egypt, Washington agreed to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam in late 1955 in order to gain political influence and gather diplomatic assistance in mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict. For its part, Britain was eventually able to reach a breakthrough in Anglo-Egyptian negotiations over British forces in the Canal area through the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian agreement. Under this agreement, Britain agreed to withdraw all of its troops out of Egypt by June 1956 on the understanding that the Suez Canal would remain under international control.

Over and above these developments, Winston Churchill’s retirement as British Prime Minister in April 1955 had serious ramifications for the immediate future of the Suez Canal and the broader region. His replacement, Anthony Eden, adopted a much more aggressive foreign policy towards Egypt that seriously strained Anglo-American relations and prompted one of the most serious international crises during entire the Cold War. Subsequent British action in Suez bitterly exposed the divergent views between the ANZUS powers on policies toward the Middle East and Britain’s role in world affairs.

**Nationalisation of the Canal: The 1956 Suez Crisis**

By mid-1956, Australia and New Zealand had begun a clear strategic shift away from the Middle East and toward their own immediate region. Meanwhile, the United States had become more closely involved in the Middle East. Yet once Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956 and the British planned for a military response, Australian, New Zealand and American policies changed dramatically. While privately concerned about British action, Australian and New Zealand diplomats publicly supported Britain. The United States instead

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refused to entertain the idea of military action and became infuriated with the British once they intervened with the French after the Israeli invasion in late 1956. During this crisis, the ANZUS powers were not thinking along similar lines and were certainly not working cooperatively. These differences stemmed from trans-Tasman British ties and contrasting views about the US response which categorically rejected military action.

*Escalation of the Crisis: March-August 1956*

Throughout 1956, Eisenhower and Eden grew increasingly concerned about Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. After overthrowing the Farouk government in 1952 and declaring Egypt a republic, Nasser frequently condemned British action in Egypt and publicly advocated a Pan-Arab movement against the West in the Middle East. The Britons and Americans, however, had very different views on how to deal with Nasser. Eisenhower hoped to encourage local and international political resistance against Nasser through a secret operation called Operation Omega, which aimed to use both diplomacy and covert action to thwart his ambitions in the Arab world. 35 Eden, on the other hand, wanted to take a much more direct approach. In conjunction with the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), Eden worked on plans to assassinate Nasser either covertly or through a large-scale invasion. In his eyes, Nasser was comparable to Hitler and needed to be eliminated as soon as possible. In letters to Eisenhower and in discussions with the SIS, he made frequent comparisons between Nasser, Hitler and

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Mussolini.\textsuperscript{36} “I feel myself that we can no longer safely wait on Nasser,” Eden wrote to Eisenhower in early March, “a policy of appeasement will bring us nothing in Egypt.”\textsuperscript{37}

In response, Eisenhower told Eden that he feared Nasser might work closely with the Soviets. “I share your current concerns over the current developments in the Middle East,” Eisenhower wrote on 9 March, “we face a broad challenge to our position in the Near East … [as] the Soviets have made it abundantly clear even in their public statements their intentions toward the Near East. He added that “some moves by Nasser have assisted the Soviets,” and under these circumstances, “it may well be that [the United States and Britain] shall be driven to conclude that it is impossible to do business with Nasser. Yet for all of his concerns, Eisenhower was not willing to completely dismiss finding a peaceful solution with Nasser. “I do not think that we should close the door yet on the possibility of working with him,” he argued in a letter to Eden.\textsuperscript{38} Eisenhower, in short, wanted to explore all options to maintain the US position in the Middle East in order to stop Soviet expansionism in the region and protect American access to regional oil reserves.

By mid-1956, prospects for finding a peaceful solution with Nasser evaporated quickly. On 19 July, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced that the United States was formally withdrawing aid for the Aswan Dam Project. In a meeting with Egyptian Ambassador in Washington Ahmed Hussein, Dulles suggested that there was “little goodwill toward Egypt on the part of the American public,” so much so that Dulles doubted whether the Administration


\textsuperscript{37} Eden to Eisenhower, 6 March 1956, NARA, RG 59, 780.5/3-656.

\textsuperscript{38} Eisenhower to Eden, 9 March 1956, in Eden-Eisenhower Correspondence, 122.
could obtain the funds from Congress. “For the time being,” Dulles told Hussein, “the Dam project should be put on the shelf while we tried to develop a better atmosphere and better relations.”39 One week later, Nasser announced Egyptian plans to nationalise the Suez Canal. Nasser declared his plans were the “answer to American and British conspiracies against Egypt” and a response to “imperialistic efforts to thwart Egyptian independence.”40 Nasser’s decision greatly concerned Eden, who immediately began plans to intervene militarily in Egypt. He believed that Nasser’s action was not only a threat to Britain’s economic interests but it was also a provocative attack on British power and authority. Eden immediately established an Egypt Committee (an inner circle of British Cabinet members that planned for a Suez operation) and warned Eisenhower that Britain was prepared to use force in Egypt. “My colleagues and I are convinced that we must be ready, in the last resort, to use force to bring Nasser to his senses,” Eden told Eisenhower on 27 July.41

The Americans were not willing to consider the use of a force. Instead, policymakers in Washington preferred a peaceful diplomatic approach. US Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr. urged Eisenhower not to consider military action as there were “grave dangers” in such a response. “While [a] strong position should be taken in order to preserve Western status in [the] Middle East,” Hoover told Eisenhower on 28 July, the “confiscation of the Suez company was not sufficient reason for military intervention.” Hoover added that “unless we (the United States) can introduce an element of restraint, Eden will tend to move much too rapidly and without adequate cause for armed intervention.”42 Eisenhower agreed with Hoover’s assessment. “I cannot over-emphasise the strength of my conviction,” Eisenhower

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40 Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, 26 July 1956, FRUS 1955-1957 Vol. XVI, 1.
42 Department of State to the Secretary of State, 28 July 1956, FRUS 1955-1957 Vol. XVI, 25.
wrote to Eden on 31 July, that all diplomatic routes must be explored “before action such as you contemplate should be undertaken.”

Four days later, Eisenhower met with Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Australian Ambassador Percy Spender in Washington. Eisenhower hoped that the Australians might assist US efforts in advising London against the use of force in the Middle East. As Eisenhower told Menzies, he “hoped that the United Kingdom and France would continue to exercise restraint.” He added that London should be careful not to succumb to the “tyranny of the weak,” a term he used to describe “the difficulty that arises when weak nations are in a position to challenge great powers by taking advantage of certain situations.”

Even though Australia had withdrawn from its defence commitments in the Middle East, Nasser’s nationalisation of the Canal prompted Menzies to pledge his support for British efforts in the region. On 30 July, Menzies suggested to the External Affairs Department that military action might be necessary in order to ensure that Nasser did not “get away with such an act of brigandage.” One day later, Menzies made similar comments in a meeting with British Ambassador in Washington Roger Makins and US Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover. “I made it clear (to Makins and Hoover) that in my opinion Nasser’s action was illegal,” Menzies recalled, “and unless his prestige could be materially diminished, [the United States and Britain] would be exposed to trouble after trouble in the Middle East.”

This view, however, was challenged by several policymakers in Canberra. Australian External Affairs Minister Richard Casey, Defence Minister Philip McBride and Deputy Prime


44 Meeting between Eisenhower, Menzies and Spender, 3 August 1956, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 2, EL.


46 Robert Menzies, Afternoon Light, 149-150.
Minister Arthur Fadden all urged Menzies against military action, suggesting that they all saw “substantial arguments against the use of force.” If force was used, they claimed that trading vessels in the region would be in danger, the participating powers would be brought before the UN Security Council, and relations with Arab and Asian countries would be jeopardised.47 Adding to these concerns was the complete lack of consultation between Australia and Britain especially in relation to the possibility of resorting to force. “We have had nothing from the UK about their intentions in respect of the use of force nor their appreciation of its military and political effects,” Casey penned in his diary on 7 August.48

Although Casey, Fadden and McBride did not advocate the use of force to retain international control of the Canal, military recommendations suggested that Canberra should support London if a decision was made to intervene. The Australian Defence Committee produced a report on 9 August that concluded that Western control of Suez was of “major importance” to Australia because it relied heavily on regional oil reserves and free access to the shipping route. The report also concluded that total Egyptian control of the Canal would affect “the flow of reinforcements and supplies from the United Kingdom to the Far East in an emergency.”49 In this regard, Australian defence interests in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific became intertwined.

From a military standpoint, Australia fully supported British intervention despite its limited potential to contribute to military action. The “immediate military objective should be to seize and occupy the canal,” the Defence Committee report advised Menzies, even though it conceded that only a token Australian force might be available for deployment while most of

47 Casey, Fadden and McBride to Menzies, 1 August 1956, NAA, A4926, 14. See also Hudson, Blind Loyalty, 49-50.

48 Casey Diary Entry, 7 August 1956, Casey’s Diaries, 237.

49 Australian Strategic Interests in the Middle East, 9 August 1956, NAA, A5954, 1410/1.
its troops were stationed in Malaya.\textsuperscript{50} The report outlined that “if the situation was to deteriorate in Southeast Asia or the Far East, it may be necessary to bring back any Australian forces deployed in the Suez Canal area.” In short, Australia was prepared to support Anglo-French military action in Suez. However, an Australian commitment to the region should “be small and limited to the navy and air force.”\textsuperscript{51}

New Zealand reached similar conclusions. Like Australia, Wellington was unable to proffer any significant number of defence forces in the event of an armed intervention (although a New Zealand warship called the ‘Royalist’ was stationed in the Mediterranean). Diplomatically, Wellington was fully behind any British action in the region in order to protect Commonwealth interests. As New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland told British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd on 30 July, “you may be assured that New Zealand will as always fully support any steps which the United Kingdom feels obliged to take to ensure that vital British rights are fully protected.”\textsuperscript{52} Holland’s conviction that New Zealand should stand fully behind Britain was no secret. He made very similar comments in the New Zealand Parliament eight days later. “Where Britain stands, we stand; where she goes we go, in good times and bad,” Holland announced on 7 August. In his estimation, that was the “mood of the New Zealand people” on the topic.\textsuperscript{53} After Holland’s speech, External Affairs Minister Tom McDonald made a similar speech that was particularly scathing of Egyptian action in the Canal:

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\textsuperscript{50} Defence Committee Report to Menzies, 9 August 1956, NAA, A5954, 1410/1.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Holland to Lloyd, 30 July 1956, Archives NZ, EA, 217/1/6 Part 1.

\textsuperscript{53} Holland Statement, 7 August 1956, New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (hereafter NZPD), 1956 Vol. 309, 885-894.
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The manner in which the Egyptian government has acted … has given Britain and other European countries no ground for comfort at all. Egypt has waged over the air against the United Kingdom a constant propaganda campaign which has at times been vicious and virulent. She has endeavoured to create trouble by turning neighbouring countries against the countries of Europe … Egypt gives us no reassurance at all concerning Egyptian intentions, and the unheralded and arbitrary method of this latest seizure gives no promise of future harmony and can only be deplored.

For these reasons, McDonald argued that New Zealand must stand wholeheartedly behind British action against Egypt, even with the potential use of force. “Britain has every justification for preparing to meet any eventuality,” McDonald declared. “As to mobilisation,” he added, “I think it has been overlooked, and it should not be.”54 New Zealand support for the use of force, however, was not unanimous. Much like the way in which Casey, Fadden and McBride urged Menzies to renounce the use of force as a means to respond to Nasser’s nationalisation, New Zealand High Commissioner in London Thomas Clifton Webb hoped Britain would not respond with military action. “Let us hope they have not committed themselves to something which … cannot be carried out,” Webb wrote to McDonald on 31 July, “either because of lack of support from [the] USA … or even from their own public here.”55

Menzies and the Suez Committee: August-September 1956

While Britain and France contemplated the use of force in Egypt, an international conference was held in London during mid-August in the hope that a diplomatic solution might be found


to return the Canal to international control. Before the Conference, Menzies made a television address to the British public on 13 August to outline his views toward the developing crisis. Menzies, in no uncertain terms, placed the blame for the crisis squarely on Nasser. “Nasser’s actions in respect of the Suez Canal Company has created a crisis more grave [sic] than any since the Second World War,” Menzies concluded. Menzies did not trust Nasser at all and was convinced that it would be “suicidal” to leave the Commonwealth’s vital trading interests in Suez solely in his hands. Moreover, he stressed that Nasser’s nationalisation of the Canal was illegal under international law and would encourage further aggression if left unchecked. By nationalising the Canal and rejecting the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, Menzies argued that “Nasser violated the first principle of international law” and this grievance “will encourage other acts of lawlessness if not resisted.”

At the Conference, Menzies maintained that his country was unprepared to accept anything less than a return to international control of the Suez Canal. “Australia has a great interest in freedom of transit” in Suez, Menzies said in a speech in London. According to Menzies, the “essential factor” was the establishment of an efficient administrative body in the Canal so that all nations could benefit from the free operation of the Canal. New Zealand External Affairs Minister Tom McDonald made a similar statement in London. The Suez Canal, McDonald argued, “must, in our view, be on an international basis … it should be able to assure free transit of the Canal, it should be efficient, and it should not be subject to financial instability.” In other words, both Australian and New Zealand representatives in London thought that international management of the Canal was essential.

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56 Menzies Statement, 13 August 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.


58 McDonald Statement, 17 August 1956, NZFP: SD, 444-448.
Even though Menzies announced that his government completely supported British action in Egypt, Australian External Affairs Minister Casey continued to urge him to renounce the use of force as an appropriate solution. “I recommended to Menzies that he should speak against the use of force to Anthony Eden, [as] it would put us completely in the wrong with public opinion in practically every part of the world,” Casey penned in his diary on 17 August. He added that “I recommended that he should seek to get an appreciation from the UK of the military side, of which we were entirely in the dark. I failed to see what could be achieved by action of this sort.”

Casey’s New Zealand counterpart, Tom McDonald, was suspicious that Australia and New Zealand were purposefully “left in the dark” at the Conference in order to prepare for Anglo-French military action. Suspecting a secret invasion plot, McDonald now thought that military action would be disastrous for Britain and Western interests in the region. These views were “shared by a majority in the New Zealand Cabinet.” Writing to the New Zealand Prime Minister on 23 August, McDonald advised against supporting British military action. He suggested that the entire conference was designed to prepare an unacceptable proposal to Nasser that he would reject in order to make resorting to force appear more reasonable. This, in McDonald’s view, was “one of the main reasons for the conference.”

McDonald’s suspicions proved to be correct. Eden had planned to take back the Canal regardless of the outcome of negotiations. As one British Foreign Service Officer Anthony Nutting recalled later about the crisis, “Eden hoped that the conference would produce a solution unacceptable to

59 Casey Diary Entry, 17 August 1956, NAA, M1153, 38.
61 McDonald to Holland, 23 August 1956, NAA, A5462, 118/2/4 Part 2.
Nasser.”\(^{62}\) In other words, the outcome of the Suez Conference was destined to fail. Eden had already authorised French troops to be stationed in Cyprus and asked British subjects to leave the Middle East area on 29 August, days before any diplomatic approach was made to Nasser.\(^{63}\)

Nonetheless, a Committee was appointed in London comprised of representatives from Australia, Ethiopia, Iran, Sweden and the United States in order to present a number of proposals to Nasser agreed upon by eighteen of the twenty-two participating powers at the Conference. These proposals revolved around returning the Canal to international control. On strong insistence from Dulles and Eden, Prime Minister Menzies agreed to lead this Committee and present the agreed proposals to Nasser. Menzies surely felt complimented that he might play an instrumental role in resolving a complex international situation. Unaware of Eden’s actual plans, Menzies was especially enthusiastic about leading the Committee because he was concerned that the outbreak of war in Egypt was “an even money chance.”\(^{64}\) There was a “very distinct prospect,” Menzies feared, that Britain and France would use military force should a diplomatic solution not be reached.\(^{65}\)

Menzies and the Suez Committee met with Nasser in Cairo on 3 and 4 September to present the agreements reached in London. While making clear that there was “no spirit of hostility” about the agreements being proposed, Menzies emphasised to Nasser that the use of force was completely possible should he choose to reject the proposals. As he warned Nasser, it would be “a mistake for you to exclude the possible use of force from your reckoning.” Nasser, however, did not budge in the face of this possibility. “President Nasser took our proposals apart, tore them up, and metaphorically consigned them to the wastepaper basket,” Menzies

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\(^{63}\) Watry, *Diplomacy at the Brink*, 123.

\(^{64}\) Menzies to Fadden, 22 August 1956, NAA, A4926, 13.

\(^{65}\) Menzies Memorandum, 25 August 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.
recalled. Nasser then rejected the proposals formally on 9 September, claiming that they were a form of “collective colonialism.”

Menzies returned to Australia disappointed and frustrated by Nasser’s stubbornness. Fending off media criticism that he ultimately failed in his efforts to convince Nasser to agree to the Committee’s proposals, he stressed that Nasser was uncooperative and entirely to blame for this crisis. “This repudiation by the President of Egypt was committed without notice, without consent, and in fact, by force,” Menzies said at a press conference in Sydney on 18 September, “those things are worth remembering.” “It is quite true that I was appointed as chief spokesman for presenting these matters to the President of Egypt,” Menzies added, but “I don’t think anyone could challenge the fairness or indeed the generosity of one item in the proposals.” He also rejected Nasser’s claim that the Suez Committee’s proposals were a form of collective colonialism. “I hope it will be remembered that under the proposals put forward Egypt’s position as landlord was recognised completely,” Menzies argued, stressing that “Egypt was to be the only nation deriving any profit from the Canal at all.”

Paving the way for military action, Eden was surely pleased by Nasser’s rejection of the Committee’s proposals. Eden, however, placed the Committee’s failure squarely on Eisenhower, who during the conference told the media that he hoped for a peaceful solution to the crisis while the British were threatening Nasser with the use of force. This, in London’s

66 Menzies, Afternoon Light, 168. See also Menzies Memorandum, 4 September 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.
67 Committee of Five Report, 10 September 1956, NAA, A5954, 1411/7. See also Menzies Memorandum, 9 September 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.
68 Menzies Statement, 18 September 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.
69 Ibid.
70 Watry, Diplomacy at the Brink, 125.
view, completely undermined their negotiating position with Egypt. “We must … show that Nasser is not going to get his way,” Eden urged in a letter to Eisenhower on 6 September. Meanwhile, Eisenhower continued to stress publicly that he would not use force in order to find a resolution to the crisis. “This country will not got go war ever while I am occupying my present post unless the Congress declares such a war,” Eisenhower said at a press conference on 11 September. Dulles made similar remarks in a press conference the next day, suggesting that even if the United States had a right to intervene militarily “we (the United States) did not intend to shoot our way through.”

Many policymakers in New Zealand, who continued to be very supportive of the British during negotiations over Suez, similarly placed blame on Eisenhower and the Americans for doing little to support British diplomatic efforts. As New Zealand External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh told his former Deputy Foss Shanahan on 24 August,

> How infuriating the British must find the Americans over Suez … when it comes to ostriches I am sure that bigger birds never stuck their heads into a bigger expanse of sand than Dulles is now doing in the undignified spectacle they present near the Pyramids.

In reality, there were no major differences with respect to US and British views about the threat Nasser posed. Anglo-American tensions were rather a result of differences about how these countries should respond to this threat. As Eisenhower described in a letter to Eden on 8 September, the United States and Britain had a “grave problem confronting Nasser’s reckless

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73 McIntosh to Shanahan, 24 August 1956, in *Unofficial Channels*, 208.
adventure with the Canal” and did not differ from British “estimates of his intentions and purposes.” The main point of Anglo-American disagreement, according to Eisenhower, was resorting to force and “the probable effects in the Arab world of the various possible reactions by the Western world.”74 The possibility of a Western military response clearly concerned Eisenhower, which in his estimation would be a disaster and hurt US prestige in the Arab world. According to Eisenhower, resorting to war “when the world believes there are other means available for resolving the dispute would set in motion forces that could lead, in the years to come, to the most distressing results.”75

Eisenhower and Dulles were especially fearful that after the failed Menzies mission, Eden was even more likely to pursue military options in Egypt. On 6 September, Dulles held a Congressional meeting with Senators Hubert Humphrey, Mike Mansfield and William Langer to brief them on the Suez situation and gather bipartisan approval for renouncing the use of force in Egypt. Dulles warned that the British and the French thought that it was necessary to “begin military operations to curb Nasser.” “The British feel that if Nasser gets away with it,” Dulles said, “it will start a chain of events in the Near East that will reduce the UK to another Netherlands or Portugal in a very few years.” Dulles told the Senators that he and Eisenhower were doing everything in their power to “strongly discourage” the use of force, as they felt it would be “disastrous for the French and the UK militarily to intervene at this point.”76 There were no criticisms or partisanship injected during the meeting. All three Senators agreed with Dulles’s efforts to prevent the use of force in Egypt.

74 Eisenhower to Eden, 8 September 1956, FRUS 1955-1957 Vol. XVI, 431.
75 Ibid., 433.
76 Meeting between Dulles, Humphrey, Mansfield and Langer, 6 September 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 7, EL; Conversation between Eisenhower and Dulles, 7 September 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 7, EL.
Meanwhile, Eisenhower sent several letters directly to Eden in the hope he might convince him to reconsider military action. Eden was, however, unconvinced by Eisenhower’s reasoning. Instead, Eden argued that anything other than the use of force would be appeasement, a policy that could lead to catastrophic results. “There is no doubt in our minds that Nasser, whether he likes it or not, is now effectively in Russian hands, just as Mussolini was in Hitler’s,” Eden said to Eisenhower. He argued that “it would be as ineffective to show weakness to Nasser now in order to placate him as it was to show weakness to Mussolini … that is why we must do everything we can.”

Seemingly out of touch with British thinking on the matter, Dulles also turned to Australia to express his concerns. “I am beginning to feel concerned,” Dulles wrote to Menzies and Casey on 27 October, “I am not myself in close touch with recent British-French thinking but in view of [the] leading role Australia has played, I feel it appropriate to express my concern.”

The Crisis Erupts: October-November 1956

Eisenhower’s and Dulles’s messages to London and Canberra could not prevent the escalation of the crisis in the Suez Canal. Despite American efforts, Eden remained inclined to use military action in order to topple Nasser and re-internationalise the Suez Canal. Tensions in Suez reached a climax on 29 October when Israeli forces, in collusion with Britain and France, invaded the Sinai Peninsula. None of the ANZUS powers, nor other Commonwealth countries, were informed beforehand of this secret Anglo-French plan. “For a long time the Middle East had been simmering,” Eden said in a message to all Commonwealth Prime Ministers a day later, “now it is boiling over.” In the message, Eden outlined plans for an Anglo-French

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77 Eden to Eisenhower, 1 October 1956, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 6, EL.

78 Dulles to Menzies and Casey, 27 October 1956, NARA, RG 59, 974.7301/10-2756.

79 Eden to Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 30 October 1956, Archives NZ, EA, 217/1/12 Part 1.
response, omitting entirely that London and Paris secretly supported the Israeli invasion in the first place. He described that unless the Israelis and Egyptians withdrew within twelve hours, Anglo-French forces would seize the Canal and overthrow Nasser. Nasser predictably rejected the ultimatum, which ultimately led to an Anglo-French invasion of Egypt on 5 November.

In Washington, the Eisenhower Administration was shocked and angered by Anglo-French action without American consultation. “I think the British made a bad error,” Eisenhower told Senator William Knowland on 31 October, “I think it is the biggest error of our time.” In a meeting with Dulles, Eisenhower said he was “astonished” that Eden avoided informing Washington of its decision. “They are our friends and allies (Britain and France),” Eisenhower said, “and suddenly they put us in a hole and expect us to rescue them.”

At an NSC meeting on 1 November, Eisenhower and Dulles outlined that the United States must do all it can to push for a peaceful resolution through exerting the greatest possible pressure on Britain and France. “Recent events are close to marking a death knell for Britain and France,” Dulles described, and the United States had to decide whether it would side with its oldest allies or the Arab world. Eisenhower made his choice clear: in his eyes, the action Eden had taken was “nothing short of disastrous.” “How could we possibly support Britain and France if in so doing we lose the whole Arab world,” Eisenhower asked rhetorically.

In discussing the international reaction, Dulles outlined that there was so far very little support for British-French action in Egypt. He stressed that the “verdict of the rest of the world [was] altogether unanimous” in its opposition to the use of force in Egypt. There was, however, two exceptions to this opposition to British-French action: approval for the attacks had only come from Australia and New Zealand. Secretary Dulles told the NSC that Australia and New

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80 Eisenhower to Knowland, 30 October 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 18, EL; Eisenhower to Dulles, 30 October 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 18, EL.

81 NSC Meeting, 1 November 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, EL.
Zealand were indeed the exceptions at this stage, yet there were extenuating factors in these cases. In Australia’s case, there was “much unhappiness” amongst the public about British action. Moreover, at the political level, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Allen Dulles (John Foster Dulles’s younger brother) suggested that there was “a wide split of opinion between Menzies and Casey.” In New Zealand’s case, John Foster Dulles simply suggested that “it was virtually a colony and almost invariably followed the lead of the United Kingdom.”

Meanwhile, angered by Eden’s betrayal, Eisenhower wrote to the British Prime Minister to express his concern about the Anglo-French ultimatum. “I feel I must urgently express to you my deep concern at the prospect of this drastic action,” he wrote, “even at the very time when the matter is under consideration in the United Nations Security Council.” Privately, Eisenhower followed the decisions reached at the NSC meeting on 1 November and put severe economic and military pressure on the British, hoping that it would sway London to agree to a UN cease-fire and withdraw from the Canal area. The US Sixth Fleet harassed the Anglo-French invasion fleet in the Mediterranean and delayed its arrival into Egypt, while in Washington, Eisenhower approved a series of economic sanctions on Britain to compel the British to withdraw.

Eisenhower likewise put diplomatic pressure on Britain and France through the introduction of a UN ceasefire resolution. After consultation with Dulles and the NSC, Eisenhower argued that the United States must present a cease-fire resolution in the United Nations as soon as possible. In his estimation, the United States must lead this cease-fire resolution before the

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82 Ibid.


84 Watry, Diplomacy at the Brink, 135-138. See also Bertjan Verbeek, Decision Making in Britain during the Suez Crisis: Small Groups and a Persistent Leader (Ashgate, 2003).
Soviet Union presented its own resolution in order to prevent Moscow from “seizing a mantle of world leadership through a false but convincing exhibition of concern for smaller nations.” Overall, in an effort not to embarrass the British and French by specifically naming them, US action in the UN aimed to avoid “singling out or condemning any one nation, but should serve to emphasise to the world our hope for a quick ceasefire.” An emergency United Nations session was then called on 1 November. Dulles introduced a cease-fire resolution that passed by a margin of 64-5. Along with Britain, France and Israel, Australia and New Zealand were the only other countries to oppose the resolution.

_Australian and New Zealand Responses to the Israeli Invasion_

As Dulles predicted, Australia and New Zealand both publicly supported British action in the Suez Canal. While disturbed by conflict in the Middle East, New Zealand Prime Minister Holland wholeheartedly supported British action. To his mind, such a response protected Commonwealth interests and was necessary in order to preserve Britain’s vital interests in the region. “We are naturally gravely concerned,” Holland wrote to the New Zealand High Commission in London, yet he added that “there is no need for me to stress New Zealand’s ties of blood and empire and our traditional attitude of standing by Britain in her difficulties. He added that “I can assure you of our deepest sympathy for the United Kingdom in the situation now confronting her. It is our desire, as always, to be of the most utmost assistance.” Holland also shared these thoughts to the New Zealand public. In a statement on 1 November, Holland announced that “I have the full confidence in the United Kingdom intentions in moving forces

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85 Eisenhower Memorandum, 1 November 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 18, EL.

86 Holland to the NZ High Commission in London, 1 November 1956, Archives NZ, EA, 217/1/12 Part 1.
into the Canal area” and declared New Zealand would do all it could to assist Eden and the Britons in their hour of need.87

In Canberra, Menzies pledged similar public support for British action. “Australia accepts that Anglo-French intervention was a necessary emergency measure by two great democratic powers,” Canberra reported to the Australian High Commission in London on 1 November.88 Later that day, Menzies wrote to Dulles and outlined that his government supported Anglo-French action. “Quite frankly I do not believe that it would in the interests of any of us to have [the] Canal closed for weeks and possibly months,” Menzies said, “from this point of view my colleagues and I see considerable merit in police action which is involved in Anglo-French ultimatum.”89 He made a similar statement to the Australian public on 3 November, stressing his opinion that Anglo-French action was necessary. “The action taken by the United Kingdom and France was the only quick and practical means of separating the belligerents and protecting the Canal,” Menzies announced.” He also argued that it was “wrong and absurd” to consider Nasser, the “author of the Canal confiscation and promoter of anti-British activities in the Middle East,” as an “innocent victim of unprovoked aggression.”90 Put another way, Menzies clearly thought that Nasser had caused military action against Egypt and on some level deserved it.

Privately, however, policymakers in the Tasman countries expressed grave concerns about British action. Canberra and Wellington were also concerned that pledging public support for Britain compromised their security relationship with the United States. New Zealand reports from Washington confirmed these concerns shortly after the Israeli invasion on 29 October. As

87 Holland Statement, 1 November 1956, NZFP: SD, 452.
88 Memorandum for the Australian High Commission in London, 1 November 1956, NAA, A1838, S170 Part 5.
89 Menzies to Dulles, 1 November 1956, 1 November 1956, NAA, A1838, S170 Part 5.
90 Menzies Statement, 3 November 1956, Menzies Papers, Box 423, NLA.
the crisis escalated, New Zealand Ambassador in Washington Leslie Munro met with US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Rountree in Washington to discuss the American reaction to the crisis. He reported to Wellington on 31 October that the situation was of the “utmost gravity, both from [the] point of view of [an] Anglo-American breach and in terms of general security in the Middle East.” Munro warned that the situation could develop to a point where the Western position in the Middle East became “irretrievable.” In a subsequent cablegram to Prime Minister Holland later that day, Munro stressed that Anglo-French action “put New Zealand in a difficult position vis-à-vis its ANZUS partner, the United States, and confronts us with a critical choice between British and American policies in the Middle East.”

Australia was caught in a similarly difficult position. In Canberra, Menzies stressed that a rift in Anglo-American relations was deeply concerning to Australia. “I have myself urged upon both British and American leaders that consultations should speedily occur to reconcile any differences of opinion,” Menzies said to the House of Representatives on 1 November. He added that “it is a great misfortune that there have been public differences between those great democracies whose friendly cooperation is so vital to us all.” Nonetheless, despite this rift in Anglo-American relations, Menzies remained supportive of British action. Menzies echoed this belief in an address to Parliament on 3 November, stating that Anglo-French action was “the only quick and practical means of separating the belligerents and protecting the Canal.” He then wrote to Eden, reassuring the British Prime Minister that he had Australia’s full support:

91 Munro to NZ Department of External Affairs, 31 October 1956, Archives NZ, EA, 217/1/12 Part 1.
92 Munro to Holland, 31 October 1956, Archives NZ, EA, 217/1/12 Part 1.
93 Menzies Address to the House of Representatives, 1 October 1956, NAA, A2908, S170 Part 5.
94 Menzies Statement, 3 November 1956, 1 November 1956, NAA, A1838, S170 Part 5.
You have indeed had a difficult decision to take but I am sure that you are right. Under these circumstances, an abandonment of operations by [Britain] and France would have left the Canal unprotected, would have given fresh heart to Egypt and would have meant a lot of destructive fighting around and over the Canal itself … our support remains undiminished and that we think that you were and are right. It is tragic at a time like this you should have to encounter such intemperate and stupid attack.\(^{95}\)

It is indeed telling that even without any consultation from London Australia chose to place its support behind British action. As far as Canberra was concerned, Britain’s vital interests came before any possible diplomatic backlash in Washington. “I believe that Anglo-French action was correct,” Menzies later told Eisenhower, “in Australia I believe that approval of the British action is widespread.”\(^{96}\)

Even then, choosing sides between the United States and Britain was quite difficult for Australian policymakers. Casey, fearing the effect this crisis would have on Australian-American relations, did not stand completely beside Menzies in his support for British action. For Casey, it was greatly concerning that a rift in Anglo-American relations was so publicly exposed. During discussions for a ceasefire in the United Nations, Casey reported to Menzies that “I was greatly distressed by atmosphere at United Nations.” He added that “the almost physical cleavage between United Kingdom and United States was one of the most distressing things I had ever experienced.”\(^{97}\)

\(^{95}\) Menzies to Holland, 6 November 1956, NAA, A1838, S170 Part 5.

\(^{96}\) Menzies to Eisenhower, 20 November 1956, DDE Diary Papers, International Series, Box 2, EL.

\(^{97}\) Casey to Menzies, 22 November 1956, NAA, A1838, S170 Part 5.
Casey was not alone. Many Australian and New Zealand diplomats were privately concerned by an Anglo-American rift over Suez because it put Canberra and Wellington in a very difficult position between its two most important allies. To this end, Australian and New Zealand diplomats agreed that they faced the same dire situation. Writing about a meeting he had with New Zealand High Commissioner in London Clifton Webb as well as other British Ministers on 2 November, Casey recalled that

There is great deal of doubt, to put it mildly, in most people’s minds, about the wisdom of the enterprise on which the UK has launched. The fact is that I have met no-one (apart from senior Ministers) amongst the many friends with whom I have been in contact, who are in favour of it, and many of them are genuinely and greatly distressed. Their fears are not on account of the outcome of the military operation, but for the effect on the position and prestige of Britain and as to whether the operation will not have a longstanding effect the reverse of what is intended.\(^98\)

In Wellington, the New Zealand External Affairs Department expressed deep concern about London’s decision to intervene. In a letter to Foss Shanahan, External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh compared the Suez Crisis to the outbreak of the Second World War. “The last few days have been all too reminiscent of 1939,” McIntosh told Shanahan, “we in the Department have been horrified at the implications of British action, but Cabinet as a whole and the Prime Minister have been thoroughly in favour of backing the United Kingdom.”\(^99\)

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\(^{98}\) Casey Diary Entry, 2 November 1956, NAA, M1153, 49D.

\(^{99}\) McIntosh to Shanahan, 8 November 1956, in *Unofficial Channels*, 209.
McIntosh was particularly alarmed by British action. Writing to Under Secretary Frank Corner, McIntosh described Eden’s decision to intervene in the Suez area as “criminal.” “In my view,” McIntosh concluded, “he (Eden) ought to be impeached.” He was particularly concerned that the crisis had developed so suddenly and without any consultation with Wellington. In another letter to Corner, McIntosh wrote that “one of the features about this Middle East Crisis that has shaken me most is not only the lack of consultation between the United Kingdom and the Dominions but also the slackening flow of information as the crisis has proceeded.” Corner agreed with McIntosh’s grim assessment of the deteriorating situation and criticised the lack of information that came from London, suggesting that Eden must be quite mad. “It is said that the Arabs have enormous respect for madmen,” Corner said memorably, “because Allah is supposed to reveal himself through them. If only the doctors would confirm the diagnosis of Whitehall and certify Eden.”

Aftermath: Eden Resigns

In the end, enormous diplomatic, economic and military pressure eventually forced Britain and France to agree to another UN cease-fire and an emergency peace-keeping operation on 6 November, enabling an Anglo-French withdraw from the Canal. For all their efforts in Suez, London and Paris had nothing to show for it except failure and embarrassment. As the US

100 McIntosh to Corner, 12 November 1956, in Unofficial Channels, 212.
101 McIntosh to Corner, 14 November 1956, in Unofficial Channels, 213.
102 Corner to McIntosh, 23 November 1956, in Unofficial Channels, 214-215; Eden had in fact been taking medication to deal with mental health issues. Upon his resignation, Eden cited that his reasons for doing so were because of ill-health rather than from the failed Suez mission. See D. R. Thorpe, Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden, First Earl of Avon, 1897-1977 (Random House, 2004); Watry, Diplomacy at the Brink, 138-147; Nichols, Eisenhower 1956, 268-269; Tony Shaw, Eden, Suez, and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion During the Suez Crisis (I.B. Tauris, 1996);
Embassy in Cairo reported to Washington, the British and French “gained nothing except loss of prestige and increased hatred of Arabs.” Shoudering the brunt of the blame and embarrassment for the crisis—as well as struggling with a number of health issues—Eden resigned as Prime Minister on 9 January 1957. For all the shock and surprise surrounding events in Suez, his resignation was predicted. “Eden has had a physical breakdown and will have to go on vacation immediately … this will lead to his retirement,” the US Embassy in London cabled Washington on 19 November. His replacement, Harold Macmillan, quickly asked the United States to provide a “fig leaf to cover our nakedness” in early January so that British troops could finally withdraw from Egypt. As Anglo-French forces withdrew, even those in Australia and New Zealand who wholeheartedly supported British policy recognised that the crisis signalled the end of Britain’s claim to major power status. As New Zealand External Affairs Officer Frank Corner told Secretary Alister McIntosh, “the centre of effective power and decision has, I think, passed away from London. Washington and New York are likely to be the most interesting places from now on.”

Conclusion
After a failed invasion of the Sinai Peninsula due to American diplomatic, economic and military pressure, the end of the 1956 Suez Crisis publicly exposed a bitter rift in Anglo-American relations and essentially confirmed the end of British world leadership. It also exposed noticeable differences between Australia, New Zealand and the United States over the control of the Suez Canal, defence policy in the region, and Britain’s role in world affairs.

103 US Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, 10 November 1956, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, EL.

104 US Ambassador in London to Eisenhower and Dulles, 19 November 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 18, EL.

105 Corner to McIntosh, 10 November 1956, in Unofficial Channels, 210.
While all of the ANZUS powers had defence interests in the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand decided to publicly support British military action during the 1956 Suez Crisis despite strong private reservations. The United States, in contrast, bitterly opposed British action and forced London to withdraw from Egypt. As this Chapter argued, defence interests the Middle East and responses to the Suez Crisis demonstrated clear policy differences between the ANZUS powers that stemmed from trans-Tasman British ties and views surrounding US leadership. It also demonstrated a turning point in alliance diplomacy for both Canberra and Wellington. During the Suez Crisis, Australia and New Zealand held similar views and were not prepared to defer to US leadership when vital British interests were at stake. In short, five years after the conclusion of ANZUS, Australia and New Zealand were still prepared to pledge support for vital British interests instead of aligning all strategic policies with their chief protector, the United States. For Canberra and Wellington, Suez starkly exposed the limitations to supporting Britain when London’s views were at odds with those in Washington.
CONCLUSION

The eleven years between the end of World War II and the end of the Suez Crisis wrought many changes in how Australia, New Zealand and the United States approached each other and the wider world. Evolving from a wartime alliance during WWII, these countries shared common interests in defending against Communist aggression, preventing a revival of Japanese aggression and broadly preserving the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific. As this thesis has argued, however, the ANZUS powers were far less united on these issues than the conclusion of the treaty suggested. Moreover, as Australia and New Zealand maintained close ties to Britain throughout this period, ANZUS policies did not revolve completely around US policy.

As Chapter One argued, initial Australian post-war policy centred on strategic and military cooperation with Britain and the United States. This policy gave little thought to New Zealand’s role in cooperation with these powers. Canberra also hoped to conclude a defence arrangement with the United States through the joint control of island bases in the Southwest Pacific. Again, New Zealand was barely consulted. Overall, Australia saw its primary task as maintaining the closest ties possible with the British Commonwealth while developing a new strategic relationship with the United States. New Zealand policymakers also recognised that the security of their country rested on protection from the United States, but they instead decided to cooperate with British plans to send New Zealand forces back to the Middle East in the event
of war between 1945 and 1953. Wellington, in contrast to Canberra, saw its role as a small but loyal member of the British Commonwealth and an active supporter of the United Nations as an instrument for world peace. Meanwhile, other than obtaining Australia and New Zealand cooperation for its plans in Japan, the United States took no major interest in its relationship with the British Dominions in the South Pacific. US post-war policy was global in nature, prioritised Europe and the Middle East as key regions, and aimed to prevent an expansion of Soviet influence. Put another way, President Truman’s early post-war strategies in the Pacific theatre generally hinged upon US preponderance and the state of affairs in other regions of the world. As a result, the United States did not cooperate closely with Australia and New Zealand.

Events in late 1949 and 1950—such as the beginning of conservative anti-Communist governments in Canberra and Wellington, the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, and the outbreak of the Korean War—brought Australian, New Zealand and US foreign policies into closer alignment, culminating in the conclusion of the 1951 ANZUS Treaty. Yet while this treaty committed each country to meet a “common danger” in the Pacific region, Chapter Two demonstrated that ANZUS meant different things for different countries. For Australia, ANZUS provided formal protection from the United States. In Canberra, ANZUS was a necessary security measure in order to offset Britain’s inability to protect Australian defence requirements. Policymakers in Canberra also hoped ANZUS would be a gateway to accessing information on US global strategic planning.

Across the Tasman, New Zealand also accepted that their country must rely on US protection but policymakers in Wellington wanted a less formal arrangement. These policymakers hoped instead that President Truman declared that the United States would defend New Zealand if attacked. For New Zealand, this declaration would secure US protection without binding New Zealand to defend American interests. Moreover, a non-binding commitment was less likely to signify jeopardise New Zealand’s relationship with Britain. This
at least in part explains why New Zealand wanted to include Britain as either a treaty signatory or observer to ANZUS Council meetings once its plans to secure a Presidential Declaration failed. The United States, however, was unwilling to entertain this possibility. The State Department had no intention of sharing power in the Pacific with Britain and opposed British membership in ANZUS in any capacity. For the United States, conclusion of ANZUS was a trade-off for Australian and New Zealand acquiescence to the Japanese Peace Treaty. It also served as further support for the American position in Northeast Asia. In short, conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty papered over the consistent disagreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States about mutual security issues and the overall nature of the relationship.

During the Eisenhower Administration, ANZUS evolved into a more complex and meaningful relationship. Australia and New Zealand began to view Southeast Asia as the most vital region for their own security. As a result, these countries looked to maintain close ties with both the United States and Britain in order to protect their security interests in this region. In the United States, Eisenhower’s global strategy addressed the same issues as under Truman: the Soviet Union was the major threat, the United States must prevent an expansion of Soviet power and influence, and a containment strategy would apply to most world regions including Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The manner in which these objectives were achieved, however, changed substantially. In contrast to Truman, who sought to contain the Soviet Union through military and financial assistance to those countries threatened by Moscow, Eisenhower relied on nuclear brinkmanship as a more cost-effective means of containing the Soviet Union. He also valued defence pacts with Allied powers, as these generally procured support for US policies in exchange for military protection. In this way, ANZUS was an increasingly important component of Eisenhower’s plans to maintain American control in the Pacific.

Against this backdrop, Australia and New Zealand were uniquely placed to play more important roles in US foreign policy during the 1950s. This became especially important once
a series of crises broke out in the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Yet, as Chapter Three suggests, the ANZUS powers still struggled to find common ground on these pressing security issues. Once Vietminh forces began a siege at French-held Dien Bien Phu in March 1954, Washington announced that US intervention in Indochina relied on multilateral support (especially Britain) for a “United Action” plan. In response, New Zealand suggested its participation hinged upon British participation and Australia suggested its participation hinged upon upcoming general elections. Once Britain declined to participate and Australia could not commit, the proposal for united action fell apart. Britain’s unwillingness to participate in the “United Action” plan, in other words, ultimately stifled agreement between the ANZUS powers on responding jointly in Indochina. Subsequently, when SEATO was created in late 1954, Australia and New Zealand wanted this treaty to be broadly defined in order to defend their interests in Southeast Asia. The United States, on the other hand, sought to limit the treaty’s scope to defend only Communist aggression. A lack of interest in multilateral intervention in Indochina also demonstrated to US policymakers that Britain must participate in SEATO. Moreover, as Australia and New Zealand both hoped for British participation, this section additionally argued that trans-Tasman ties to the British Empire continued to shape the nature of the ANZUS relationship.

Chapter Four argued that similar issues occurred during the 1954-1955 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis. Once PRC forces shelled Nationalist-held offshore islands in September 1954, the United States responded with the conclusion of the US-Taiwan Mutual Defence Treaty as well as the threat of nuclear retaliation. Possible US escalation greatly concerned its allies, particularly Australia and New Zealand. In an effort to avoid the crisis escalating, Australia was very active diplomatically in both Washington and London hoping to avoid a serious rift in Anglo-American relations over China. Meanwhile, New Zealand was heavily involved in a US and UK sponsored United Nations resolution which called for a cessation of fighting in the
Straits. While all three ANZUS powers hoped to defend against Communist aggression and avoid an escalation of the crisis, there was no sense of unity in the most appropriate response. To this end, Chapter Four argued that divergent policies between the ANZUS powers on China largely stemmed from contrasting Anglo-American views over recognising and containing Beijing. Tensions were also caused by concerns in Australia and New Zealand that the Eisenhower Administration’s brinkmanship-like approach to rebuffing Chinese aggression could spark a major war. Nonetheless, as Australia and New Zealand ultimately supported the US position on China due to concerns it would compromise their security relationship with the United States, this chapter exposed that there were clear limits to unequivocal support for either US or British policies toward China and the Taiwan Straits Crisis.

Finally, Chapter Five exposed similar policy differences between Australia, New Zealand and the United States during the 1956 Suez Crisis. Again, Britain continued to play a key role in shaping the nature of the ANZUS relationship. This crisis publicly exposed a bitter rift in Anglo-American relations and highlighted the end of British world leadership. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden ignored Eisenhower’s pleas against the use of force and secretly planned with France and Israel to invade Egypt in order to reclaim control of the Suez Canal in late 1956. The United States, in contrast, bitterly opposed British action and forced London to withdraw from Egypt through heavy diplomatic and economic pressure. Meanwhile, Australia and New Zealand took an almost identical course of action by publicly supporting British intervention even if many of their diplomats privately questioned Britain’s decision to resort to force. In this context, Australian-New Zealand-US responses to the crisis provide an interesting insight into contrasting views between the ANZUS powers toward Britain’s post-war role in world affairs. The United States saw no major role for Britain without Anglo-American cooperation, whereas Australia and New Zealand erroneously thought that Britain was still capable of wielding enough influence in the Middle East to take action without
American support. The Suez Crisis ultimately demonstrated a turning point in alliance diplomacy in Canberra and Wellington. Australia and New Zealand held similar views and were not prepared to defer to US leadership when vital British interests were at stake. In short, Australia and New Zealand were still prepared to pledge support for vital British interests instead of aligning all strategic policies with their chief protector, the United States. For these countries, Suez exposed starkly the limitations to supporting Britain when London’s views were at odds with those in Washington.

In exploring these issues between the ANZUS powers, this thesis advances two major conclusions to explain why these foreign policy and strategic differences regularly occurred. Firstly, close Australian and New Zealand ties to Britain caused friction in their respective relationships with the United States. Despite Australian and New Zealand policymakers accepting that their post-war security relied upon the United States due to a fleeting British presence in the Asia-Pacific, Canberra and Wellington maintained close strategic ties with London. As a result, when British decisions clashes with US policies, the Tasman countries were forced to choose between aligning their policies with one of their two most important allies. When Australia and New Zealand adopted positions that supported British policies—such as those taken during the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis and the Suez Crisis—there was little policy agreement between the Tasman countries and the United States.

Even then, policymakers in Canberra and Wellington did not always agree on how closely to align their respective policies with the United States and Britain. This was due in some measure to mutual distrust, but it also stemmed from trans-Tasman differences over Britain’s proper role in the post-war Pacific and Middle East. Canberra continued to cooperate and consult closely with London, yet the Anglo-American power shift caused Australian diplomats to pursue actively a much closer relationship with the United States in order to meet their own security requirements. New Zealand also recognised the need for US protection but remained
sceptical of American intentions and aimed, wherever possible, to align their policies with Britain in order to counteract US dominance. In short, while both countries maintained close British ties, active Australian efforts to pursue closer US-Australian strategic cooperation—often at the expense of cooperation within the British Commonwealth—caused significant discord in the trans-Tasman relationship. The Anglo-American rift that developed during the early to mid-1950s—arising initially out of different views over the question of recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and then deepening in the wake of crises in Indochina, the Taiwan Straits and Suez Canal—further exposed trans-Tasman differences over whether or not to prioritize US or British policies.

Secondly, the United States proved unwilling to consult closely with Australia and New Zealand until at least the mid-1950s. This lack of consultation created significant discord in the relationship. In the early years of the Truman Administration, US foreign and defence policies were global in nature. Moreover, these policies centred on containing the Soviet Union in Western Europe and gave little consideration to Australia’s and New Zealand’s role in the US containment strategy. While Australia and New Zealand also identified the Soviet Union as a serious threat, their primary strategic interests lay in the Pacific. Ultimately, the Tasman countries simply had little ways in which to encourage the United States to take Australian and New Zealand views more seriously in this region. Australian-New Zealand-American interests did overlap in the post-war occupation of Japan, yet the United States envisioned no significant role for Australia and New Zealand other than for these countries to cooperate with American plans. In this regard, amidst strong Australian and New Zealand objections to a soft or speedy Japanese Peace Treaty without some form of reassurance that Japan would not again be a menace to the world, US relations with Australia and New Zealand were generally frosty.

As the Cold War escalated in Asia (especially after the establishment of the PRC, the outbreak of the Korean War and the Communist threat in Southeast Asia), it became wholly
practical for the United States to reach a peace treaty in Japan as quickly as possible and secure Allied support in the region. As a result, the United States gave far more attention to developments in the Asia-Pacific and Washington began to consider new ways in which to combat the spread of Communism in this region. This greater attention could only bring it closer to Australia and New Zealand. From this shared vision of responding to mutual security threats in the Pacific theatre, the ANZUS Treaty was concluded. Although the ANZUS powers still disagreed over a number of strategic issues, Australia and New Zealand were given a greater—albeit still minor—role in US global strategy. Over the following years, Australia and New Zealand participated in Five Power Staff Agency Talks for the joint defence of Southeast Asia in 1953, contemplated the practicality of multilateral intervention after the Dien Bien Phu Siege in March 1954, and became key SEATO members. Similarly, New Zealand was heavily involved in the pursuit of the secret US-UK sponsored United Nations resolution to reach a ceasefire during the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, and Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies led the US supported diplomatic mission to Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis.

Looking more broadly, this thesis demonstrated that the early Cold War period was one of great change and consequence for the future of relations between Australia, New Zealand and the United States. For instance, Australia and New Zealand began to agree more consistently over defence and foreign policies in their region, highlighted by joint participation in the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s despite British non-participation. Later, amidst New Zealand protestations over harbouring American nuclear vessels during the mid-1980s, the United States suspended its security guarantee to New Zealand in 1985. It was perhaps fitting that New Zealand, the country that often questioned its close relationship with the United States during the early Cold War, was later suspended from the treaty that it initially did not want. Meanwhile Australia, the keenest country to conclude a security arrangement in the first place, became the first signatory to formally invoke ANZUS in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks
on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. Strategic and diplomatic issues between Australia, New Zealand and the United States during the early Cold War certainly had a decisive impact on the future of the relationship between these countries and their interactions with the wider world. Yet, as this thesis has explored, US policymakers were not only unwilling to originally share leadership with Australia and New Zealand in the Asia-Pacific, but were in fact unwilling to consult on matters both great and small until at least the mid-1950s. Moreover, the trans-Tasman countries struggled to cooperate closely during this period due to difficulties associated with balancing close ties with both the United States and Britain.
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