All the Way with LBJ?:
Australian Grand Strategy and the Vietnam War

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This thesis titled
All the Way with LBJ?:
Australian Grand Strategy and the Vietnam War

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ABSTRACT

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Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War garners little attention in most American historical literature, but the event marked a significant step in the development of an Australian postwar strategy. It was the first time that Australia acted without the support of its traditional British ally. In the years preceding Australia’s commitment to the war, officials in Canberra recognized that French withdrawal from Indochina, the Malayan Emergency, crises in Laos, and Indonesian Confrontation threatened the stability of Southeast Asia. Additionally, the threat of Chinese communist expansion and the beginning of British decolonization placed Australia in a vulnerable position. As a result, Canberra turned to collective security agreements such as ANZUS and SEATO to solidify its position in the region. With the potential threat for an attack on Australia increasing after World War II, Canberra needed to make national security a priority, but such a task required the preservation of stability in Southeast Asia. As a result, when the United States called for support in Vietnam, Australia willingly answered with its national interests in mind.

Approved: ______________________________________________________________

Peter John Brobst

Associate Professor of History
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<tr>
<td>AATTV</td>
<td>Australian Army Training Team Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIF</td>
<td>Australian Imperial Forces</td>
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<td>ANZAC</td>
<td>Australia-New Zealand Agreement or Canberra Pact</td>
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<td>ANZAM</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, Malayan security area with Britain</td>
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<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, United States (Security Treaty)</td>
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<td>CINCPAC</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific</td>
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<td>FRUS</td>
<td><em>Foreign Relations of the United States</em></td>
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<td>JIC</td>
<td>Joint Intelligence Committee</td>
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<td>JTC</td>
<td>Jungle Training Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAAG</td>
<td>Military Assistance Advisory Group (United States)</td>
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<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command Vietnam</td>
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<td>MCP</td>
<td>Malayan Communist Party</td>
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<td>MRLA</td>
<td>Malayan Races Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAA</td>
<td>National Archives of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>National Archives and Records Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAN</td>
<td>Royal Australian Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLA</td>
<td>Royal Lao Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLG</td>
<td>Royal Lao Government</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In 1962, the deployment of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, marked the beginning of Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War. During the first few years of the conflict, the AATTV increased from thirty advisors to one hundred and eventually expanded further with the commitment of a battalion in 1965. Over the course of its thirteen-year commitment to the war, nearly 60,000 Australians served, over 3,000 were wounded, and 521 died.¹ In comparison to the American commitment to the war, Australia may not have committed as many troops or experienced as many casualties, but Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War was remarkable for other reasons. It became the first conflict that Australia joined without British support, it indicated Australia’s support of American policies in the Pacific, and it followed Canberra’s postwar strategy.

Geography played a role in shaping Australian foreign policy and regional relations. Since the arrival of the British in 1788, Australia had to contend with its distance from Britain and its perceived isolation from the Western world.² Changes in Australian geopolitical thinking become apparent when comparing different geopolitical models. Naval power remained the key to global power through the early twentieth century. As a result, Australia only served as an extension of British naval power into the Pacific and Asia. The acceptance of Halford Mackinder’s view that controlling the Heartland led to global power also meant that Australia became isolated from the global

² The key work in Australian history that elaborates upon this argument is Geoffrey Blainey, Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia’s History (South Melbourne: Sun Books, 1982).
centers of power. As such, Australian defense and foreign policy prior to 1942 reflected its support of British actions abroad through military contributions and with the supply of food and raw materials. In return, Britain assured Australian security.

Geopolitical thought that appeared after World War II highlighted a period when air power and ideological concerns became central to the way governments viewed their position in global affairs. Mackinder’s Heartland theory placed Australia in the Outer Crescent, which meant that little its isolation translated into few security concerns. However, during the Cold War, the Outer Crescent became a more hostile area. Air power created the possibility of a Soviet attack on Australia, and the extension of communism into Southeast Asia could lead to an attack relating to ideological differences. As a result, Australia’s region of primary strategic interest shifted from Europe to Southeast Asia by the time Canberra decided to enter the Vietnam War.

Australia’s traditional political and military allegiance with Britain remained strong throughout the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Australians found themselves involved in the Boer War alongside the British as a new federation. As the century progressed, the battlefields changed, but Australia’s commitment to Britain remained. From the Boer War through World War II, Australians fought alongside Britons as part of the Commonwealth, but the Anglo-Australian relationship changed between World War II and the Vietnam War. Support from the United States in the Pacific during World War II accelerated the coordination of defense

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5 For more about the impact of air power, see Alexander P. de Seversky, *Air Power: the Key to Survival* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950).
6 Rumley, 10, 167.
policies with the United States. After the war, Australia needed to find a way to balance its traditional bond with Britain with its developing relationship with the United States. The Vietnam War presented the first postwar situation in which Australia stood apart from London and with Washington. This development led many to question Canberra’s decision to assist the Americans without the support of its traditional ally.

As a subject, the Vietnam War encompasses volumes of literature in the United States and divides into three large categories. The first involves the wartime stage where participants and observers of the events wrote descriptive accounts of the war. The second embodies a more scholarly approach, but questions about objectivity remained. The final category could ideally link historical truth and broad consensus about the events. The amount of Australian scholarship about the Vietnam War pales in comparison to its American equivalent, and its development followed a different path.7

Australians have a long history of associating their national identity to war and the military engagements of the twentieth century, but they ignored the subject of Vietnam for nearly a decade after the conflict ended. Antiwar movements led to the production of several pamphlets and other material about the subject, but a scholarly approach only emerged at the beginning of the 1980s from intelligence officers, or soldier-scholars, who served in the war.8 Michael Sexton’s War for the Asking and Peter King’s Australia’s Vietnam were two of the earliest assessments of Australian participation in the war.9 These early contributions to literature about Vietnam typically focused on foreign policy and the government’s failure to gain support from the

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7 See Jeffrey Grey, “Getting into the Books: Vietnam as History in Australia” in Jeff Doyle, Jeffrey Grey, and Peter Pierce, Australia’s Vietnam War (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 98.
8 Ibid., 99.
electorate before joining the war. In the middle to late 1980s, the history of Australia’s experience in Vietnam became based more in academics than personal experience. Historians such as Coral Bell, Glen St. J. Barclay, Frank Frost, and Norman Harper focused their attention on the Anglo-Australian relationship, and its implications on Canberra’s decision to go to war.10

While the Anglo-Australian relationship remained a factor in more recent literature, historians began to research the Vietnam War as it related to government organizations and to questions about foreign policy. The consistent flow of academic work from the mid 1980s, though not as heavy as in the United States, continued in the 1990s with official histories.11 Within the last decade, subjects have become specialized and depict the complexity of Canberra’s decision. Each military department published its own history, which included the experience of each branch in Vietnam, as part of a project called The Australian Centenary History of Defence.12 In addition to the comprehensive works, most arguments still referred to the US-Australian relationship as the primary reason for entering the Vietnam War. Few included other possibilities such

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as the impact of British decolonization, and Australia’s perception of its Asian neighbors.¹³

Even with the transition between the soldier-scholars of the early 1980s to academic specialization of the last decade, no established patterns emerged as they had in American scholarship. Perhaps one of the most substantial obstacles that historians faced resulted from the availability of archival resources. Australia’s Thirty-Year Rule established a declassification system similar to that of the United States, but the Freedom of Information Act in Australia was not retroactive. As a result, many of the resources associated with the Vietnam War had not become available to those interested in the topic. Fortunately, the National Australian Archives created an online digital archive in 2001 that allows researchers to access some of the most requested documents in the archive. However, even today several records relating to the war remain unexamined or closed to researchers.¹⁴

In 1966, Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt declared that Australia had prepared to fight “all the way with LBJ” in Vietnam. Holt’s declaration found its way into the title of many published works about Vietnam. It has generally suggested that Australia blindly followed the United States into the war. In terms of this thesis, the phrase serves to challenge this understanding of Australian strategy. Australia’s relationship with the United States certainly figured into its decision to enter the Vietnam War, but the commitment was neither as flattering nor ill-planned as many scholars have


suggested. The thesis argues that Canberra’s decision to enter the Vietnam War reflected the impetus of a larger Australian grand strategy, which is important for several reasons. First is its perspective. Vietnam may be a popular subject among American scholars, but few address Australia’s role as an ally and even fewer examine the alliance from an Australian perspective. This thesis does both.

Another aspect to this thesis emerges through the assessment of Australia’s position as a middle power. To determine a country’s position as a large or middle power, certain factors must be assessed. One ratio to determine the difference between the two relates to the percentage of the population in the armed forces and the percentage of the gross domestic product spent on defense. Generally, a country that is labeled as a great or large power, such as Great Britain or the United States, had a large population, a strong economy, and a sizeable military. Australia’s small population, comparably small permanent armed forces, and average economy contributed to its position as a middle power at this time.\(^{15}\) Because of Australia’s status as a middle power many historians associated the phrase ‘middle power’ with ‘militarily dependent.’ This assumption translated into the books written by historians who over-emphasized Canberra’s relationship with Washington as the primary reason for Australian involvement in the war. By suggesting that this division between middle and larger powers clouded Australian judgment, historians diminished Australian foreign policy decisions. To combat such arguments, this thesis proposes that a middle power can also formulate a grand strategy in cooperation with a larger power without dismissing its own priorities.

Although the scope of this thesis focuses on the 1960s and Canberra’s entry into the Vietnam War, it is necessary to extend the scope in Chapter 1 to cover specific events in World War II to contextualize the US-Australian relationship. The chapter argues that Canberra realized the need to develop its own policy as a result of Britain’s failure to protect the nation from attack during World War II. During the war, the United States came to Australia’s defense after attacks on Darwin in 1942 and offered the best immediate protection that Canberra needed. While this marked the beginning of US-Australian cooperation, the relationship’s balance tipped toward the United States. The events of World War II may not have secured the US-Australian relationship, but it certainly encouraged Canberra to take a more active role in its defense than it had in the past.

The transition from a defense policy based on Commonwealth interests to one more closely associated with its own position in the Pacific occurred slowly. Canberra’s first goal in the postwar years involved the creation of a formal security alliance. Even with Washington’s refusal to commit to such an alliance, Canberra continued to pursue its strategy by signing the Canberra Pact and agreeing to become part of the ANZAM area. Events in Korea eventually changed the original position of the United States, and they agreed to the ANZUS treaty in 1951. This treaty not only formed the basis of an official relationship between the United States and Australia, but it also advanced Canberra’s strategy for collective security. The formation of SEATO three years later reaffirmed both objectives. In spite of this closer relationship with the United States, Canberra still maintained its traditional relationship with Britain, specifically through the ANZAM agreement. Over time, the US-Australian relationship became stronger through
collective security agreements and military standardization programs, but Canberra operated according to its own postwar defense strategy, not as the tail of an American kite.

Chapter 2 questions the impact of the relationship on Australia’s decision to commit to the Vietnam War. It begins with an explanation about Australian scholarship and proposes that the arguments can be roughly divided into three categories. Among the historians who acknowledge the link between Washington and Canberra as the primary reason to join the war, their arguments either followed the security, insurance, or strategic path. Those who argued along the security path believed that Australia committed to war because communist expansion threatened its security. According to those who followed the idea of the “insurance policy,” Australian entry into the war provided insurance that the United States would later intervene to help Australia in the event of an attack. Still, other historians suggested that Australia’s strategic dependence on Washington led to its involuntary involvement in Vietnam. While each argument provided a plausible explanation for Australia’s commitment to Vietnam, a single-cause explanation simplified the complexity of the situation that Canberra faced in the 1960s.

As the chapter explains, Australia’s military commitment to South Vietnam began with the deployment of thirty military advisors in 1962, not when Canberra committed a battalion to the war in 1965. Australia’s experience in the jungles of Malaya proved valuable for training American troops in Vietnam. The initial commitment expanded over the next couple of years to include more advisors, equipment, and aircraft. The experiences of the AATTV allowed Canberra to plan for the possibility of further engagement. With attacks from the Vietcong becoming more frequent and destructive,
Canberra suspected that further commitment would no longer be just a possibility. As a result, exchanges through ANZUS and SEATO allowed for Washington and Canberra to coordinate their policies regarding Vietnam before Australia officially committed to the American request for assistance. Ultimately, the experiences of the AATTV and the increasing hostility in mainland Southeast Asia led to Canberra’s decision to provide further assistance to the United States in Vietnam.

Chapter 3 argues that Australia’s commitment toward the security of South Vietnam reflected its postwar strategy that called for the security of Southeast Asia as a whole. As this chapter explains, regional instability concerned Canberra even before its commitment to South Vietnam. The Malayan Emergency from June 1948 to July 1960 and the policy of Confrontation in Indonesia from 1963 to 1966 indicated that the insurgency in South Vietnam was part of a larger movement. According to Canberra, this movement originated in Peking. The success of Chinese communists in 1949 created the ultimate threat to democracy in Southeast Asia and Australia, and it influenced Canberra’s acceptance of the domino theory and forward defense strategy. According to the domino theory, Peking’s push for communist expansion into Southeast Asia would create a domino effect by toppling one country’s government after another until all of Southeast Asia became an extension of Peking. As a result of this belief, Canberra

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16 To provide an accurate depiction of Canberra’s motives for joining the war, the term Southeast Asia requires further definition. In 1953, Canberra defined Southeast Asia as the region that included “Burma, Siam, Malaya, the Crown Colonies of Singapore (including Christmas and Cocos Islands), British North Borneo” (later Sabah) “and Sarawak, the Sultanate of Brunei, Indo-China [Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia], the Philippines, Portuguese Timor, the Republic of Indonesia, and Dutch New Guinea.” Therefore, any references to Southeast Asia within the context of this thesis merely suggest Canberra’s perception of the geographical area, especially as it pertained to regional security issues. “Minute by Defence Committee No. 368/1952” 18 December 1952 in “Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy 1953,” A1209, 1957/4152, NAA. Accessed 3 September 2008.
needed to follow the forward defense strategy that aimed to prevent communist
expansion by fighting it as far from Australian borders as possible.

British decolonization amplified Australia’s emphasis on the threat from China.
Britain’s withdrawal from India after World War II created a military vacuum in the
Indian Ocean that Australia was unprepared to address. Although Australian policies
became more aligned with the United States in the postwar years, Canberra still tried to
maintain its traditional connection to Britain. However, Australian efforts to secure
British territories in the Pacific and to develop a joint nuclear program with London could
not change Britain’s plan to withdraw from East of Suez. Canberra’s focus on the threat
posed by China’s expansionist aims and acceptance of British intent to withdraw from the
region emphasized Australia’s need to align with another larger power.

The changing international system after World War II compelled Australia to
formulate an independent foreign policy suited to its status as a middle power.
Canberra’s alliance with Washington and its response to regional conflicts reflected these
circumstances. In Vietnam, the United States needed support from another country with
similar regional interests, and they found critical support from Australia, a middle power,
not a larger European ally such as Britain or France. The American position as the larger
power in the partnership could have led to Australia’s ‘blind’ approval for American
policy, but it did not. Canberra’s postwar strategy enabled Australia to function as an
independent power in the Pacific without alienating its larger allies, and Australia’s
commitment to Vietnam reflected this balance.
CHAPTER 1

US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS: THE PATH TOWARD VIETNAM

The cooperation between Australia and the United States that occurred during the Vietnam War resulted from a relationship that began two decades prior to the war. As a middle power, Australian defense protection depended on a great power because the Australian population and defense budget could not support a large enough military to compete with other countries. The great power that Australia relied on for security and defense since its inception as a colony had always been Great Britain. Fortunately for Australia, Canberra had few occasions to question the success of the relationship because they faced few domestic threats since federation in 1901. World War II changed Canberra’s perspective.

Canberra’s concern about a Japanese attack, in particular, led to the request for reassurance that Britain would protect Australia from Japanese aggression even if they were engaged in Europe at the time.17 With a guarantee from Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Australian troops entered the war to defend Commonwealth interests, only to have their initial request overruled three years later.18 The Japanese attack on Darwin in 1942 forced Canberra to accept that Britain could not protect the Pacific when British security in Europe was at stake. The great power that could offer the best protection now, according to Canberra, was the United States. It was this transition that helped to shape Canberra’s postwar defense policies and its relationship with Washington. To understand whether or not Canberra’s association with the United States dictated its participation in

the Vietnam War, it is important to identify the origins and development of the relationship prior to the war and to recognize the shift in Canberra that led to the development of its postwar strategy.

The Singapore Strategy and World War II

Australia’s heavy dependence on Britain’s new naval strategy led to its vulnerability during World War II because Canberra was unprepared to defend its own borders from attack. At the end of World War I, Britain discussed a new plan for naval defense in the Far East that addressed the possible end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and alleviated the cost of maintaining a permanent fleet in the area. To protect Australia and New Zealand, London had to find a solution that would not encourage a Japanese attack on an inferior British fleet or threaten the Japanese by creating a substantial British establishment in the area. The solution came in the form of a mobile fleet. The Royal Navy remained in British and Mediterranean waters during times of peace but could quickly respond abroad if a conflict arose.19

The blue-water rationale, defended by the Committee of Imperial Defense, emphasized this new naval structure. To the Admiralty, the Empire’s existence depended on the protection of sea lanes. With the rise of Japan and the United States as naval powers, Britain hoped to build a base large enough to protect its interests East of Suez, with Hong Kong, Sydney, and Singapore as potential base locations.20 British Foreign Secretary A.J. Balfour explained that the most cost-effective option for Britain involved

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building a naval base in Singapore. In turn for naval protection, Britain expected India, Australia, New Zealand, and their other territories to contribute to the cost of developing the base.21

As a member of the Commonwealth, Australia naturally attached its primary defense to Britain. In 1921, the Australian Department of Defense explained:

British sea supremacy is the basis of the British system of Imperial defense, and that it has always been the policy of Great Britain, by developing any British ports suitably situated for use as naval bases in an emergency, to make the most of the favourable position in which the possession of Colonies all over the world has placed her.22

In other words, the imperial defense system consisted of interdependence. The Commonwealth countries depended on British naval protection, but Britain also depended on the location of its territories for a strategic advantage. While discussing what became known as the Singapore Strategy, the Australian Department of Defense recognized the likelihood of a Japanese attack on either Singapore or Hong Kong but emphasized the importance of a base at Singapore because of its position as the “western gateway of the Pacific.”23 As a result, a base in Singapore would be more effective than one in Sydney or Hong Kong because it allowed for more mobility of the Royal Navy and secured imperial communication lines in the Pacific.24

21 Hamill, pp. 21, 25, 28; McGibbon, 93-114; David Horner, “The Army’s Role in the Maritime Defence of Australia” in David Stevens, ed., In Search of a Maritime Strategy (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1997), 32, 34.
22 “Naval Base-Development of Singapore as Naval Base,” A5954, 1738/2, June 1921, NAA. Accessed 9 February 2008. All records from NAA were accessed through the online digital archives at www.naa.gov.au using the “Record Search” option.
23 Ibid.
24 Neidpath, 15.
Strategy, Australia aligned its current and future defense with the Royal Navy in lieu of an independent foreign policy.25

By 1938, the Chiefs of Staff in Britain admitted that dispatching the Royal Navy to the Pacific in the event of a Japanese attack became less practical than originally expected.26 After discussions with the United States in 1939, British authorities believed that the Americans supported British interests in the Pacific and would send a fleet from Hawaii to the Far East to defend the area if necessary.27 With the French surrender in June 1940, British concern about the naval position of Singapore became a stark reality as Britain’s focus turned almost entirely to the German threat in Europe. As a result, the vulnerability of the Pacific Dominions became apparent, as did division between British and Dominion interests. In one instance, Prime Minister Winston Churchill insisted upon sending the 7th Division of the Australian Imperial Forces to the Middle East instead of allowing them to provide reinforcements to Malaya in Britain’s absence. Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff disagreed with each other. While the Chiefs of Staff regarded Malaya as a primary target of Japanese aggression, Churchill argued that the Middle East posed a likely threat to Commonwealth security because he never anticipated a Japanese attack on Malaya.28 Canberra initially complied with Churchill’s request but recalled the 7th Division from the Middle East in 1943 against London’s wishes.

As the British reconsidered their naval commitments to the Far East, the United States implemented its “Germany First” policy. The implications of French surrender on

27 Neidpath, 187.
28 Ibid., 172-175.
naval power led the Roosevelt Administration to consider the possibility that German victories across Europe coincided with German naval superiority. Furthermore, the United States would have to stand alone against Germany to protect more territory than it could reasonably defend. As a result, the Administration chose to focus its efforts on the defeat of Germany in Europe instead of the possibility of a Japanese attack in the Pacific.\footnote{Ibid., 187-188.} For Australia, the decision of these two Great Powers to prioritize Europe over the Pacific adversely affected its own security.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, coupled with the British inability to send the Royal Navy to Australia’s defense, drew the Royal Australian Navy back to the Pacific. By linking its defense so closely with Britain in the Singapore Strategy, the RAN was unprepared for an independent war with Japan and requested American assistance in spite of its “Germany First” policy. In December 1941, Prime Minister John Curtin described Australia’s relationship with the United States as “a military alliance made necessary by geographical considerations.”\footnote{“Australia’s Relations with USA in Conduct of Pacific War. Prime Minister’s Statement of December 1941,” A5954, 654/27, NAA. Accessed 8 February 2008.} By withdrawing its troops from Europe, Australia had no intention of severing ties with Britain but recognized the importance of the United States in forming a Pacific strategy against Japan. From Curtin’s perspective, once the threat of Japanese aggression materialized “[all] Australia was at stake.”\footnote{Ibid.} With the fall of Singapore and concurrent capture of the AIF 8\textsuperscript{th} division on 15 February 1942, a Japanese attack on Australia would likely follow. Nearly two hundred Japanese aircraft began a bombing campaign that destroyed the town
of Darwin in the Northern Territory on 19 February 1942. Australians never forgot the impact of the bombing. The events of February 1942 confirmed the failure of Britain’s Singapore Strategy and exposed the vulnerability of the Commonwealth territories in the Pacific.

### Opening the Door to US-Australian Relations

While Canberra understood the necessity of American support, as reflected in Curtin’s statement, the United States hesitated. Washington understood the benefit of using Australia as a base of operations but still committed its primary defense to the Atlantic. According to then Assistant Chief of Staff, Dwight Eisenhower, the United States considered Australia’s security highly desirable but not necessary. In other words, Canberra could expect less support from Washington. However, both Australia and the United States shared the common goal of defeating the Japanese. General Douglas MacArthur’s defeat in the Philippines and the creation of the South-West Pacific Area Command presented a potential opportunity to improve the situation through US-Australian defense coordination.

In April 1942, MacArthur became the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area. Curtin’s lack of wartime experience and history as a pacifist led him to call on Defense Secretary Frederick Shedden as his Chief Advisor on military strategy. Shedden, often recognized by historians as an opportunist, capitalized on his new position

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33 Blaxland, 73.
and surrendered Australia’s wartime decision-making to MacArthur.\textsuperscript{35} By relinquishing control over its security decisions to the United States, Australia held little input in Allied actions in the Pacific for the remainder of the war. Australians gained a sense of security in the United States but still remained subordinate to a greater power.

Although Shedden surrendered Australian decision-making to MacArthur, Australian Minister of External Affairs Dr. H.V. “Doc” Evatt attempted to salvage Australia’s position in international affairs. Evatt, a controversial political figure, questioned the traditional role of the great powers in deciding the fate of small or middle powers. When Australia received no invitation to join the United States, Britain, and China at the Cairo Conference in November 1943, Evatt became indignant. To him, the Australians fought beside the United States in the Pacific against the Japanese and earned the right to discuss the postwar settlement regarding Japan.\textsuperscript{36} Because of his skepticism of American intentions and reservations about British defense capabilities in the Pacific, Evatt sought a bilateral agreement with New Zealand. In his defense of this agreement before the House of Representatives, Evatt explained that the United States would play a significant role in maintaining Pacific security, but “we have to live in the region and because we are representatives of the West, Australia and New Zealand are obliged to do all they can to ensure that the Powers come to grips with the long-term Pacific problems


of security and welfare.” Both countries, as middle powers, found their futures intertwined with a larger power whose concerns centered upon its global role rather than specific regional interests.

**Collective Defense as an Early Strategy**

The Australian-New Zealand Agreement, signed on 21 January 1944, intended to strengthen the voice of both countries in Pacific affairs. Some provisions of the agreement, also known as the Canberra Pact and ANZAC, included defense cooperation in the Southwest and South Pacific zones, representation during all armistice planning sessions, and protection of Pacific interests through a trusteeship. Evatt’s willingness to negotiate foreign policy agreements independent of a greater power surprised the United States and angered Secretary of State Cordell Hull. At the San Francisco Conference in 1945, where countries signed the United Nations Charter, Evatt proposed a trusteeship program that stemmed from the Canberra Pact. The program allowed Australia and New Zealand to administer select mandates and colonies in the Pacific. To Hull and other critics, the program challenged American objectives in the Pacific by claiming the right to control enemy territory after the war, even though the United States contributed more to Pacific security than Australia or New Zealand. Despite Evatt’s attempt to improve

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37 “Australia-New Zealand Agreement [reply by Dr. HV Evatt to debate in the House of Representatives],” 30 March 1944, CP13/1, 19, NAA. Accessed 10 February 2008.
39 Watt, 74-75.
40 Airgram from American Embassy in Wellington to the Department of State, “Comment on U.S. Foreign Policy Documents,” 14 July 1965, Box 1908, RG 59, NARA.
41 Ibid.; Reese, 41-43; Watt, 76.
the position of the two middle powers, the United States still chose to operate primarily within the circle of other great powers. 42

Tension between the United States and Australia continued after the war. In the immediate postwar period, the Japanese peace settlement highlighted the policy differences between the two countries. With the 1942 attack on Darwin in mind, Canberra still viewed Japan as an enemy and wanted to guarantee the destruction of its military. From the American perspective, Japan posed less of a threat to American security than Germany; therefore, postwar planning should focus more on Germany than Japan. The United States continued to disregard Australian requests for consultation just as it had during the war. 43

As the immediate postwar period indicated, Australia’s movement toward the United States during the war created noticeable conflicts between the two. Still, the unofficial military connection between Australia and the United States during World War II established the foundation for a set of formal agreements that emerged in the 1950s. Yet, Australia’s status as a middle power made the transition from unofficial connection to official cooperation with the United States difficult due to the conflicting interests of those involved. The developing postwar situation led some countries, who had interests in the area, to seek a Pacific security pact. Britain, specifically, recognized the value of a security alliance in the Far East because of its diminishing power and inability to protect the Commonwealth. Australia and New Zealand had the Canberra Pact but needed support from a larger power, and the United States saw little need to sign a formal security agreement. Even with Soviet nuclear testing and the fall of China to

43 Ibid., 84-85, 92-93.
communism in 1949, President Truman refused to sign a collective security pact with Australia.\footnote{Ibid., 98.}

In response to American reluctance to enter into a defense pact, Britain and Australia forged an alliance of its own in 1948. The Australia, New Zealand, Anglo-Malayan agreement and security area, or ANZAM, addressed common security concerns in Southeast Asia and encouraged defense coordination between the three countries.\footnote{David Goldsworthy, \textit{Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain’s Empire} (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 26.} Not unlike the situation during the war, Australian and British perceptions differed. Postwar planning for the possibility of World War III led the British to create the “Three Pillars” of defense strategy for the security of the Commonwealth. The first pillar called for the protection of the United Kingdom, the second involved the maintenance of vital sea communication, and the third pillar required protection of the Middle East.\footnote{“The Three Pillars Strategy,” in Ritchie Ovendale, ed., \textit{British defence policy since 1945} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 36.} While ANZAM covered the defense of Southeast Asia, Britain also believed that the agreement ensured Australian support in the Middle East. For Australia, the agreement met the immediate need for a security pact in Southeast Asia with a larger power, even if Britain proved incapable of meeting security needs during the war.\footnote{McIntyre, 129.} In spite of the different interpretations of the agreement, ANZAM temporarily answered the desire for a Pacific security pact.

Unlike the British, American preoccupation with its overseas commitments prevented the signing of a collective security agreement. Strategic planning after the war led the United States to focus on Japanese occupation and the Soviet Union rather than
the Pacific. When discussions about the Pacific defensive perimeter surfaced, the United States began to realize the extent of its international commitments and the need for Pacific bases.\textsuperscript{48} By 1950 the American attitude about collective security changed. In light of the situation in Korea, communist expansion seemed more plausible in the Pacific than Europe as Washington had originally anticipated.\textsuperscript{49} As a result, the United States wanted to prevent a defenseless Japan from falling to communism and sought a quick end to the stalled Japanese peace talks.\textsuperscript{50} To conclude the discussions, the United States needed full support from its allies, but Australia refused to sign an agreement that allowed unrestricted Japanese rearmament without receiving an American security guarantee.\textsuperscript{51}

**Formalizing the Relationship through ANZUS and SEATO**

The Korean War presented an occasion for the United States to understand the threat of communist expansion in Southeast Asia and provided Australia with an opportunity to advance its own interests.\textsuperscript{52} Sir Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs from December 1949 to March 1951, first expressed Australian concerns during a meeting with President Truman on 13 September 1950. In this meeting, Spender explained that Australia resented being excluded from global strategic planning, especially when the outcome affected its own well-being. Additionally, he outlined Australia’s request for a security guarantee equal to the North Atlantic Treaty from the

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 65, 82-83.
\textsuperscript{49} "Functional organization and Status of departments,” A5954, 1831/11, NAA. Accessed 17 January 2008; Reese, 118.
\textsuperscript{50} Watt, 120-121.
\textsuperscript{51} Reese, 120; McIntyre, 285.
\textsuperscript{52} Blaxland, 110-111.
United States. Spender received initial support from Truman and continued to emphasize Australian interests in his subsequent meetings with American officials. The State Department’s response to his concerns led to discussions about a tripartite agreement involving the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.53

John Foster Dulles, then a consultant for the State Department, became responsible for addressing Spender’s concerns and organizing the Japanese settlement. Dulles initially wanted to avoid a formal agreement with Australia because he believed that the English-speaking connection between the two countries already guaranteed American support in the event of an attack. He eventually conceded that a formal alliance would be necessary to appease Spender and gain Australian support for the Japanese peace settlement. The Canberra Talks subsequently began on 15 February 1951. From the Australian perspective, a security guarantee must come from the United States because it was the only power capable of protecting Australia from Japanese rearmament. During the discussions, Dulles emphasized the desire of the United States to return Japan “into full equality” with other nations and reiterated that Japan posed no threat to Australian security. By the end of the Canberra Talks, Ralph Harry, a member of the Department of External Affairs, drafted a copy of what would become the Australia, New Zealand, United States Agreement.54

The official ANZUS Treaty, signed on 1 September 1951, varied little from Harry’s draft.55 The brief document reflected Spender’s two initial concerns about the US-Australian relationship. Article III established the parameters of consultation that Australia desired by guaranteeing that the parties “will consult together whenever in the

53 McIntyre, 284, 286.
54 Ibid., 289, 311, 316, 320.
55 See Appendix A for the text of the ANZUS treaty.
opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific.” As for his requirement of an American security guarantee, Article V of the agreement came the closest. It concluded that “an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties.” The treaty also reflected the priorities of the United States and Australia. For the United States, Australian support for the Japanese peace settlement was so important that Washington broke with its previous policy of informal agreements. The genuine fear of Japanese rearmament caused Australia, particularly Percy Spender, to fight for an American security guarantee. In the end, ANZUS provided benefits to Australia and the United States.

While the treaty alleviated some of the tension in the US-Australian relationship, it created anxiety between the ANZUS partners and Britain, who remained noticeably absent from the agreement. Britain’s main concern related to the impact the treaty had on the Australian and New Zealand commitment to the Middle East. In the end, the Foreign Office reminded the Cabinet that neither country officially agreed to commit troops to the Middle East, thus the ANZUS treaty should have no bearing on the decision. Australia and New Zealand waited to consult Britain until the Canberra Talks concluded, perhaps to prevent objections that would limit progress. The United States feared that the inclusion of Britain in the agreement would appear as a discriminatory “Anglo-Saxon” alliance to the Asian nations in the Pacific.

57 Ibid.
58 McIntyre, 291, 347.
59 Ibid., 323-324, 327.
60 Ibid., 334.
While Britain eventually accepted its exclusion from the ANZUS treaty, it applied to the members for observer status. In Eden’s opinion, Britain would support Australia and New Zealand in the event of an attack on either party, with or without an agreement, but observer status allowed Britain to prepare for such an event by aligning its policies with the ANZUS partners.\(^{61}\) Churchill reiterated Eden’s opinion during a 12 December 1951 meeting with the Prime Ministers but questioned how the ANZUS partners could plan for Pacific defense without consulting the British or French. He argued that Australia and New Zealand should consult the British, especially, because of the ANZAM arrangement.\(^{62}\) The ANZUS members denied Britain observer status but agreed to inform London about the meetings and to allow access to military information as necessary.\(^{63}\) Regardless of the problems Britain had with the treaty, ANZUS allowed for closer military planning between Australia and the United States. Unlike the illusion of policy coordination during World War II, the terms of this new agreement allowed Australia to contribute to overall planning. Still, Australian officials believed that ANZUS only served as the first step in securing a larger Pacific pact.\(^{64}\)

The next step occurred with the signing of the Manila Pact on 8 September 1954, by Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Britain, the Philippines, France, Pakistan, and Thailand.\(^{65}\) The Pact, officially called the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, addressed two main goals. It not only operated as a security agreement against aggression in Southeast Asia, but also served as an economic and social program that


\(^{62}\) Ibid.


\(^{65}\) See Appendix B for the text of this document.
would allow the signatories to “live in peace and freedom.”\textsuperscript{66} The agency created to implement the tenets of the Manila Pact became known as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO. Although SEATO developed as a multi-national organization, it originated in the Anglo-American discussions of June 1954.

In the wake of Dien Bien Phu, both Churchill and Eisenhower admitted the likelihood of French abandonment of Indochina and considered the need for a collective defense arrangement in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{67} Churchill likened such an organization to NATO and called for a diplomatic solution to the problem in Vietnam. Eisenhower, who aimed for a more militaristic approach, wanted an organization that provided protection for non-Communist countries against potential Communist aggression, especially in the case of the Vietnam. Although the leaders disagreed over the specific language of the impending organization, both agreed on the need for a collective security arrangement in Southeast Asia that would supplement the Geneva Accords. From Churchill and Eisenhower’s discussions, the first draft of the Manila Treaty emerged in July 1954.\textsuperscript{68}

Over the course of the next couple of months, the parties involved in SEATO voiced opinions about the language of the draft treaty. Much of the debate between Australia and the United States, prior to the September meeting, focused on the phrase “Communist aggression.” Canberra’s primary objectives in SEATO included the prevention of losses in Southeast Asia, the “cultivation of non-Communist Governments in the area,” and the containment of Chinese influence in the region.\textsuperscript{69} Australia

\textsuperscript{67} Tunstall, 33.
discouraged the specific use of “Communist” in the phrase because it failed to address the possibility of non-Communist aggression from Indonesia and Japan.\textsuperscript{70} Canberra also argued that the use of the phrase could provoke China because the Chinese could interpret the treaty as a direct threat to its own regional interests.\textsuperscript{71} In both cases, Australia wanted to ensure the long-term effectiveness of SEATO in addressing all forms of aggression in Southeast Asia.

While Australia preferred the omission of “Communist aggression,” the United States argued for its inclusion. Canberra may have regarded a limited treaty as ineffective, but Washington preferred such an arrangement. By limiting its commitment in Southeast Asia to specific cases of Communist aggression, the United States could avoid unnecessary involvement in local disputes and gain more Congressional support for the treaty as a result.\textsuperscript{72} As a compromise, the United States agreed to omit “Communist” from the main body of the treaty but included an addendum titled “Understanding of the United States of America.” In this addendum, the United States explained that the American interpretation of “aggression and armed attack” mentioned in paragraph one of Article IV only applied to the case of Communist aggression. In the case of non-Communist aggression, the United States may still respond to the threat but would do so only after consulting with the other countries.\textsuperscript{73} The Australian and American arguments related to each country’s broader Cold War strategy. The American approach reflected

\textsuperscript{70} “Drafting of S.E.A.T.O.” in “Sir Arthur Tange’s personal papers on SEATO,” A1838, TS688/6/2/2, NAA. Accessed 7 March 2008. Despite the previous steps to ensure Japanese peace, Australia still suspected Japan of “doing a deal with China” that would place Australian security in jeopardy.
\textsuperscript{71} “Minute of meeting between the Prime Minister, Treasurer, the Minister for External Affairs, and the Minister for Defence on SEATO,” A1838, TS688/6/2/2, NAA. Accessed 7 March 2008.
\textsuperscript{73} SEATO, “Story of SEATO” (Bangkok, Thailand: SEATO Public Information Office, 1966), 44.
its global strategy to combat communism, whereas Australia focused on the regional implications of communist expansion.

Whether implicitly or explicitly stated, SEATO’s primary purpose involved the prevention of communist aggression and expansion in Southeast Asia. As explained through the Manila Treaty and subsequent pamphlets produced by SEATO, the signatories believed that “the leaders of international Communism [were] seeking by every means to advance their ambitions into South-East Asia.” Thus, the smaller Asian powers depended on the United States, France, and Britain for support and protection against the increasing power of Communist China and the Soviet Union. Even for a middle power such as Australia, the Americans played an essential role in SEATO. R.G. Casey, Minister of External Affairs, viewed the United States as “the most powerful country in the Pacific and a proven friend of Australia and democracy. Without American participation the pact would lack the strength it needs.”

Despite the recognition of the American role in SEATO, some questioned the commitment of the United States to the organization. According to Secretary of State Dulles, the Manila Conference sought “to develop a position of firmness and unity to reduce the likelihood of further Communist expansion in South-East Asia.” While Dulles suggested the use of military commitments to encourage unity and stop aggression, the American position on military support and consultation remained ambiguous. According to Canberra, it appeared as if the United States preferred the

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75 George Modelski, “SEATO and Its Function and Organization,” in Modelski, 3.
77 “Statement by Mr. Dulles on SEATO Conference as supplied by the U.S.I.S.,” A1838, TS688/6/2/2, NAA. Accessed 7 March 2008.
absence of a permanent military arm of SEATO. Australia, however, urged SEATO members to develop a permanent secretariat instead of the advisory committee that the United States preferred. In the event of an armed attack, joint consultation within such a permanent framework would allow for a more efficient military response from SEATO.\(^{78}\)

An additional military concern of Australia related to the Asian perception of Western military intentions. Canberra understood the importance of a sound defense system in Southeast Asia but wanted to avoid giving the impression that Western powers had imperialist intentions in the area. As a result, Australia wanted to emphasize the imperialist nature of communist expansion to the susceptible countries.\(^{79}\) A cable from the Department of External Affairs addressed similar concerns and defended the US-Australian relationship from criticism. Australia believed that the United States showed its genuine concern for the region by providing “liberal economic aid,” even to countries that accused it of imperialism. The cable also rejected the assumption that Australia blindly followed the United States into SEATO.\(^{80}\) Australia expressed its concerns about American intentions in SEATO without following Washington’s lead. The cable continued by condemning the accusation by some Asian countries that Thailand and the Philippines were “stooges,” acting like American satellites instead of Asian countries that should resist Western imperialism. The Department of External Affairs explained that unlike other Southeast Asian countries who did not become part of SEATO upon its inception, these two countries faced greater danger from Communist expansion because


of their proximity to China. Therefore, they should not be chastised for their support of SEATO.\textsuperscript{81}

In addition to issues about language, military contribution, and status, the Manila Conference also led to discussions about existing commitments in the Pacific. With several of the SEATO countries already committed to regional agreements, questions arose about the role of SEATO in relation to these existing treaties. According to Article VI, SEATO complemented the current and future treaties in the region.\textsuperscript{82} For Australia and the United States, ANZUS and SEATO both provided the means for closer cooperation, but each had a different value. If the benefit of SEATO lay in its value as a broad regional organization, the value of ANZUS existed in its limitations. Although the scope of SEATO covered a larger area than ANZUS, both countries preferred to operate through ANZUS. With SEATO’s open membership, the diverse interests of each country could delay decisions. With the membership of ANZUS limited to the three English-speaking nations, the treaty allowed for more confidence than SEATO through a “free exchange of views.”\textsuperscript{83} From an American perspective, SEATO operated as a planning body for military operations while ANZUS served as the “reliable military core” of defense planning and action in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{84}

**Cooperation through Military Standardization**

Although ANZUS was the preferred method of cooperation, military standardization occurred on a larger scale after the formation of SEATO. Military

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} SEATO, “Manila Pact and Pacific Charter,” 2.
\textsuperscript{83} Tunstall, 33; McIntyre, 387.
\textsuperscript{84} Tunstall, 36.
planning between Australia and the United States began during the first ANZUS Council Meeting in 1952 but lacked implementation until 1957. During the meeting in Honolulu, American and Australian officials spent the majority of the conference debating the chain of command for military coordination instead of developing a program for the standardization of military equipment. Prior to the conference, Prime Minister Menzies proposed the adoption of Washington as the central location for military planning and called for a system similar to that of the Commonwealth. To achieve this goal, Canberra argued that each Joint Service Representative should have mutual accreditation in the United States Department of Defense to encourage close consultation on the strategic level.85

Secretary of State Dean Acheson rejected Australia’s mutual accreditation suggestion. He explained the “two perils” that the Pentagon viewed in terms of strategic planning and suggested an alternative command structure. A “creeping” or cold war required American support in the Middle East and Asia, and the Australians should consult the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, Admiral Arthur Radford, for Washington’s plans. In the event of a global war, Australian involvement in NATO offered the necessary planning information. Acheson argued that placing an Australian official in such a high position at the Department of Defense would be embarrassing and may cause a conflict with other foreign representatives. He reasoned that the Department

of Defense kept the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, or CINCPAC, apprised of American global planning.  

The Radford/Collins Agreement provided a compromise by dividing the Eastern Indian and Pacific Oceans into definitive areas of responsibility. This allowed for the coordination of defense between the United States, represented through the CINCPAC, and the ANZAM countries, represented by the Australian Chief of the Naval Staff. The agreement also enumerated the specific responsibilities of each party in Article IV. Within their respective areas, the United States and the ANZAM countries must provide protection and safe passage to convoys and independent shipping, run reconnaissance missions, organize shipping and escorts, and manage search and rescue operations. Together, Washington and Canberra became responsible for the development of a Pacific defense strategy under the direction of the CINCPAC.

The Australians revised their original request and suggested a Joint Liaison Staff to the Headquarters of CINCPAC for the sake of defense planning, but this time Admiral Radford denied their request. After more debate, the representatives consented to the chain of command established by the United States under the CINCPAC, but agreed to its provisional status. Shedden attributed the American resistance in sharing defense and strategic planning to the infancy of the American defense system. He believed that the British Commonwealth system allowed Australia to develop the machinery for defense

86 Ibid.
87 See a map of these divisions in Appendix C.
cooperation and global strategic planning ahead of the Americans, who only passed the United States Defense Act in 1949.\textsuperscript{91} In the end, the 1952 ANZUS Council meeting established the chain of command for defense coordination but failed to implement a military equipment standardization process that would allow for closer collaboration.

By the time Menzies visited with President Eisenhower in 1955, the State Department had already recognized Australian discontent about the progress of planning under SEATO and ANZUS. William Sebald, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, articulated the opinion of the State Department to the President that “it is in the interest of the United States that the Australian defense effort should be such as to produce forces and plans which would be consistent with our own war plans.”\textsuperscript{92} Yet, he offered no definitive method for executing such a process in 1955. Prompted by the increasing possibility of a regional war and the inability for Australian defense forces to effectively respond, Menzies encouraged a program for military standardization and closer defense coordination.\textsuperscript{93} He explained in a conversation with Secretary of State Dulles that the United States needed a “dependable production base in the Western Pacific.”\textsuperscript{94} With an open offer from Menzies, the United States considered its options.

A base of production in Australia had “political and military desirability” for the maintenance of troops in the Far East, but limitations such as labor force,

\textsuperscript{91} The act created the Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Joint Planning Staff. “Special Comments on the Attached Paper,” A5954, 1420/3, NAA. Accessed 15 March 2008.
\textsuperscript{92} Department of State, “Draft memorandum to the President for the call by Prime Minister Menzies on the President,” Box 2504, RG 59, NARA.
\textsuperscript{93} Through this “re-equipment plan,” Australia purchased an American field gun and the C130 aircraft. Other steps toward defense cooperation involved the exchange of defense information between the two countries. Reese, 281-282.
\textsuperscript{94} Department of State, Executive Secretariat, “From Deputy Director Joseph N. Greene, Jr. to Mr. Dillon, 18 March 1957,” Box 2504, RG 59, NARA.
communications, and natural resources required a long-term American commitment.\textsuperscript{95} By reviewing Australian data reports provided to SEATO, the United States proposed immediate programs to produce “high rate consumables” such as small equipment, spare parts, and ammunition.\textsuperscript{96} By taking advantage of Australia’s existing capabilities and developing equipment that required little conversion from the American standard, both countries received short-term advantages while forging ahead with long-term standardization programs. The establishment of SEATO in 1954 suggested a more obvious threat of Communist expansion than existed at the formation of ANZUS in 1951. As communism extended into Southeast Asia, the United States acknowledged the need to create a permanent defense system with Australia. As a result, the ANZUS discussions that began in 1952 developed further in 1957 after the establishment of SEATO.

**Questions of Interpretation**

Cooperation between Australia and the United States grew through closer cooperation through ANZUS and SEATO, but many historians argued that Australia, as a middle power, naturally fell into the role of the junior partner. Phrases such as “the tail of an American kite”\textsuperscript{97} or “tied to the chariot wheels of the American government,”\textsuperscript{98} described the imbalance that some perceived within the US-Australian relationship. According to Australian historian Coral Bell, Australia’s history as a dependent nation, first on Britain and progressively more on the United States, led Canberra into

\textsuperscript{95} The long-term plans for development called for private foreign investment, migration to boost the labor force, and natural resource exploration. Department of State, “Development of a Defense Production Base in Australia,” Box 2504, RG 59, NARA.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Department of State, “United States Policy Assessment,” Box 1908, RG59, NARA.
\textsuperscript{98} Harper, 346.
relationships where the stronger power acted more as a protector than a partner. Bell argued that the postwar events created a situation where Australia had no choice but to seek American assistance, thus becoming a dependent ally. She used the example of ANZUS to defend her argument by stating that Canberra envisioned the treaty as a way to gain equal footing and consultative power with the United States while Washington viewed the treaty as a way to appease the Australians.99 Dennis Phillips agreed with Bell’s assessment and claimed that Canberra had to convince the Australian public of the “special relationship” that existed between itself and the United States to gain support for further diplomatic relations. According to these historians, ANZUS built onto the myth of the special relationship by overemphasizing the treaty as the cornerstone of Australian policy.100

While Bell and Phillips suggested that necessity and self-interest guided the US-Australian relationship, other historians approached the subject differently. For Norman Harper, Spender’s central role in the development of ANZUS showed Australia’s unwillingness to unquestionably follow American policies. As previously explained, Washington’s desire for a Japanese settlement overshadowed its reluctance to enter into an official treaty. Therefore, Spender understood how to capitalize on the situation by offering Australian support for the treaty in return for an official security guarantee from the United States.101 Spender and other Australian officials were unwilling to risk Japanese rearmament and its implications for informal promises of American security. According to Alan Watt, Evatt also represented Australian unwillingness to be the tail of an American kite, though not as successfully as Spender, during the negotiation of the

99 Coral Bell, Dependent Ally (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), 199.
101 Harper, 241-244.
1944 Canberra Pact. Although Evatt’s agreement proved to be more symbolic than functional, his efforts illustrated Australia’s movement toward a foreign policy independent from American interests.\(^{102}\)

Canberra’s perceptions of the US-Australian relationship favored Harper’s and Watt’s arguments. On a number of occasions, Canberra admitted the importance of America’s “great power” status to its own security, but the Commonwealth connection still mattered to officials. As Curtin already explained in 1941, Australia’s motive in calling for American assistance was not to sever ties with Britain but to protect itself from Japanese aggression.\(^{103}\) In a 1954 cable to Spender, Menzies and Casey reiterated Curtin’s wartime sentiments. They acknowledged that some people believed “that our destiny in the Pacific is so wrapped up with the United States that we should support them even if we believe that the course of action proposed by them is wrong.” The men denied the claim and called for the maintenance of Anglo-Australian relations because Australian intervention without British support would be “a terrible innovation for Australia to promote.”\(^{104}\) Australia recognized the delicacy of its position between Britain and the United States. During a meeting between the Prime Minister and other department Ministers, the men discussed Australian objectives in SEATO. Canberra would have to find a way to balance its relationship with the United States and Britain to avoid alienating either one.\(^{105}\) Therefore, Australia could not blindly follow policies

\(^{102}\) Watt, 77.

\(^{103}\) “Australia’s Relations with USA in Conduct of Pacific War. Prime Minister’s Statement of December 1941,” A5954, 654/27, NAA. Accessed 8 February 2008.


established by the United States as Bell and Phillips suggested because Canberra still had to consider its Commonwealth connection and its own needs.

Casey explained to the Australian House of Representatives that “Australia’s participation in a collective defence pact will entail co-operation with our stronger friends, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This association cannot be one-way traffic.” Casey intended this statement as a call for Australia to prove its reliability and responsibility as a middle power to the United States. At the same time, the United States accepted some responsibility in shaping the effectiveness of Australia’s position in the alliance. In a secret memorandum to the President, the State Department argued, “it is important for us to go as far as we can toward meeting [Australia’s] needs. By thus developing a sense of close partnership, we can be sure that they will be effective allies in an emergency.” This implied that the United States may not have considered Australia as an equal, but at least recognized the value of an ally in the Pacific. While the United States embodied the role of the senior partner in the relationship, Washington and Canberra understood the responsibility each had in nurturing the relationship.

The postwar period leading up to the Vietnam War illustrated the complexity of the US-Australian relationship. The illusion of cooperation during World War II turned into American unwillingness to pursue a collective security pact immediately after the war. American hesitation failed to prevent Canberra from looking elsewhere for security. Both the 1944 Canberra Pact and the 1948 ANZAM agreement met Australia’s immediate needs, but Canberra acknowledged the need for a larger Pacific arrangement

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107 Department of State, “Memorandum for the President: Your Meeting with Australian Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies,” Box 2504, RG 59, NARA.
with the United States at its core. The outbreak of the Korean War and the need to secure
Australian support for the Japanese peace treaty led the United States to break with its
previous policy of informal treaties in favor of an official security agreement with
Australia. Through the persistence of Percy Spender, the US-Australian relationship that
began during World War II became official when both countries and New Zealand signed
the ANZUS Treaty in 1951.

The signatories understood the benefits of a small, English-speaking alliance, but
Australia wanted a more comprehensive regional arrangement. The Manila Pact and
SEATO addressed their concerns. SEATO also allowed for the renewal of discussions
about military cooperation that began at the first ANZUS Council and led to the
development of programs for military equipment standardization. As Washington and
Canberra experienced closer cooperation during the 1950s, questions about the dynamic
of the relationship arose. Despite Australia’s status as a middle power, officials such as
Spender and Evatt refused to become the tail of an American kite, and Canberra’s
perception of its position in the US-Australian relationship affected official thought over
the next decade. Regardless of each country’s status, both the United States and
Australia acknowledged mutual responsibility for upholding the collective security
agreements. The US-Australian relationship that developed out of necessity during
World War II ultimately became a proactive partnership against communist expansion in
Southeast Asia as the Vietnam War approached.
CHAPTER 2

29 APRIL 1965: COMMITTING A BATTALION TO WAR

In 1954, the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu and subsequent withdrawal from South Vietnam marked the beginning of American aid to Vietnam. For the Vietnamese, both in northern and southern Vietnam, this continued the presence of a Western power that began with French occupation in the 1800s. It was an opportunity to become involved in Southeast Asia and preserve the southern portion of Vietnam as a democratic government under Ngo Dinh Diem for the United States. For Australia, the events of 1954 allowed for a closer alliance with the United States through ANZUS and SEATO. As cooperation between the United States and Australia improved throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, the situation in Southeast Asia began to change. The political instability in Vietnam, in particular, concerned both countries.

Nearly ten years after Dien Bien Phu, on 29 April 1965, Prime Minister Menzies announced Australia’s intention to send combat troops to Vietnam. In the wars of the twentieth century, Canberra traditionally declared war or offered military support in accordance with British action, but Great Britain refrained from answering the American call for military assistance. Therefore, Menzies’ announcement broke with Australia’s traditional approach to international conflicts, and historians began to question Canberra’s motivation for offering support. The majority of historians attributed the April 29 decision to the US-Australian relationship, and three main lines of argument emerged that established the ideas of security, insurance, and strategy as the primary reasons for Australia’s decision. While these arguments should not be entirely dismissed, such explanations often oversimplified the complexity of the situation that policymakers
in Canberra faced in the early 1960s. In reality, Canberra’s decision to commit troops to South Vietnam stemmed from its existing commitments in Vietnam and from extensive discussions with the United States about the situation there.

**Historical Arguments and the Primacy of US-Australian Relations**

As Australian scholarship about the Vietnam War expanded in the 1980s, historians attempted to account for Canberra’s motives for committing troops to the war. Most historians identified Australia’s relationship with the United States as the primary incentive for involvement, but the historical arguments varied as much as the historians who wrote them. By examining the arguments through the categories of security, insurance, and strategy, the nuances become more apparent. Historians such as Ronald Frankum, David Horner, and Norman Harper attributed Australia’s decision to security concerns. All three suggested that Canberra perceived communist expansion as a direct threat to national security because of a widely accepted belief in the domino theory, but the details of their arguments varied. Frankum claimed that Australian and American interests converged in Vietnam and that intervention showed the necessity of Australia’s relationship with the United States. He developed his argument by explaining that Australia took “a step of faith” with the United States by hoping for the defeat of communism in Vietnam without considering alternatives. In accordance with the domino theory, a Western victory in Vietnam not only delivered a blow to the larger Communist movement, but also prevented the dominoes from falling.\(^{108}\)

David Horner also maintained that Canberra placed importance on security through the domino theory, and he attributed such a position to General Sir John Wilton. Wilton served in various military positions throughout Southeast Asia from the end of World War II through 1970. Thus, his personal encounters with communist aggression and experience through his military posts shaped his view toward Australia’s military commitment in Vietnam. His various positions also allowed Wilton to influence official policies. Horner reasoned that Wilton, who served as Chief of the General Staff from 1963-1966, firmly believed in the commitment of combat troops to South Vietnam because he viewed Vietnam as the forefront of Australian security.\(^\text{109}\)

Like Frankum and Horner, Norman Harper also conceded that the threat of Communist expansion played an important role in Australian foreign policy into the 1960s. To Harper, Australia’s ongoing participation in regional security pacts, specifically ANZUS, directly related to its obligation to commit troops to the war in 1965. In his opinion, Australia’s direct response to Washington instead of Saigon marked the importance of ANZUS. It also meant the possibility of strengthening the alliance with the United States for the benefit of Australian security.\(^\text{110}\) Though explained from different perspectives, Frankum, Horner, and Harper agreed that Canberra’s decision to send combat troops to Vietnam related to the connection between Vietnam and national security.

As explained by historian Peter Edwards, the idea of Australian commitment in Vietnam as an insurance policy referred to the idea that “Australia needed to support its great and powerful friend [in Vietnam] to ensure that that friend would support it if it


\(^{110}\) Harper, 323-324.
were ever threatened with attack.” In this line of argument, the US-Australian relationship became more of a balance sheet instead of a diplomatic relationship based on the alliances of the 1950s. Historians such as T.B. Millar, Frank Frost, and Dennis Phillips believed that Canberra paid a premium to the United States with its soldiers and its political support in Vietnam. In turn, Canberra hoped for support from the United States in future conflicts.

To Millar, Australia needed to prove its worth as an ally if Canberra hoped to receive aid from the United States in the future. He emphasized the importance of the insurance policy argument and reiterated the idea that Australian involvement paid “overseas premiums to the American insurance policy.” Frost, too, supported the idea that the US-Australian relationship forced Canberra to pay the same premium. He argued that Canberra ultimately wanted to promote Australian security by encouraging a relationship with the United States. Because the United States played a primary role in Australian foreign policy, Canberra understood the need to answer Johnson’s request for support. Essentially, Canberra decided to commit enough troops to “gain favor” with Washington without risking their own security by committing beyond their ability. Phillips agreed that Australia tried to gain favor with the United States. However, he suggested that Canberra had the opportunity to “stiffen American resolve” with the

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112 While the insurance policy was not necessarily a reference to the economic relationship between the two countries, a similar economic argument emerged. The “diggers for dollars” or “blood for dollars” slogans became popularly used by trade unions. While not synonymous with the insurance policy argument, “diggers for dollars” also assumed that Australia wanted to gain favor with the United States and receive economic benefits in return. For a more detailed account of this argument, see Edwards, 39-43.


purpose of encouraging the United States to consider long-term commitments to Southeast Asia.\(^{115}\) Ultimately, the insurance policy argument implied hope for, but no guarantee of, American support in the event of a future threat to Australian security.

Glen St. J. Barclay’s argument served as an anomaly within the insurance policy argument. He believed that Australian involvement in Vietnam had the potential to ensure America’s presence in Southeast Asia. In turn, Australian participation as a “Free World” contributor guaranteed America’s policy in Vietnam.\(^ {116}\) While he presented ideas similar to that of Phillips, Barclay’s argument best fit within the strategic argument. The basis of the strategic involvement argument centered upon the importance of securing American presence in Southeast Asia. While the security and insurance arguments accounted for threats to Australian security, they tended to view Vietnam in terms of immediate benefits (security) or of the possibility of future assistance (insurance) from the United States. In contrast, the strategic argument sought more permanent involvement of the United States in Southeast Asia because a long-term commitment to the region correlated with long-term security concerns for Australia.

Historians such as T.R. Reese, Coral Bell, Gregory Pemberton, and Jeffrey Grey referred to Australia’s strategic dependence on America to explain the commitment of troops to the war. To Reese, Australia’s dependence led Canberra to commit without considering the consequences. As evidence for Australia’s “blind” support of American policies, Reese referred to Canberra’s need to offer immediate support for the United States in events such as the retaliation bombing after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, the

\(^{115}\) Phillips, 127.

decision to send combat troops, and the escalation of fighting during the war. He also suggested a direct connection between Henry Cabot Lodge’s April visit to Australia and Menzies’ April 29 declaration of troop commitment by implying that the former led directly to the latter.117

In opposition to Reese’s argument for hasty commitment, Bell insisted that Canberra considered the implications of joining the war but entered anyway because of its dependence on the United States. She explained that only a few key policymakers in Canberra, particularly in the Department of External Affairs, operated under the assumption that Australia’s national interests coincided with those of the United States in Southeast Asia. The policymakers believed that the best way to secure American presence in Southeast Asia was to provide more than just political support during the war.118 Grey reiterated Bell’s perspective. He argued that Canberra’s “grudging acceptance” of their strategic dependence on the United States forced them to move beyond political and on to military support.119

Pemberton viewed Australia’s commitment as an opportunity to gain absolute security, which required continuous American presence in Southeast Asia. He explained that Australia’s strategic dependence on the United States related to Canberra’s perception of the threat from China. According to Pemberton, Canberra needed the region to be pro-Western and non-Communist to achieve its goal of absolute security. Thus, American presence in Southeast Asia provided a deterrent from Communist

117 Reese, 305, 318-319.
118 Bell, 79-80, 85.
expansion. As a result, the US-Australian relationship not only provided security for Australia in the future, but it also drew Australia into Vietnam.\(^\text{120}\)

The security, insurance, and strategy arguments only provided partial explanations for Canberra’s response to Vietnam. Individually, they oversimplified the situation in Southeast Asia that surrounded Australia’s commitment. By emphasizing the importance of the US-Australian relationship in Australia’s decision to enter the war, historians failed to account for Canberra’s attempt to create an independent postwar strategy. Other historians, such as Reese, also failed to consider Australia’s dispatch of combat troops as part of its ongoing commitment to Vietnam. Ultimately, the security, insurance, and strategy arguments discounted the genuine concern that Canberra had for regional security.

**Australia’s Initial Commitment to Vietnam**

Australia’s involvement in Vietnam began long before the military commitment of its first battalion. Both the United States and Australia committed to the welfare of Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries when they signed the Manila Treaty in 1954. As part of the Treaty, the members agreed that South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia held the status of Protocol States. As such, they became eligible for economic and military aid on the same basis as the members of SEATO under Articles III and IV of the Treaty. If any of the Protocol States came under an armed attack that threatened the peace of the region or their sovereignty, the signatories could vote to provide military

support to the respective country. Under Ngo Dinh Diem, the stability of the
government in South Vietnam decreased, and cadres from the north began moving south
in 1959. With the political situation deteriorating into the early 1960s, a military
response in Vietnam became a possibility.

In a 31 March 1962 letter, Ngo Dinh Diem informed President Kennedy that
increasing Communist activity in Hanoi threatened Saigon. He also suggested that North
Vietnam never complied with the tenets of the Geneva Accords because Hanoi continued
to support guerilla warfare in the South since 1954. Diem extended his concerns about
South Vietnam’s security to the Communist bloc as a whole because they continued to
provide military supplies to the Vietcong through Laos. He stated that his government
was “compelled to appeal for increased military assistance and support from free world
countries to help prevent it from being overwhelmed by massive subversion from
Communist North Vietnam, backed by heavily increased support from the Communist
bloc.” The United States already committed to the defense of South Vietnam in 1954
upon French withdrawal, but Diem’s request translated into Washington’s hope for
additional support.

An international presence in South Vietnam not only provided political support
for the United States but also answered a request from Diem. After Diem’s request,
the United States concluded that third country military assistance would be necessary to

122 Department of State, “Letter from President Diem to President Kennedy,” Foreign Relations of the
123 Diem’s official request for assistance met the requirements of Article IV in the Manila Treaty.
According to point 3 of the Article, member states could only aid a country that formally requested
assistance.
provide “a visible demonstration of solidarity against Communist attack.”\textsuperscript{124} After assessing the likelihood of military contributions from other countries, Washington determined that Australia would “be willing to send experienced ‘jungle bashers’ to help train border patrol rangers or any other desirable personnel.”\textsuperscript{125} By the time of the May 1962 ANZUS meeting, Admiral Harry Felt, CINCPAC, informed the Australian Chiefs of Staff about American proposals for Australian assistance in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{126} However, the meeting provided the countries an opportunity to discuss further the possibility and led to Australia’s decision to begin its military commitment in South Vietnam in the form of advisors. Sir John Wilton, now Chief of the General Staff, gave his approval of the plan and explained that the “integration of Australian effort with United States Training Programme is most practicable and economical method of making an effective contribution with number available now.”\textsuperscript{127}

According to the initial agreement, Canberra sent thirty military advisors to South Vietnam with the purpose of training the South Vietnamese ground forces with special focus on jungle training.\textsuperscript{128} The advisors, soon referred to as the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, operated under the command and logistical support of the United States through the United States MAAG/MACV organization.\textsuperscript{129} However, the

\textsuperscript{124} Department of State, “Memorandum From the Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Cottrell) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Harriman)” \textit{FRUS}, Volume II. Accessed online 27 June 2008 from http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii_1961-63/o.html.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{129} The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) merged with the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) in 1964.
AATTV functioned as a national component within the organization and maintained a status equal to that of the United States. Before receiving their assignments in Vietnam, the Team underwent extensive training at the Jungle Training Center in Canungra, Queensland. The initial function of the JTC involved training Australian troops for the fighting conditions in Malaya. For the United States, Australia’s experience fighting in Malaya was an asset for training of South Vietnamese ground forces in 1962. While in training, the advisors practiced field exercises such as navigation, ambush, shooting, and countering vehicle ambushes. After nearly one month of rigorous training, the AATTV departed for Saigon.

Though under the operating control of the United States, the Team maintained at least some influence over its position. While the original plan called for stationing the AATTV at Quang Ngai, the Lieutenant-General, Chief of the General Staff Reginald George Pollard, had reservations. He believed that Quang Ngai “must be classed as a zone of high Vietcong activity, and one in which Australian personnel would be quite likely to become involved, at Vietcong initiative, in action outside the instructional field.” Colonel F.P. Serong, Commander of the AATTV, agreed with Pollard and suggested an alternative plan. According to the plan agreed upon by all parties, the Team would not be stationed together around Quang Ngai, but they would be separated into smaller groups and stationed near Hue because of its position as one of the safest

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130 According to the agreement, Canberra paid US $150 per month per officer, US $125 per month per enlisted member, US $100 per month for the Senior Officer’s sedan. In addition to these set expenses, the advisors paid for their meals by individual contributions. “14 June 1962” in “Despatch of Australian training team to Vietnam,” A1945, 248/4/66 PART 1, NAA. Accessed 14 July 2008.
131 McNeill, 6, 12.
132 Pollard acknowledged that becoming involved beyond the instructional level would be possible throughout Vietnam but admitted that the likelihood of this happening in Quang Ngai was comparatively higher. “Australian Military Instructors for South Vietnam” 2 July 1962, in “Despatch of Australian training team to Vietnam from,” A1945, 248/4/66 PART 1, NAA. Accessed 14 July 2008.
133 Before becoming the Commander of the AATTV, Serong served at the JTC as a Commanding Officer.
areas in South Vietnam. Although the AATTV’s general purpose involved the training of South Vietnam’s ground forces, the scope of their activities varied. The men would be split among six different areas, each group with its own purpose. The ten men assigned to Phu Bai provided army training to units that would be removed for retraining. The ten assigned to Hiep Khanh trained regional troops and village defense personnel through a Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps. At Da Nang, two advisors worked at the Special Force Center training trail watchers and Special Forces. Four Australians worked in Duc My at the Ranger Training Center to specifically prepare men for jungle, mountain, and swamp conditions. Three of the remaining advisors were stationed at the MAAG Headquarters, and Colonel Serong, as Senior Officer, served at the MACV Headquarters.134

Responses to Australian aid in South Vietnam varied. According to the government in Hanoi, Australia violated the 1954 Geneva Accords by sending advisors and aircraft to Saigon. In a radio broadcast on 10 June 1964, Hanoi condemned Canberra’s participation “in the aggressive war being waged by the United States” to establish a “stooge administration in South Vietnam” and accused the government of “tailing after the United States.” According to Hanoi, the military collusion between the United States and Australia infringed “on peace and security in Indochina and Southeast Asia.”135 For obvious reasons, Washington expressed its appreciation for Australia’s additional assistance and acknowledged the strength of US-Australian relations as a result. Washington expressed to the Australian Embassy that the United States was

“extremely pleased” that Australia’s contribution was “much more than token.” The praise continued and suggested that the contribution of advisors served as “first-class evidence of the strength of Australian-American Relations” because Canberra responded as no other country had done or intended to do.136

From their arrival on 3 August 1962 to Menzies’ announcement on 29 April 1965, the experiences of the AATTV allowed Canberra to gauge the need for increasing its military aid to Vietnam. Although Canberra wanted to avoid involving its advisors in operational activities, it became apparent that such activity could not be avoided. Already on 17 August 1962, Canberra received reports from Saigon that the Vietcong fired on two of its advisors, along with American personnel, when their helicopter landed after engine problems.137 The incident, which took place near Quang Ngai, confirmed Pollard and Serong’s initial belief about the danger of Vietcong activity in the area. It also reiterated the fact that the advisors must be prepared to undertake a combat role when necessary.

According to reports, Vietcong activity increased and became more organized in 1964. With the number of clashes between the Vietcong and the advisors rising, Canberra considered the option of sending additional support for the AATTV. After discussions with Washington and Saigon, Australia agreed to send thirty non-commissioned officers and six Caribou aircraft to South Vietnam on 29 May 1964.138

138 In addition to these additional military commitments, Australia also agreed to send an Army dental team with equipment and an army driving and instructional team to train Vietnamese personnel for a total of 53 Warrant Officers. Immediate. Secret. “South Viet Nam,” 29 May 1964, in “Saigon-Australian Army Training Team,” A4531, 215/4/1 PART 3, NAA. Accessed 12 July 2008.
addition to supplementing the existing personnel, Canberra also decided to change the tasks of the Team. The additional tasks of the incoming and original AATTVM included acting as advisors for battalions, Special Forces, a Self-Defense Corps, Village Defense programs, and Combat Youth Centers.139

Though initially under strict orders to only maintain an instructional role in Vietnam, the AATTVM hoped to expand their role by joining the ARVN battalion during operations as the United States had done since the Team arrived. With the new 1964 directive, Canberra acknowledged that its men not only acted as advisors to the South Vietnamese Army, but also needed to prepare themselves for an increasing combat role in Vietnam. As anticipated, attacks became more prevalent in the summer of 1964. In June, reports of “minor” armed clashes between the Vietcong and Advisors surfaced, and Canberra agreed to send an additional twenty personnel to South Vietnam. The likelihood of casualties increased with Australia’s increasing commitment, as well. At 2 a.m. on 6 July 1964, the Special Forces camp at Nam Dong came under a surprise Vietcong attack, and Warrant Officer Kevin Conway became Australia’s first combat casualty.141

While the personnel involved in the AATTVM held the primary role of advisors, their experiences allowed for Canberra to send a battalion in 1965. With the death of Conway and the increasing Vietcong activity in 1964, Canberra showed its willingness to increase its commitment of personnel and supplies. They also recognized the need for

140 McNeill, 24.
141 Sergeant William Hacking was the first Australian to die in Vietnam, but his death came after his weapon misfired. Conway, on the other hand, died during an enemy attack, which made him the first combat death in Vietnam. “Death of Warrant Officer Conway in Vietnam,” 10 July 1964 in “Saigon-Australian Army Training Team,” A4531, 215/4/1 PART 3, NAA. Accessed 12 July 2008.
the AATTV to adopt an operational role in addition to its original instructional role. Instead of the Team’s 1962 purpose of training the ground forces in “jungle fighting and village defence,” the revised directive allowed for the possibility “for any future broadening of the nature of military assistance without altering the directive.” The revised 1964 directive for the AATTV opened the possibility of Australia’s increasing military support for South Vietnam. With more Vietcong attacks and the first Australian combat death in 1964, the deployment of a combat battalion in 1965 was consistent with Australia’s existing commitments through the AATTV.

**The Continuation of Australia’s Commitment**

Prime Minister Menzies reiterated the role of the AATTV in Vietnam during his 29 April 1965 announcement of Canberra’s decision. During his statement, Menzies acknowledged that the thirty military instructors sent with the AATTV in 1962 later expanded to include one hundred instructors, six Caribou aircraft, around £1,000,000 in economic aid per year, and additional experts stationed around South Vietnam. Because Canberra decided to send the AATTV as a response to a request from the Government of South Vietnam, another request for further assistance in 1965 warranted a similar response. Although Menzies claimed that Canberra received a request for assistance from the South Vietnamese Government in his statement, evidence showed that the Australians still had not received an official request from Saigon on the day of the announcement. According to David Anderson, Australian Ambassador to Saigon,

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143 The plan to deploy troops to Vietnam became known as Plan Trimdon.
Canberra and Saigon had “minimal” consultation on the decision to send a battalion to Vietnam.\footnote{“From Anderson to Prime Minister and Assistant Minister for External Affairs,” 28 April 1965, in “United States request [sic] for Australian defence assistance in South Vietnam,” A1945, 248/4/113, NAA. Accessed 18 January 2008.} However, another document stated that without an official request from Saigon and without approval from the United States, Menzies would not make his announcement.\footnote{Ibid.} Menzies read Johnson’s letter of approval during his 29 April statement but lacked a similar letter to read aloud from Saigon.

Although discussions with Saigon factored little into Australia’s decision to commit troops, Canberra and Washington thoroughly discussed the situation in South Vietnam, especially during ANZUS meetings. These discussions helped to shape Australia’s later decision to provide more support. Perhaps the most instructive meeting between the two occurred during the 8-9 May 1962 ANZUS Council Meeting in Canberra. Meeting for the first time since October 1959, the ANZUS members had the opportunity to discuss the numerous changes in Southeast Asia since they last met. While several items filled the agenda, the most important discussions for Canberra focused on the situation in South Vietnam and the Southeast Asian policy of the United States.

A summary of the situation in Vietnam emphasized the improvement of the ground forces. Admiral Felt informed the delegates that a self-defense corps fought off a Vietcong attack, that the South Vietnamese soldiers were on the offensive, and that the South Vietnamese lost fewer men than the Vietcong. After hearing about the improvements, Rusk claimed that “there was no reason why the Vietnamese Government
should not win, provided it could ‘pull up its socks’ and get on with the job.”\(^{147}\) With this favorable attitude, the ANZUS members were under a similar impression about the positive steps made in South Vietnam, but they also realized that the supply line into South Vietnam through Laos presented a problem. While the troops became better prepared to deal with Vietcong activity, the prospect of a continuous supply line into South Vietnam created the need for more support.

Perhaps the more important information Canberra received during the ANZUS meeting emerged from an exchange between Rusk and Minister for External Affairs Sir Garfield Barwick. If Australia was going to send military personnel to Vietnam, Barwick wanted to understand Washington’s position on Southeast Asia, in general, and South Vietnam, in particular. Canberra wanted to be sure to avoid a neutralizing conference because the overall goal was to eliminate communism not compromise with the Communists. He questioned whether or not “the scale of United States intervention in Vietnam would need to go on increasing.” Rusk tried to pacify Barwick’s concerns by explaining that “unless the communists made a bigger and more overt effort they could be handled without the need for overt western intervention.”\(^{148}\) He only foresaw a different outcome if the supply lines through Laos became better organized than they had been. According to Rusk, the United States wanted to avoid committing itself militarily to a land-locked country like Laos to combat insurgency, but he reasoned that the situation in South Vietnam presented a “justifiable commitment.”\(^{149}\)

With a better understanding of America’s policy toward South Vietnam, Barwick also questioned Washington’s policy toward Southeast Asia. To gauge the American

\(^{148}\) Ibid.
\(^{149}\) Ibid.
commitment to the area, he asked “whether or not the U.S.A. considered Vietnam and South East Asia to be vital.” He explained that Canberra placed the utmost importance on the region and wanted reassurance that others would be as committed. Rusk’s response confirmed the significance of Southeast Asia to Washington, explained the importance of international support for American actions, and mentioned the possibility of requesting assistance from Britain and France. Barwick reiterated the importance of Southeast Asia to Australia and encouraged Rusk to be more specific about American intentions. Rusk only suggested that the United States placed no limitations on its commitments in Vietnam but insisted that further consultation should involve the President and Prime Minister as well as other possible contributors.\textsuperscript{150}

Because Rusk appeared to be avoiding a concrete answer, Barwick rephrased his question more directly. He wanted to know:

whether there had been a political decision that South East Asia, particularly South Vietnam, was of such vital significance that ‘come hell or high water’ the U.S.A. would defend it, with all the implications that the U.S.A. would follow up the path of escalation including ultimately resisting Chinese and other counter action.\textsuperscript{151}

Rusk responded with a little more clarity that the United States “was nearer ‘yes’ than that of any other government he knew of” and that “the U.S.A. was as close to a complete commitment as one could be without being able to see into the future.”\textsuperscript{152} With the impression that the United States placed the same priority on Southeast Asian security as Canberra, Australia and the United States both committed to resolving a conflict whose outcome depended on many variables. This ANZUS Conference not only presented a

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
forum for the discussion of Vietnam and Southeast Asia, but it also helped the Australians and Americans understand each other’s position on both matters.

Between November of 1964 and February 1965, the Vietcong attacks became better organized and more frequent than they had ever been. As a result, both the United States and Australia recognized that present commitments were insufficient. Michael Forrestal, part of the United States National Security Council Staff, explained that Vietcong attacks had become “acts of pure terrorism.” He informed the ANZUS members at the July 1964 meeting that attacks rose from 1500 in the first half of 1963 to 2100 in the first half of 1964. Additionally, he reported a rise in the loss of South Vietnamese weapons to the Vietcong. With the increasing success of the Vietcong attacks, the Australians and Americans acknowledged the decreasing morale of the South Vietnamese forces. As a result, Rusk suggested that other Free World Countries should show support for the South Vietnamese to improve morale and combat Vietcong indoctrination.

Rusk also asked Australia and New Zealand to consider increasing their assistance and to encourage other countries to raise their flags. Canberra still wanted to establish Washington’s level of commitment to South Vietnam before considering an increase in military aid. Two years after the original conversation between Barwick and Rusk at the ANZUS meeting, Alan Renouf and William Bundy revived the discussion. Renouf wondered if Washington’s warnings toward North Vietnam, as the conditions in South Vietnam deteriorated, constituted a political decision. Bundy clarified that the

“United States was not in the habit of deciding to make war in advance” but that he had a “hunch” the United States would rather fight than see a Communist takeover of South Vietnam.155 By the time of the 1965 ANZUS meeting, the hunch became more tangible.

In preparation for the June meeting, the United States acknowledged the additional support from Free World countries since the previous meeting. Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea provided military assistance, approximately thirty countries agreed to assist South Vietnam in other ways, and nearly seventy governments supported American efforts in Vietnam.156 Countries such as Britain and India aided the situation by attempting to encourage negotiations instead of military action. Because negotiations failed, their attempts would help to justify military action against North Vietnam.157

Even with the additional support, Washington wanted to be sure that all of the ANZUS members had the same understanding about the situation in Vietnam. During the meeting, the United States especially wanted to “demonstrate our common concern for the security of the Southwest Pacific and…the importance we attach to Australian and New Zealand participation in Free World efforts in the Far East.”158 The 1962, 1964, and 1965 ANZUS meetings led to a mutual understanding of the situation in South Vietnam and allowed all three members to respond accordingly.

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156 Department of State, “ANZUS Council Meeting. Talking Points for the Secretary’s Welcoming Statement,” 24 June 1965, RG 59, Lot File 66D347, Entry 3051B, Box 381, NARA.
157 Department of State, “Communiqué of the Fourteenth ANZUS Council Meeting,” 28 June 1965, RG 59, Lot File 66D347, Entry 3051B, Box 381, NARA.
Division within SEATO

ANZUS allowed the members to receive more information about the situation in South Vietnam, but SEATO provided a way to gain political support. Vietnam’s status as a Protocol State under the Manila Treaty and Diem’s request for assistance allowed SEATO members to aid South Vietnam against communist aggression. However, when Laos, another Protocol State, needed SEATO’s support, the organization failed to respond. As a result, SEATO became less effective as a regional body in the defense of Southeast Asia against communism. Therefore, when the instability in Vietnam required a response, Australia became more likely to turn to ANZUS than SEATO. Still, SEATO meetings allowed the ANZUS members to understand the perspectives of their Asian counterparts and to gauge their dedication to Southeast Asian security.

The 1954 Geneva Accords allowed the Pathet Lao to remain in the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua in Laos with the intention that Laos would form a unified government. When a new government under Phoui Sananikone came to power in 1958, Phoui wanted to integrate the provinces into the existing Vientiane government. By doing so, the United States could answer Laotian requests for military support because Phoui met the stipulations of the Geneva Accords. The first critical period in Laos happened in 1959 when the Pathet Lao began attacking the Royal Lao Government. Because SEATO viewed the situation as internal, the organization believed that their intervention would only provoke the Pathet Lao. As a result, the first crisis ended quickly with SEATO agreeing with the United Nations’ decision to avoid intervention.

160 Buszynski, 72-73.
Instability within the Laotian government worsened after the first crisis and created a more complicated situation for SEATO to address. The first coup of 1960 overthrew the right-wing government and placed Souvanna Phouma as its leader. With Phouma’s decision to create a neutralist government, he removed the possibility for SEATO intervention as Pathet Lao attacks intensified. However, a counter-coup with right-wing Boun Oum as Prime Minister returned the possibility.\footnote{Horner, 183.} With the information that both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union supplied the Pathet Lao attacks against the RLG, SEATO reviewed its options according to the Manila Treaty. At a previous SEATO meeting, the Military Advisors established a seven part plan that organized the order of SEATO troop deployments. Plan 5 specifically addressed communist insurgency in Laos.\footnote{Ibid., 182.} With the attacks continuing, the Joint Intelligence Committee met on 7 April 1961 to determine the effects of a SEATO intervention based on Plan 5. The JIC’s findings suggested very few positive results from the implementation of the plan. According to the report, insurgency and subversion would continue, support for the Pathet Lao would strengthen, SEATO would need to increase its troops immediately, and SEATO forces would offer little effective assistance to the Royal Lao Army.

Additionally, the JIC saw the potential for an extended commitment in Laos. However, an assessment of SEATO’s failure to intervene proved equally devastating for Laos and SEATO. Not only would Laos fall under Communist control, which would threaten the security of Southeast Asia, but it also meant that SEATO faced “extinction…as a deterrent to further communist adventures in Southeast Asia.”\footnote{“JIC [Joint Intelligence Committee] – SEATO military intervention and its likely effect on the situation in Laos,” A1838, TS666/61/72, NAA. Accessed 17 July 2008.} Even
with the risks, the JIC determined that SEATO needed to intervene for a period of time to relieve the Laotian army of its internal security role. By doing so, the army could concentrate on training and eventually defend itself from insurgency without help from SEATO.  

Australia assumed that SEATO would respond militarily only if they received a request from a legitimate Laotian government or if internal subversion threatened the independence of Laos. The March 1961 SEATO communiqué indicated that the members still wanted to negotiate and neutralize the situation in Laos. This decision came after the United States already deployed 1,000 marines and three aircraft to the Gulf of Thailand in response to the Pathet Lao’s defeat of the RLA. Washington wanted to deter further insurgency by showcasing their preparedness for military action. While Australia and the United States seemed willing to intervene militarily if the situation called for it, Britain and France only agreed to resolve the situation diplomatically and would veto military action. The division within SEATO negated the possibility of a unanimous vote for intervention, which the Treaty required. It also transformed SEATO’s position into a solely diplomatic one. After all, it would be difficult to preserve the security of Southeast Asia when the members fundamentally disagreed about whether or not SEATO should take military action.

Both the Australians and the Americans drew similarities between the situations in Laos and South Vietnam. The decreasing morale of the RLA allowed for the success
of the Pathet Lao attacks. When the United States and Australia recognized a similar situation in Vietnam, both understood the importance of boosting the morale of the South Vietnamese. Additionally, in Laos, the JIC determined that the army needed more training to be able to defeat the insurgents. Again, Washington and Canberra could draw from their experiences in Laos. The AATTV and Washington’s advisors provided specialized training for the South Vietnamese forces so they had the ability to adapt to guerrilla attacks. The association between the situations was not always positive. SEATO’s failure to respond militarily in Laos led Australia and the United States to question the effectiveness of SEATO action in Vietnam. As a result, Australia and the United States could hope for political support from some SEATO members but could not rely on the organization to respond to events in South Vietnam as effectively as ANZUS.

While historians such as Frankum and Reese claimed that Australia’s relationship with the United States led to its decision to commit troops in 1965, Canberra only responded to the situation in Vietnam after years of preparation. Australia agreed to promote peace and security in Southeast Asia when they signed the Manila Treaty. As soon as the threat of communism disrupted the peace and threatened the security of South Vietnam, both Diem and Washington called for Australian support. Canberra decided to send the AATTV to South Vietnam only after assessing their ability to send military personnel without disrupting existing commitments elsewhere. Additionally, consultations with its ANZUS partners proved that Australia not only committed itself to the region prior to sending combat troops, but also showed the channels Australia used to understand the situation in Vietnam and respond to it. ANZUS meetings allowed the

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members to address a complicated situation such as Vietnam with the benefit of common information and candid discussions.

While SEATO’s ineffective response during the Laotian crises from 1959-1961 led some to question its value as an organization, Washington and Canberra understood its political importance. Even though Britain and France threatened to veto a military response to insurgency, some of the Asian nations seemed willing to support the military efforts of the United States. Such political support weakened the Vietcong claim that the United States only intervened with imperialist intentions. Canberra certainly valued its relationship with Washington, but Australia committed a battalion to the Vietnam War because the experiences of its advisors and discussions about the security threat posed by the Vietcong suggested the need for further commitments.
CHAPTER 3
REGIONAL SECURITY: AUSTRALIA’S POSTWAR STRATEGY

Australia’s reaction to the situation in South Vietnam reflected its broader concern for the security of Southeast Asia and led Canberra to consider the regional implications of a Communist victory. The communist insurgency in South Vietnam posed similar problems for the preservation of Southeast Asian security as other events that occurred in the region after World War II. Between the crises in Laos, the declaration of Emergency in Malaya, and Indonesia’s policy of Confrontation, Australian military personnel were already engaged in Southeast Asia before their April 29 combat troop commitment to South Vietnam began. With the threat of communist expansion in each of these areas, Australian strategy had to reflect the regional security concerns it faced in the postwar era. Canberra understood the importance of having a global power as an ally during the Cold War to ensure national and regional security.

Its traditional relationship with Britain faltered after the fall of Singapore, but Canberra still believed in maintaining the relationship. However, with Britain’s weakening global status and hints at decolonization, Australia became concerned about its own security in the Pacific. To reflect the need to address both national and regional security outside of the traditional realm, Canberra’s policies regarding Southeast Asia became more oriented toward the United States than Britain. As a result, Canberra’s response to regional insurrections, to the threat posed by China, and to the implications of Britain’s decline in the Pacific reflected Australia’s postwar foreign policy aim of preserving regional security for the sake of ensuring national security.
Australia’s Response to the Malayan Emergency

After World War II, Australia’s first encounter with insurgency in Southeast Asia occurred in Malaya. Social instability within Malaya after the war resulted from a population boom between 1880 and 1957 when the population rose to five times its previous level. A majority of the new laborers came from India and China to work in rubber and tin production, but the new wave of workers created ethnic divisions within Malaya that prevented a nationalist movement.168 With the Chinese representing the largest ethnic group, the Malayan government had to contend with the Malayan Chinese population’s assumed allegiance to mainland China.169 The social divisions within society only reflected part of Malayan instability. In addition to ethnic divisions, the colonial government created political divisions. Britain secured its presence in the Malayan Peninsula and Singapore by 1919, but political influence increased when the local Sultans welcomed the British as resident advisors. Some of the Malays and Malayan Chinese resented British rule because other British colonies gained independence after World War II.170

In addition to the internal divisions within Malaya, World War II brought an external threat to the region. Because of Malaya’s natural resources and strategic location, Japan attacked the area in December 1941. In response to the threat, the

168 In the 1950s, Malaya was the top producer of rubber in the world, and fifty percent of the world’s tin came from Malaya. See Wm. Roger Louis, “The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam” in Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 564.
169 The Malayan Chinese Association formed in 1949 to organize the Malayan Chinese community and to encourage unity for Malayan independence. The British High Commissioner, however, questioned their motives and believed that their loyalty to mainland China superseded their desire for Malayan independence. “The Australian Commissioner for Malaya to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra” in “BTSEA: Malaya and Singapore. Chinese minorities and [sic] interests,” A1838, 413/3/6/2/1 PART 1, NAA. Accessed 23 August 2008.
The colonial government decided to use the Malayan Communist Party, once an illegal organization, to combat Japanese militarism. After the war ended and the British attempted to disband the organization, the MCP secretly collected weapons that the Japanese forfeited and the British left behind. With the organizational systems they developed while fighting against the Japanese and the weapons they obtained after the war, the MCP and its militant arm, the Malayan Races Liberation Army, became better prepared to stage attacks against the colonial government. The British left the military in charge of postwar reorganization, but corruption and disorganization created an opportunity for the MCP and MRLA to gain momentum for large-scale operations. One of many attacks occurred in 1950 when the MCP burned a northern village in Perak and attacked a police station in Johor. The continuous success of the MCP’s attacks proved the Malayan government’s weakness and inability to respond to this initial wave of communist insurgency.

The MCP targeted the British in smaller-scale attacks, as well. On 16 June 1948, members of the MCP attacked and murdered three British estate managers in Perak. In response to this attack and the increasing militancy of the MCP, the colonial government declared a state of Emergency throughout Malaya on 18 June 1948 that lasted until 31 July 1960. From the British perspective, the success of the insurgency corresponded

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171 During the war, this militant branch of the MCP was known as the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army, or MPAJA.
174 Because ninety-five percent of the army consisted of Malayan Chinese, the insurgency became associated with Chinese communism. This influenced Australia’s perception of the insurgency in Malaya and led them to send military assistance. For more information see “Extract from R.A.A.F. Intelligence
with strategic and economic losses for Britain. After losing Singapore in 1942, Britain invested £86 million into the Malayan economy for tin and rubber production.\textsuperscript{175} In turn, Malayan resources allowed Britain to recover some of the economic losses from World War II. To protect their interests in the region and respond to the insurgency, Britain sent Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs to Malaya as Director of Operations in 1950.\textsuperscript{176} Briggs developed a plan that called for the isolation of the insurgents from their supplies to decrease their effectiveness. He also wanted the colonial government to launch propaganda campaigns to undermine the MCP’s public support system.\textsuperscript{177} To do this, Briggs used his own propaganda to link the insurgency in Malaya to the larger Communist movement as proof that the events were a result of external issues as opposed to a nationalist movement against the colonial government.\textsuperscript{178} If the British garnered enough public support, they could maintain their presence in Malaya and defeat the insurgency.

Because of the importance of Malaya to Britain’s position in Asia, the British were involved in the battle against insurgency from the beginning. When the British responded militarily to the MCP’s activities in 1950 with the appointment of Briggs, Canberra debated what its own response should involve. Australian partnership with Britain and New Zealand in ANZAM warranted some degree of a response to the security

\textsuperscript{175} Louis, “The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam,” 563.
\textsuperscript{176} By June 1948, British forces in Malaya only included thirteen infantry units that consisted of Gurkha, British, and Malayan battalions as well as one British Artillery Regiment. Karl Hack, \textit{Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore 1941-1968} (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 113.
\textsuperscript{177} Dennis and Grey, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{178} Edwards with Pemberton, 30-31.
threat that guerrilla activity in Malaya posed. Additionally, Canberra understood the strategic importance of Malaya. During Emergency the Department of Defense determined that the “defence of Malaya is a practicable military proposition, in both the cold and hot wars, providing the Allies can retain command of the sea and air in that region.”

By holding a line north of the Malay Peninsula in Siam, Commonwealth troops could “prevent infiltration if adequate troops [were] deployed and could not be outflanked by seaward movement whilst command of the sea [was] maintained.”

While the Department of Defense understood the strategic importance of Malaya to Australia, Parliament failed to agree about the origins of the conflict and the appropriate response from Australia. The Labor Party believed that the insurgency stemmed from internal events caused by Britain’s presence. The Party generally stressed the importance of independence and believed that Australia should avoid military contributions to Emergency. The Liberals, however, generally believed that the insurgency in Malaya correlated with Communist expansion. Because they viewed the Communist threat as a security risk to the entire region, the Liberals supported Australian intervention according to the ANZAM agreement. In spite of their differences, the Cabinet agreed that Australia could provide arms to use in Malaya within their ability and upon Britain’s request. The Department of Defense reiterated the importance of Malayan stability and encouraged an Australian response to preserve regional security.

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179 As part of the ANZAM arrangement, Britain, New Zealand, and Australia all contributed troops to the Far East Strategic Reserve. These troops would be the first to respond in Malaya.
181 Ibid.
182 Edwards with Pemberton, 32.
183 “Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 2nd August 1948,” A2703, 182, NAA. Accessed 27 August 2008. As of the meeting, Canberra provided 100 Sten guns to Malaya upon Britain’s request.
According to the Department, Malaya provided “defence in depth” for Australia. The Department believed that the loss of Malaya:

would mean that Communist influence, and power, would come within striking range of Australia; the Allies would lose the focal point for the control of the sea routes between the Indian and North Pacific Oceans and they would be deprived of their best source of supply of rubber and tin. The loss of Malaya during World War II did not prove to be vital; however, it did expose Australia to the danger of invasion.\(^\text{184}\)

While the likelihood of an invasion may not have been accurate, the Department’s perception of Emergency reflected Australia’s past experience of invasion by the Japanese in World War II and shaped Canberra’s response to the situation.

The reelection of the Menzies Government in 1949 led to a more concrete military commitment to Malaya.\(^\text{185}\) With the idea of Australian vulnerability in mind, Canberra decided to enhance its contributions to the Malayan Emergency. The Defense Committee responded to a British request for air support in April 1950 by recommending the provision of four Lincoln Bombers and eight Dakota transport aircraft. Canberra also agreed to send officers who had experience in jungle warfare.\(^\text{186}\) While their contributions began in 1950, Canberra waited until 1955 to commit ground forces to the insurgency. By that time, the British response to Emergency appeared to be successful and the effectiveness of the insurgents declined. Still, Australian troops helped to drive the guerillas out of Malaya and continued to protect the country after Emergency ended.\(^\text{187}\) Australia’s involvement in the Malayan Emergency lasted longer than any

\(^\text{185}\) Most historians highlighted Menzies’ affinity for the “motherland” and desire to remain tied to Britain. This differed greatly from the Chifley Government that preceded his second term in office.
\(^\text{186}\) Horner, 139.
other conflict in its brief history as a nation and allowed military personnel to gain experience in jungle warfare and communist insurgency that would later assist them in South Vietnam.

The Impact of Confrontation on Australia

After responding to the Emergency in Malaya, Canberra next faced the Indonesian policy of Confrontation toward Malaysia from 1963 to 1966. When Malaya gained independence in 1957, the Federation consisted of the nine Malayan states, Penang, and Malacca. With the addition of Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah (British North Borneo), the Federation of Malaya became Malaysia in 1963. According to the British Foreign Office, Indonesia’s President Sukarno challenged the United Nations’ assessment that Sabah and Sarawak willingly joined the Federation of Malaya to become part of Malaysia. The reason why Indonesia opposed the formation of Malaysia reflected its own anti-colonial foreign policy and its disapproval of British presence in the region. As a former colony of the Netherlands, Indonesia fought for independence from the end of World War II into the 1960s. Malaysia, however, remained part of the Commonwealth even after independence. As a result of its recent past and of its own regional interests, Indonesia wanted to discourage further colonial presence in Southeast Asia through its policy of Confrontation.

The Department of Defense believed that Indonesia’s traditionally neutralist and anti-colonial stance could jeopardize Australia’s position in Southeast Asia. The location of Indonesia as a “road block” between Australia and mainland Southeast Asia meant that

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Indonesia could isolate Australia from its Asian allies. With Indonesia’s desire to create regional hegemony and to eliminate those opposed to Indonesian interests, the Department believed that Confrontation could last into 1966 or 1967. With that possibility, Indonesia’s geographical position threatened air and sea routes to Southeast Asia, sea routes between Europe and the “Far East,” and Australia’s use of Singapore.

The Department of External Affairs’ assessment focused specifically on communism in Indonesia and its impact on Australian security. The Department adopted the view that the Indonesian Communist Party, or PKI, followed the same beliefs as all other “orthodox” Communist parties with “the eventual overthrow of the Government of the country in order to impose upon that country a communist form of Government” as its goal. Officials believed that the PKI would only become more powerful if the existing government legally recognized the organization, which it did in October 1945. The PKI and the army became the two pillars of Sukarno’s rule in Indonesia from the declaration of martial law in 1957 until his removal from office in 1966. While the army played an important role in the guerilla-style warfare of Confrontation, the PKI worked to create political separation between Sukarno and the army.

Canberra also believed that if Indonesia succumbed to Communist pressure, its anti-colonial policies would lead to Commonwealth withdrawal from bases in Southeast Asia and subsequent closure of bases to Australia. Additionally, Indonesia’s proximity and cultural similarities to other Southeast Asian countries could potentially lead to

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192 Dennis and Grey, 205.
Indonesian influence over Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, Portuguese Timor, and Borneo. Such influence impeded Australian interests in the region and had a direct political influence on Canberra. With the increasing influence of the PKI within the political system, the Departments of Defense and External Affairs concluded that the threat of the PKI would weaken Western prestige while enhancing the power of the Communist bloc in Southeast Asia.

As previously explained, President Sukarno refused to accept the unification of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. The combination of his refusal and Indonesian attacks drew Britain into Confrontation. After an Indonesian mob attacked and burned the British Embassy in Jakarta on the same day as Malaysian Federation, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan requested Australian military assistance “should the necessity arise” on 20 September 1963. Canberra responded that in the event of “armed invasion or subversive activity – supported or directed or inspired from outside Malaysia – we shall to the best of our powers…add our military assistance…in the defence of Malaysia’s territorial integrity and political independence.” Canberra received three additional requests for aid – two from Britain and one from the Malaysian Ministry of Defense. The urgency expressed for assistance in Sabah led to Australia’s commitment of engineers, light anti-aircraft, minesweepers, and helicopters. Canberra also allowed British use of the Cocos Islands for transport aircraft and V-bombers. By the ANZUS meeting on 28

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195 London’s second request arrived on 19 December 1963 and the third on 10 April 1964 with the Ministry of Defense’s appeal preceding the third British request. Britain and Malaysia requested other forms of assistance that Canberra rejected because of the lack of availability, inability to provide, or the belief that
June 1965, the Australian representatives even offered the use of Darwin as a base for air operations to Indonesia. As in Malaya, military personnel gained additional experience in jungle and guerilla warfare that allowed them to be better prepared to adapt to the conditions of guerilla fighting in South Vietnam. Australian military contributions may not have been critical for the end of Confrontation, but assistance assured Britain of Canberra’s willingness and ability to defend Commonwealth interests in the region. Both Emergency and Confrontation encouraged Canberra to develop a foreign policy that focused on the preservation of national security by maintaining regional security in Southeast Asia.

The Emergence of an Australian Strategy

After World War II, Australians quickly developed a stronger interest in foreign policy because the postwar situation not only forced them to do so, but Canberra also recognized “distinctly Australian interests to pursue and to safeguard in international relations.” Such an approach noted the importance of primary dependence on the nation and national interests instead of dependence on larger powers for national security. Canberra’s basic goal for national defense called for the security of the Australian mainland and its island territories, but national defense required consideration of Southeast Asian security, as well. Senator Sir Shane Paltridge, who became Minister of Defense in April 1964, admitted that for “the foreseeable future the pursuit of

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196 Department of State, “ANZUS Meeting – June 28, 1965,” RG 59, Box 381, Entry 3051B, Lot 66D347, NARA.

[Australia’s] distinctive national objectives must continue to take account of the need for co-operation with our Asian neighbors.199

Asia factored into the development of an Australian strategy because geography inextricably linked the two.200 Their proximity allowed for the development of mutual interests in the region despite Australia’s Western background and influence. As a result, Australia’s position in the Pacific naturally lent itself to the consideration of Southeast Asia in the development of postwar strategy. Canberra wanted to create “a foreign policy which facilitates the projection of Australian experience and knowledge into South East Asia, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands and perhaps, if our resources will allow, also into Africa.”201 To do so, Australia focused on the main tenet of the United Nations Charter to encourage an international disarmed community, but the Department of Defense recognized that Canberra could not rely solely on the United Nations for security. As a result, Canberra placed importance on collective security arrangements. Paltridge expressed that “[we] have greater security as a nation because – apart from our association with Britain and other partners in the Commonwealth of Nations – we belong to regional defence agreements.”202 Arrangements such as ANZAM, SEATO, and ANZUS all met the need for national defense through collective security.203

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200 Canberra’s concern for Asia differed remarkably from its prior support of the “White Australia” policy, which consisted of discriminatory language and legislation against people of Asian descent and others of different racial backgrounds.
202 Ibid.
203 The Canberra Pact of 1944 could also be considered a collective security arrangement. While Canberra believed that this bilateral relationship with Wellington was important for national and regional security, Australia and New Zealand both benefitted from the other three agreements because the larger powers helped to compensate for the deficiencies of smaller powers.
Security arrangements served as the backbone of regional defense, but not every treaty held the same value. ANZAM fostered the continuation of Commonwealth relations in the Pacific and addressed the similar interests that all parties had in the security of Malaya, and later Malaysia. Although ANZAM allowed for the maintenance of ties to Britain, SEATO and ANZUS were more valuable. The strength of SEATO lay in its status as a multi-lateral treaty with Western and Asian members. Canberra referred to SEATO as the “main instrument” for collective defense planning in Southeast Asia, but the organization’s weaknesses caused concern, as well.

The Department of Defense attributed those weaknesses to SEATO’s failure to prevent covert aggression in Laos and South Vietnam, the lack of a permanent command center, and the threat of France and Pakistan’s withdrawal from the organization. From the Department of Defense’s perspective, ANZUS remained the most valuable treaty because of Canberra’s access to Washington. ANZUS provided “assurance of United States assistance in the event of actual attack on the Australian mainland or Island territories or on our armed forces in the Pacific area.” In other words, SEATO protected Australia in the event of a communist attack, but Canberra believed that ANZUS guaranteed support for Australia in any case of aggression. Collective security agreements, regardless of their long-term effectiveness, allowed Australia to form an independent foreign policy with the assurance of defense support in the event of attacks in the region and on the mainland.

Canberra’s Attempt to Address Communist Expansion

Even with assurances in place, Canberra still had to address external events that would impact regional, as well as, national security. The threat of Chinese Communist expansion into Southeast Asia and Britain’s declining role East of Suez played important roles in the shaping of Australian policies. Canberra admitted that “the most important change in the world situation since the war had been the emergence of Communist China.”

Canberra and its regional allies discussed China’s political influence throughout the postwar period. During the 1965 ANZUS meeting, Paul Hasluck, then Minister of External Affairs, described China as a “major long-term problem” in Southeast Asia that ANZUS may need to address for the next twenty years.

A Liberal Party pamphlet described China as the mastermind behind the various insurrections in Southeast Asia. After a split between China and the Soviet Union in 1959, Peking became the model for other Asian communist parties and encouraged revolutions in underdeveloped areas that could masquerade as national liberation movements. According to the pamphlet, such movements discouraged Western involvement because fighting simultaneously in a number of areas depleted Western resources and guaranteed a Communist victory.

Aside from Peking’s political influence in Southeast Asia, Canberra also suspected a military connection between China and the various insurgencies in Southeast Asia after World War II. Although China’s lack of “industrial capacity” limited its

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206 Department of State, “ANZUS Meeting – June 28, 1965,” RG 59, Box 381, Entry 3051B, Lot 66D347, NARA.
ability to directly attack Australia, its military support for engagements throughout Southeast Asia presented a challenge for Canberra.\textsuperscript{208} Peking’s support of Hanoi not only caused security concerns in Saigon, but also affected Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. Throughout the conflict in Vietnam, the main supply routes for the North Vietnamese Army ran through Laos and into South Vietnam, which provided an advantage for the Vietcong.\textsuperscript{209}

In addition to Chinese support in Indochina, Canberra also recognized the influence of China in Malaya and Indonesia. Peking sustained the MCP during Emergency by creating propaganda to garner public support for the MCP.\textsuperscript{210} Canberra believed that Communist success in Indochina meant that Malaya became the front line of the Cold War in Asia. If Chinese propaganda influenced the public, Canberra believed that the Malay Chinese could join forces with the mainland Chinese and encourage a southward thrust into Australia. As the line of defense moved closer to Australia, Canberra would willingly contribute military assistance to prevent expansion and preserve national security.\textsuperscript{211} While the perception of communist expansion into Malaya may have clouded the reality of Chinese infiltration, Canberra became familiar with the standard approach to insurgency that the communists used. The process began with infiltration that led to a “terrorist” attack with the intent of provoking military operations.

\textsuperscript{208} “Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy,” A1838, TS677/3 PART 7, NAA. Accessed 3 September 2008.
\textsuperscript{209} Department of State, “ANZUS Meeting – June 28, 1965,” RG 59, Box 381, Entry 3051B, Lot 66D347, NARA.
\textsuperscript{210} Dennis and Grey, 14.
The military operations led to guerilla warfare and the establishment of bases in liberated areas after overthrowing the current government.\textsuperscript{212}

Peking followed a similar pattern in Indonesia where China strengthened the PKI. The PKI became staunch supporters of the Chinese in 1960 but moved closer to China during Confrontation in 1963. The issue with Indonesia was the overall influence of Peking on the PKI, and the PKI’s influence over Sukarno’s policy decisions.\textsuperscript{213} Canberra anticipated that Communist success in Indonesia would jeopardize Australian security because it would only encourage further expansion South into New Guinea and Australia. Fortunately for Australia, the PKI’s attempted coup in September 1965 failed and Confrontation ended shortly after the attempt.\textsuperscript{214} From Canberra’s perspective, no other Western power experienced the pressure of Chinese Communist expansion into Southeast Asia more than Australia. As a result, Australian foreign policy needed to address China’s political and military influence in Southeast Asia and prevent its success in order to preserve national security.

The correlation between Chinese Communism and Southeast Asian security appeared most prominently in South Vietnam. Menzies believed that the fall of South Vietnam “must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.”\textsuperscript{215} From the Australian perspective, communist propaganda suggested that the conflict in Vietnam resulted from a civil war, but Canberra recognized that the conflict embodied a new type of aggression influenced by Peking. The use of guerilla

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\item[213] “Communist China’s Objectives” in “Foreign Policy – Australia,” M2624, ITEM 8 ITEM 7, NAA. Accessed 1 September 2008.
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tactics to “conquer a sovereign people in a neighbouring State” fit the Chinese objective of targeting underdeveloped countries for the expansion of communism throughout the region. Instead of the civil war theory that China propagated, Canberra viewed the conflict as an example of Chinese Communist power driving into Southeast Asia and threatening the security of the entire Pacific region. Both in terms of regional and national security, Canberra believed that “South Vietnam [was] the crux of a power conflict of enormous magnitude.”

The threat of Communist success in South Vietnam encouraged Australia to maintain foreign policy based on the domino theory and forward defense as part of its overall policy toward Southeast Asia. The idea of the domino theory became associated with President Eisenhower’s speech during a 1954 news conference, but Australians already accepted the concept in 1950. During an assessment of Australian policy on 14 September 1950, Canberra identified Indochina as a possible Cold War front in Southeast Asia and East Asia. Communist expansion in the Pacific meant that if the front line in Northern Indochina collapsed, “it is only a matter of time before Siam and Burma fall under Communist influence and an invasion route to Malaya lies open to the Communist forces. From the military point of view…Indo-China occupies an important position in our strategy.” Nearly a decade later, Canberra maintained the importance of the domino theory. The Liberal Party pamphlet explained:

...the kind of conflict now taking place in South Vietnam would be renewed in adjacent States now ‘enjoying’ a precarious freedom from Communist control. Within a brief period the struggle would move to Thailand. If Thailand were abandoned, Malaysia would be next on the

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216 Ibid.
list. Burma would be menaced and Indonesia, with its strong Communist Party, would quickly be drawn within the sphere of Peking’s power and influence. In that situation not only would Australia be directly exposed; world war would be literally an inevitability.”

South Vietnam, indeed, became the crux of regional security during the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense depended on a pro-Western Southeast Asia for the advancement of Australian objectives in the region. As a result, the failure of allied forces in South Vietnam could lead to a neutral or communist government in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. With a communist victory on the Southeast Asian mainland, forces would move into Malaysia and Indonesia where limited war became likely. In the case of a limited war in Indonesia, Australians feared occupation of the Christmas and Cocos Islands, raids on Darwin similar to those of the Japanese during World War II, and interruption of the communication lines that the ANZAM agreement required Canberra to protect. These assumptions influenced Canberra’s decision to send a team of advisors to South Vietnam in 1962 and a battalion in 1965.

Canberra associated the domino theory with the strategy of forward defense. While the domino theory addressed the possible route of communist expansion in Southeast Asia, forward defense proposed to “hold mainland South East Asia against communist expansion.” Forward defense became part of the Australian policy in 1949 with the formation of the Liberal-Country Party coalition. In a 1962 message to British

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221 Ibid.
Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, Menzies reiterated that “in the present circumstances, [forward defense] is the most effective strategy for [Australian] security.” According to this strategy, Canberra intended to fight communist insurgencies as far away from Australian borders as possible. If forward defense failed to contain China’s communist expansion in mainland Southeast Asia, the dominoes would likely fall and make Indonesian resistance to communism less viable. With the belief in communism’s rapid southward expansion, the strategy quickly gained popular support, especially after the success in Malaya and apparent success against Indonesia.

As a result, the strategy of forward defense provided another reason why Australia entered the Vietnam War when Confrontation in Indonesia had not yet concluded. Along with communist expansion, Canberra viewed Indonesia as one of the two main disruptive forces in Southeast Asia. The Department of Defense believed that the combination of Communism on the Southeast Asian mainland and in Indonesia presented “an ultimate threat to [Australia’s] national security.” Although Confrontation officially ended in 1966, the Department of External Affairs had been informed about a coup attempt to end Sukarno’s rule on 21 December 1964. With the end of Confrontation near, Canberra could focus its attention farther away in Vietnam.

223 This popular support should not be confused with consensus. The implementation of forward defense for South Vietnam met with opposition from groups within the Australian Labor Party and from the Communist Party of Australia. See Edwards, *A Nation at War*, 1-2.
As communist insurgency in Vietnam increased in 1965, Canberra committed to the forward defense strategy in spite of the threat from Indonesia.226

The Role of British Decolonization in Australian Strategy

The success of Australia’s postwar foreign policy aims directly related to British and American support. In the postwar period, Canberra wanted to create a foreign policy that kept Australian national and regional interests instead of British interests as its priority, especially as the threat of Communist expansion loomed. Unfortunately, as a middle power, Australia lacked the finances and population to do so. As a result, Canberra needed to secure support from Britain and the United States to ensure the country’s foreign and defense policy aims in the event of a broad conflict in the region. Defense Minister Paltridge explained in 1965 that “the continued alignment of policy between the United Kingdom and the United States in Asia is of very great importance to Australia.”227 Collaboration with London and Washington through formal and informal agreements created a security blanket that allowed Canberra to develop policies that reinforced its independence.

If support from London and Washington factored into Australia’s national and regional security concerns, Canberra needed to address the changing interests of both powers in the Pacific. While American aims appeared to coincide with those of Australia, British interests in Southeast Asia faded after World War II. Upon returning from his visit to the United States, Menzies explained his approach to foreign policy

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226 Washington advocated for the conclusion of Confrontation because they understood Canberra’s concern about a simultaneous commitment to both areas. It was in Washington’s best interest to have Australian resources and personnel in South Vietnam.
during a 20 April 1955 speech. He stated that the “essence of foreign policy, is to make friends and to keep them.” Britain and the United States remained the “friends” that he hoped would support Australia’s foreign policy during his second term as Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966. However, with British interest in Southeast Asia waning in the postwar period, Britain became a less reliable friend than the United States.

Australians faced a difficult situation in the postwar period because they needed to find a balance their identity as a British nation with the national memory of what happened in 1942. The Pacific theater of World War II clearly proved to Canberra that Britain could not ensure Australian security as it had in the past. However, the United States remained unwilling to involve itself in formal security arrangements until the 1950s. As a result of these and other events, Australia’s transition from Britain to the United States happened over time, not immediately as a result of World War II. Historians often mark the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942 as the definitive event that dissolved the relationship between London and Canberra, but the event should be seen as more of a fracture than a separation. Although Canberra began relying more heavily on the United States for security after Singapore, Australia maintained its defense connection to Britain through ANZAM and the Joint Project.

Immediately after the war, Canberra still considered its own security within the larger framework of Commonwealth defense. According to a 1947 Defense Chiefs of Staff statement, postwar defense policy needed to support the UN position on collective security, but “reliance must primarily be placed on co-operation in British

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228 Department of State, “Prime Minister Menzies’ Speech, 20 April 1955,” RG 59, Box 2504, NARA.
Commonwealth Defense” in the meantime. ANZAM allowed Britain to compensate for the reduction of its defense capabilities in the Pacific without losing sight of its commitment to the Middle East. While the Middle East and Asia factored into British policy, the Middle East became the primary focus after 1945 because of the communication systems that linked Britain to the Pacific. As a result of this shift away from the Pacific, the Colonial Office called for Australia and New Zealand to become the main support areas for Commonwealth defense in vital areas of the Pacific in 1949.

Canberra accepted additional responsibilities in the region both as part of its position within ANZAM and also because the new position allowed Australia to closely monitor the areas that most affected its own security. With Canberra and Wellington adopting more responsibility for the security of their respective spheres, Britain would not have to extend a permanent defense arm into the Pacific. The Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee determined that Australia’s sphere of influence should extend as far as the Malay Peninsula and that the maximum expenditure to patrol the area over the next five years would be approximately £250 million. Because of financial constraints, the Committee expected additional Commonwealth support in the event of a major conflict. As the events in Malaya and Indonesia showed, Britain may not have been prepared to take primary responsibility for the defense of the ANZAM region, but they were prepared to defend it when conflicts threatened Commonwealth interests. After the

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230 Tunstall, 51.

231 “Palestine Committee of the Cabinet and the strategic significance of the Middle East,” in Ovendale, British Defence Policy since 1945, 20-21.


loss of Singapore and bombing of Darwin in 1942, both Canberra and London recognized
the need to approach their relationship with caution. Instead of operating according to
unofficial agreements, the allies relied on official arrangements and loose associations.
ANZAM met both requirements and reflected the uncertainty of postwar imperial
obligations.

The Joint Project for the development of nuclear weapons provided a more
concrete example of the Anglo-Australian attempt to preserve ties after World War II.
America’s bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to the emergence of nuclear weapons
as the indicator of a modern global power and as a necessity for defense. In the late
1940s, the United States refused to share nuclear information with Britain, especially
information relating to the production of plutonium. As a result, Britain attempted to
create a “Fourth Empire” that could address its concerns by operating through the
Commonwealth. British research for the atomic bomb began in the 1940s in Britain but
moved to Canada to avoid damage from the Blitz during the war. By 1947, Australia
became the primary location for the development of a Commonwealth nuclear
program.\textsuperscript{234} The Joint Project, modeled after the Manhattan Project, allowed for full
disclosure of defense information and reestablished the imperial connection between
Canberra and London.

In addition to providing the testing sites at Woomera, Maralinga, and Monte
Bello, Australian universities also contributed to the project. Australia built the
Australian National University in Canberra for the purpose of conducting nuclear

\textsuperscript{234} Wayne Reynolds, \textit{Australia’s Bid for the Atomic Bomb} (Carlton South, VIC: Melbourne University
Press, 2000), 8, 39, 211; Tunstall, 65.
research. With testing sites and a research institution in place, Australia moved to establish the Snowy Mountain Scheme which provided the necessary power to support the program. The Scheme included “sixteen massive dams, seven power stations (two underground), 50 miles of aqueducts and 87 miles of tunnels cut out of the granite core of the Great Dividing Range.” The combination of natural resources and Canberra’s enthusiasm for the Joint Project allowed for temporary defense cooperation between Australia and Britain, but the foundation of cooperation for the Joint Project cracked before the project’s completion.

In spite of attempts to maintain the imperial connection through ANZAM and the Joint Project, Australian security concerns about Britain’s declining status led to Canberra’s preparation for Britain’s suspected withdrawal from the region. The possible end of the British Empire came as no surprise to the Australians. After World War II, colonial nationalism, European weakness, and the rise of new powers threatened the existence of a formal empire. In 1947 Britain outlined its defense strategy for the next five years through the Three Pillars that emphasized the defense of Great Britain, the protection of sea communications, and the maintenance of Britain’s position in the Middle East. With more attention paid to the preservation of the Middle East than the Far East, Canberra had to develop policies that would address a British void in Southeast Asia.

The early indication of European withdrawal from the region came immediately after World War II with Vietnam and Indonesia declaring their independence and the

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235 Canberra also supported scientific research and development programs through the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, and the University of Melbourne. Reynolds, 50-53.
236 Ibid, 54, 67.
237 Goldsworthy, 24.
United States granting independence to the Philippines in 1946. When India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon’s independence followed in 1947-1948, Canberra recognized the need to address these regional changes. Canberra supported Indian independence but also recognized that independence created a military vacuum in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific. With nationalist movements prevailing over imperialism, Canberra wanted to address defense and security concerns by exerting political influence in the region to avoid neutrality and a swing toward communism.

From the late 1940s into the mid-1950s, Canberra attempted to achieve this goal by encouraging the transfer of British island territories to Australia. Initially, Canberra focused on the transfer of the Cocos and Christmas Islands in the Indian Ocean. R.N. Hamilton of the Department of External Affairs’ South Pacific branch later expanded the list in 1954 to also include Portuguese Timor, Netherlands New Guinea, New Guinea and Nauru, the Solomons, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, and Norfolk Island. These territories could provide economic benefits for Australia, but the real potential of the peripheral territories came in the form of political influence. If these islands in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans fell under Australian influence, they would create a security screen around Australia and aid in its regional defense objectives.

Canberra managed the first wave of decolonization by maintaining defense cooperation with Britain and by formulating a security screen with island territories. The

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240 Since India became part of the British Empire, it provided the majority of British forces in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Tunstall 52; Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket, 95.
241 Consequently, one significant concern that hampered Australian requests for transition involved racial issues. With the White Australia Policy and immigration restrictions still intact, obtaining the island territories may require movement away from racial restrictions.
242 Hamilton to Plimsoll, 15 January 1954, quoted in Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket, 51.
second wave of decolonization in the 1960s coupled with changing British defense policies after the Suez Crisis in 1956 permanently shifted Australian policy toward the United States. In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, Britain’s long-term defense strategy, described within the 1957 Sandys White Paper, called for the reduction of armed forces and the reassertion of the special relationship between the United States and Britain. The Anglo-American relationship suffered during the course of the Suez Crisis, but President Dwight Eisenhower and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan mended their relationship, particularly through nuclear defense cooperation.  

For Canberra, this shift in British policy resulted in the termination of the Joint Project and any hopes of developing an Australian nuclear program. Aircraft factories in Australia began to close in October 1957, Blue Streak testing ended by 1960, and the sites at Woomera and Maralinga closed. In addition to Britain’s nuclear cooperation with the United States, its initial application to become part of the European Economic Community in 1961 marked a clear division of interests between the two Commonwealth countries and forced Canberra to question Britain’s ability to maintain any defense mechanism in Southeast Asia. By the time Britain officially announced its withdrawal from East of Suez after a 1966 Defense Review, Canberra’s defense policies had long been aligned with those of the United States.

Decolonization certainly encouraged closer cooperation with the United States, but Canberra’s objectives for a US-Australian alliance involved more than filling a void.

244 Blue Streak was part of the Joint Project’s testing of delivery vehicles. The Blue Streak was a nuclear missile that would carry a megaton warhead 2,000 miles. Andrews, 161; Reynolds, 147-148, 184.
that British withdrawal created. A strong alliance with the United States looked more attractive in the postwar era not only because of American assistance in World War II, but also because Australia perceived common interests in Southeast Asia. The involvement of both countries in ANZUS and SEATO indicated a common interest in the preservation of a Western-influenced Southeast Asia and the prevention of communist expansion in the region. From the Defense perspective, SEATO and ANZUS marked the “mutuality of interest and high degree of confidence and friendship” between the United States and Australia. As one of the great powers of the postwar period, Washington adopted the “mantle of leadership.” Canberra expected that the United States accepted responsibility for global affairs including permanent deployment of troops in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Australian perceptions of common goals in the region and the status of the United States as a great power encouraged Canberra to further coordinate its defense policies with Washington.

In addition to their common interests, Canberra specifically hoped to secure support from Washington in case of a future regional conflict with Indonesia. At the same time of Sukarno’s policy of Confrontation against Malaysia, Canberra also feared Indonesian expansion into its territory of Papua and New Guinea. The JIC believed that Indonesia wanted to expand into Papua New Guinea because of its proximity to the

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248 Britain held Papua from 1884 and transferred it to Australia from 1902-1906. New Guinea, a former German colony, came under Australian trusteeship in 1914 and continued as such in 1919 according to the mandate system established by the League of Nations. From 1949, the two territories became legally united as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, but Australia remained the administrator of the territory. For a more in-depth analysis of this relationship, see W. J. Hudson, ed., Australia and Papua New Guinea (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1971).
recent Indonesian acquisition of West Irian (West New Guinea). Following its anti-colonial policies, Indonesia could undermine local confidence in Australian authority through propaganda. Indonesian success correlated with a direct threat to the Australian mainland and would require a military response in line with the forward defense strategy. Because Australian personnel were already present in South Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia by 1963, Canberra needed assurance from the United States for support in the event of an Indonesian-induced conflict in Papua New Guinea. They received a confirmation from Washington that, in the event of Indonesian aggression, Papua New Guinea qualified for American support according to the ANZUS treaty. Close coordination with the United States enhanced the common interests of both parties and provided assurance for Canberra in the event of Indonesian aggression.

As much as Canberra may have wanted to establish its foreign policy independent of a larger power such as Britain or the United States, its isolation in the Pacific and comparably low population prevented such a goal. However, in their postwar Southeast Asian involvement, few could accuse Canberra of blindly following the will of a greater power, whether Britain or the United States, in lieu of its own security interests. As Paltridge explained “[we] need allies with whom we can co-operate for defence and on issues of major concern to the Western World. We retain complete freedom to

250 Menzies emphasized in 1963 that Papua and New Guinea needed to be defended as part of the Australian mainland. “Foreign Affairs – Vietnam,” M2624, Box 8 Item 6, NAA. Accessed 28 September 2008; Edwards, Crises and Commitments, 272, 328, 331.
251 Consequently, the multiple crises in Southeast forced Canberra to consider numerous defense measures to ensure the security of Australia. The most infamous measure consisted of conscription for overseas service. To understand the specific situation that Canberra faced in Southeast Asia during the early 1960s, see “Study of services - Manpower deficiencies,” A1945, 164/1/6, NAA. Accessed 3 November 2008.
express…our own viewpoint in relation to such causes.” Paltridge viewed this ability to discern between national interests and the interests of an alliance as a display of Australia’s independent foreign policy.

Emergency, Confrontation, and South Vietnam all tested Australia’s status as a middle power with “great and powerful friends.” Each situation warranted a response, but Canberra consistently reacted with its own abilities and interests in mind instead of simply conceding to the larger power. In the case of Malaya, Canberra waited to contribute troops until they had the ability to commit to the long-term security of Malaya. During Confrontation, Canberra rejected some of Britain’s requests because Canberra wanted to avoid the overextension of its military personnel. In South Vietnam, as well, Canberra committed advisors and troops according to their belief in the importance of South Vietnam for the stability of Southeast Asia. Australia’s response to the regional events of the 1960s proved the consistency of its postwar policies toward Southeast Asia. While Australia’s relatively small military contributions had little effect on the final outcome of the regional conflicts, the response proved Canberra’s willingness to defend and protect the integrity of democratic areas in Southeast Asia. Whether they adhered to the domino theory or strategy of forward defense, Australia’s postwar strategy reflected Canberra’s attempts to develop independently of Britain and the United States while still maintaining the support of both as a security blanket.

CONCLUSION

Australia always had an unusual position in the Pacific as a Western nation in a predominantly Asian region. As a result, Canberra’s defense priorities often differed from those of other Western powers, namely Great Britain. At the end of World War II, officials in Canberra faced an important decision. Should they continue to link the nation’s security with the traditional British system that failed during the war or should they prioritize the security of Australia through the development of independent policies? Canberra’s choice of the latter approach allowed for the development of a clear postwar strategy that linked Australia’s long-term security with regional stability. Unfortunately, two significant forces challenged Canberra’s transition. The Chinese Communist Party’s victory in 1949 led to the expectation of communist expansion throughout Southeast Asia, and the prospect of British withdrawal from east of Suez created a vacuum that Australia had to fill.

As a result, cooperation between Canberra and Washington increased, which led many historians to speculate that this relationship clouded Australia’s judgment about entering the Vietnam War. These arguments based on security, the insurance policy, and strategy provided possible explanations for Australia’s commitment to Vietnam, but they oversimplified a complex situation. If Australia’s alliances forced the country into the war, historians should also consider why other SEATO members and Cold War allies declined assistance. If Canberra joined with the intent of securing an insurance policy from the United States, they never received an official guarantee for future American assistance in Southeast Asia. Finally, if Australians joined for the sole purpose of
regional security through the forward defense strategy, Indonesia seemed to be a more significant threat than Vietnam.

The decision to send advisors, and later a battalion, to participate in the Vietnam War should not be viewed as an isolated event in Australian military history, but as a continuation of Canberra’s regional aims. The main policy focused on the importance of collective security. Collective security agreements were valuable, but each had a different value. Doc Evatt’s Canberra Pact served as a reminder that the needs and concerns of smaller powers were just as relevant as those of larger powers, while the ANZAM arrangement allowed Australia to maintain a loose defense agreement with Britain. Likewise, the ANZUS treaty secured an official alliance with Washington that continues today, while SEATO created an organization that unified Western and Asian powers but failed to uniformly address communist aggression.

The collective security organizations that Canberra joined after World War II allowed for the development of a consistent Australian response to Southeast Asian conflicts. The regional conflicts that occurred in the two decades after the war confirmed Australia’s need to address regional security issues. They exemplified the instability often caused by nationalist movements and indicated that tension in Southeast Asia threatened Australian security. The Laotian crises, Malayan Emergency, Indonesian Confrontation, and the Vietnam War all garnered a military response from Australia. The withdrawal of France after the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 prompted Australia to sign the Manila Treaty and become a member of SEATO. To uphold the tenets of the treaty and protect the Protocol states, Australia supported the American military response to the coup in Laos in the 1960s, even when other SEATO members failed to act.
Canberra’s response to Emergency in Malaya and Confrontation in Indonesia proved to be more involved than its support in Laos. During the twelve year commitment to Malaya, Australian troops learned valuable skills about fighting in the jungle that became useful during the Vietnam War. Canberra many not have fulfilled all of Britain’s requests for support as Britain hoped, but they did operate according to the ANZAM arrangement. Their gradual addition of Australian aircraft and supplies during the first years of the conflict culminated in the deployment of ground troops in 1955. The troops, in particular, pushed the guerillas out of Malaya and protected the region through 1960. However, the stability achieved during Emergency quickly faded when Sukarno declared his policy of Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1963.

With the AATTV already deployed in South Vietnam on a training mission in 1962, Canberra had to consider carefully its approach to Confrontation. The experiences of the AATTV proved the increasing danger that the Vietcong posed for stability in Vietnam, and officials began to consider a longer commitment to Vietnam as a result. Yet, Sukarno’s aggressive campaign against Malaysia posed a more immediate threat. Peking’s influence on the PKI could lead to a long-term partnership in Indonesia, and Sukarno’s expansionist interests in Papua New Guinea threatened Australia’s position there. As a result, Canberra should address Confrontation before committing to war in Vietnam according to the forward defense strategy. Yet, Vietnam became the priority.

To policymakers in Canberra, the situation in Vietnam reiterated the importance of the domino theory. Since the First Indochina War, Canberra understood that Vietnam was the gate to Southeast Asia and that they needed to support the democratic government in South Vietnam to keep the dominoes from falling. In order to prevent
communist expansion, they needed to contain China and keep communism as far away from Australian borders as possible. Peking may have influenced the PKI, but it had a stronger hold in mainland Southeast Asia. Support from the United States in Indonesia may have helped to end Confrontation and allowed for more Australian support in Vietnam, but ultimately it was Canberra, not Washington or London, that dictated Australian action in Southeast Asia. Between the increasingly violent attacks by the Vietcong in South Vietnam, the request for third country assistance from the United States, the official request from the South Vietnamese government, and the threat to regional security, Canberra decided to commit a battalion to its first military conflict without British support in 1965.

After the Japanese attack on Darwin, Australian security became Canberra’s priority. To establish security at home, Canberra wanted to preserve regional security in Southeast Asia. If they could prevent the expansion of Peking’s influence in the region and rebound from British withdrawal from Pacific bases, Australia would be more likely to prevent an attack at home. As a middle power, Canberra recognized that the sizeable threat in Southeast Asia required assistance from a larger power whose interests, whether regional or global, overlapped with its own. Doc Evatt and Percy Spender’s early refusal to be ignored by larger powers set the tone for the development of later Australian policy. In the early postwar years, the relationship with London produced a degree of cooperation through ANZAM and the Joint Project, but it was Canberra’s partnership with the United States that proved to be more consistent with Australia’s own postwar strategy in the region. With the changing international system after World War II, Canberra responded by developing a postwar strategy based on collective security
agreements, prioritizing Australian defense over the Commonwealth commitment, and maintaining a strong relationship with a larger power. In the end, Canberra’s commitment to the Vietnam War reflected these objectives and allowed Australia to function as a middle power in the Pacific without becoming fully dependent on a larger power.
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APPENDIX A: ANZUS TREATY

Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand and United States of America

Signed on 1 September 1951

The Parties to this Treaty,

Reaffirming their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all Governments, and desiring to strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific Area,

Noting that the United States already has arrangements pursuant to which its armed forces are stationed in the Philippines, and has armed forces and administrative responsibilities in the Ryukyus, and upon the coming into force of the Japanese Peace Treaty may also station armed forces in and about Japan to assist in the preservation of peace and security in the Japan Area.

Recognizing that Australia and New Zealand as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations have military obligations outside as well as within the Pacific Area.

Desiring to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that any of them stand alone in the Pacific Area, and

Desiring further to coordinate their efforts for collective defence for the preservation of peace and security pending the development of a more comprehensive system of regional security in the Pacific Area,

Therefore declare and agree as follows:

ARTICLE I

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

ARTICLE II

In order more effectively to achieve the objective of this Treaty the Parties separately and jointly by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.
ARTICLE III
The Parties will consult together whenever in the opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific.

ARTICLE IV
Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

ARTICLE V
For the purpose of Article IV, an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.

ARTICLE VI
This Treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

ARTICLE VII
The Parties hereby establish a Council, consisting of their Foreign Ministers or their Deputies, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council should be so organized as to be able to meet at any time.

ARTICLE VIII
Pending the development of a more comprehensive system of regional security in the Pacific Area and the development by the United Nations of more effective means to maintain international peace and security, the Council, established by Article VII, is authorized to maintain a consultative relationship with States, Regional Organizations, Associations of States or other authorities in the Pacific Area in a position to further the purposes of this Treaty and the security of that Area.

ARTICLE IX
This Treaty shall be ratified by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible with the Government of Australia, which will notify each of the other signatories
of such deposit. The Treaty shall enter into force as soon as the ratifications of the
signatories have been deposited.

**ARTICLE X**

This Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely. Any Party may cease to be a
member of the Council established by Article VII one year after notice has been given to
the Government of Australia, which will inform the Governments of the other Parties of
the deposit of such notice.

**ARTICLE XI**

This Treaty in the English language shall be deposited in the Archives of the
Government of Australia. Duly certified copies thereof will be transmitted by that
Government to the Governments of each of the other signatories.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty.

DONE at the city of San Francisco this first day of September 1951.\(^{254}\)

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APPENDIX B: MANILA PACT

South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty

(Manila Pact)

The Parties to this Treaty,

Recognizing the sovereign equality of all the Parties,

Reiterating their faith in the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments,

Reaffirming that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, they uphold the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and declaring that they will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to promote self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire it and are able to undertake its responsibilities,

Desiring to strengthen the fabric of peace and freedom and to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, and to promote the economic well-being and development of all peoples in the Treaty Area,

Intending to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that any potential aggressor will appreciate that the Parties stand together in the area, and,

Desiring further to coordinate their efforts for collective defence for the preservation of peace and security,

Therefore agree as follows:

ARTICLE I

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

ARTICLE II

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to
prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

ARTICLE III

The Parties undertake to strengthen their free institutions and to cooperate with one another in the further development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed both to promote economic progress and social well-being and to further the individual and collective efforts of governments toward these ends.

ARTICLE IV

1. Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the Treaty Area against any of the parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

2. If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the Treaty Area or of any other State or territory to which the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defence.

3. It is understood that no action on the territory of any State designated by unanimous agreement under paragraph 1 of this Article or on any territory so designated shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.

ARTICLE V

The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall provide for consultation with regard to military and any other planning as the situation obtaining in the Treaty Area may from time to time require. The Council shall be so organized as to be able to meet at any time.

ARTICLE VI

This Treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of any of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the
responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Each Party declares that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any other of the Parties or any third party is in conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and undertakes not to enter into any international engagement in conflict with this Treaty.

ARTICLE VII

Any other State in a position to further the objectives of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the area may, by unanimous agreement of the Parties, be invited to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines shall inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

ARTICLE VIII

As used in this Treaty, the “Treaty Area” is the general area of South-East Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian Parties, and the general area of the South-West Pacific not including the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude. The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, amend this Article to include within the Treaty Area the territory of any State acceding to this Treaty in accordance with Article VII or otherwise to change the Treaty Area.

ARTICLE IX

1. This Treaty shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Duly certified copies thereof shall be transmitted by that Government to the other signatories.

2. The Treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall notify all of the other signatories of such deposit.

3. The Treaty shall enter into force between the States which have ratified it as soon as the instruments of ratification of a majority of the signatories shall have been deposited, and shall come into effect with respect to each other State on the date of the deposit of its instrument of ratification.

ARTICLE X

This Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely, but any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the
Republic of the Philippines, which shall inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation.

ARTICLE XI

The English text of this Treaty is binding on the Parties, but when the Parties have agreed to the French text thereof and have so notified the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the French text shall be equally authentic and binding on the Parties.

**Understanding of the United States of America**

The United States of America in executing the present Treaty does so with the understanding that its recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack and its agreement with reference thereto in Article IV, paragraph 1, apply only to Communist aggression but affirms that in the event of other aggression or armed attack it will consult under the provisions of Article IV paragraph 2.

In witness whereof the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

Protocol to the South-East Asia collective Defence Treaty

Designation of states and territory as to which provisions of Article IV and Article II are to be applicable:

The Parties to the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam.

The Parties further agree that the above mentioned states and territory shall be eligible in respect of the economic measures contemplated by Article III.

This Protocol shall enter into force simultaneously with the coming into force of the Treaty.

In witness whereof, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Protocol to the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.\(^{255}\)

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\(^{255}\) This document was reproduced from SEATO, “Manila Pact and Pacific Charter” (SEATO Publication, 1965).
APPENDIX C: RADFORD/COLLINS AGREEMENT
INDIAN AND PACIFIC OCEAN DIVISIONS