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# Introduction: Disharmonious Allies

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In August 1952, delegates from Australia, New Zealand and the United States met in Honolulu for the first formal round of discussions over how the ANZUS Treaty—a defence alliance signed by these countries in September 1951—would work in practice. The treaty required each signatory to “respond to the common danger” in the Pacific, and these powers indeed saw mutual dangers at the time. The Korean War had been raging for over a year and showed no immediate signs of ending. A Communist government in China appeared to have aggressive intentions. Local revolutionaries in Indochina and Malaya had demanded sovereignty from their colonial governments. Framed in this light, a closer strategic relationship between the ANZUS powers should have been cooperative and rather straightforward.

This was certainly not the case. In advance of Council meetings in Hawaii, Percy Spender—architect of the ANZUS Treaty and then Australian Ambassador in Washington—accused the Pentagon of purposely “diminishing the importance” of the alliance to avoid serious consultation with Australia. According to Spender, even Australia’s former enemies—Germany, Italy and Japan—had “the opportunity of consultation on vital matters in a manner which so far has been denied to Australia.”<sup>1</sup> Without a doubt, refusing to consult seriously with the Australians was an American objective. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had advised Secretary of State Dean Acheson that joint planning with Australia and New Zealand would mean “serious and far-reaching disadvantages to the present and projected

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1 Spender to Casey, 18 March 1952, Spender Papers, Box 1, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA).

state of United States planning for a global war.”<sup>2</sup> This position aggravated the Australians, yet the New Zealanders did not share this view, despite their similar geopolitical circumstances. As one adviser told Head of the New Zealand External Affairs Department Alister McIntosh, New Zealand “did not share the long-standing Australian objective of infiltration into the world’s policy-making hierarchy” after claiming that the Australian delegation almost demanded this outright at Honolulu.<sup>3</sup> McIntosh certainly sympathised with this opinion, and even conceded later that New Zealand “never wanted the damn Pacific Pact in the first place.”<sup>4</sup>

How did three allied powers—which shared a common language, similar historical roots and democratic liberal institutions—leave Hawaii with such competing views about the practicality of an alliance signed less than one year earlier? To some extent, disagreements between the ANZUS powers were symbolic of the challenging and divisive time in which the treaty was conceived. While in broad terms these countries shared similar political objectives in combating Soviet-led Communism during the early stages of the Cold War, the underlying purpose of this treaty was unique for each signatory and often created complex diplomatic tensions in the trilateral relationship. Australia, undeniably the most enthusiastic treaty member, viewed ANZUS as a means to rebalance its traditional ties with Britain by fostering a closer strategic relationship with the United States. The treaty limited the likelihood of future existential threats such as those posed by Japan in late 1942, and it provided an additional avenue for Canberra to voice its concerns about world affairs.

Across the Tasman Sea, policymakers in New Zealand were more reluctant to forge a closer political relationship with the United States if it meant damaging relations with Britain. For Wellington, one of the major benefits of ANZUS was that it simply allowed New Zealand to continue its military commitments to the British cause in the Middle East. After all, as Jatinder Mann pointed out about the post-war years,

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2 Marshall to Acheson, 16 January 1951, Foreign Relations of the United States Series (hereafter FRUS) 1951 Vol. VI, 141.

3 Memorandum for McIntosh, 25 July 1952, Archives NZ, EA, 111/3/3/1 Part 8.

4 McIntosh to Corner, 3 October 1952, in Ian McGibbon ed., *Unofficial Channels: Letters Between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner, 1946-1966* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999), 106.

New Zealand “very much identified itself as a British country and an integral part of a wider British World, which had the UK at its heart.”<sup>5</sup> In contradistinction to Australian and New Zealand views on an alliance, the United States refused to consider an ANZUS-style arrangement until the outbreak of the Korean War necessitated trans-Tasman support for a Japanese Peace Treaty. The United States did not want an explicit military commitment to defend critical Australian and New Zealand interests. US eyes were primarily fixated on the situations in Europe and Asia, and did not give much serious thought to strategic issues in the South Pacific. That said, the State Department did recognise the growing importance of the US alliance with Australia and New Zealand as the Cold War began to take shape, especially because they shared similar ways of life and political ideologies.<sup>6</sup>

Looking more broadly, the development of this trilateral relationship from the end of World War II to the 1956 Suez Crisis—two monumental historical events that bookend a period of great change for these countries—provides an interesting and unique case study in alliance diplomacy. Much like the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 which formalised the collective defence of Western Europe against the Soviet bloc, the ANZUS powers faced significant disunity when responding to mutual defence issues despite similar geopolitical interests in the Pacific. During these years, close Australian and New Zealand ties to Britain caused significant friction in their respective relationships with the United States. Despite Australian and New Zealand policymakers accepting that their post-war security relied upon the United States due to the fleeting nature of the British presence in the Asia-Pacific region, Canberra and Wellington maintained close strategic ties with London. As a result, when British decisions clashed with US policies, the Tasman countries were forced to choose between aligning their policies with one or the other of its two most important allies.

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5 Jatinder Mann, “The End of the British World and the Redefinition of Citizenship in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1950s–1970s”, *National Identities* (2017), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2017.1369019>

6 Thomas K. Robb and David James Gill, “The ANZUS Treaty during the Cold War: A Reinterpretation of US Diplomacy in the Southwest Pacific”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 17, no. 4 (2015), 109-157, [https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS\\_a\\_00599](https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00599)

Even then, policymakers in Canberra and Wellington did not always agree on how closely to align their respective policies with the United States and Britain. This was due in some measure to mutual distrust, but it also stemmed from trans-Tasman differences over Britain's proper role in the post-war Pacific and Middle East. Canberra continued to cooperate and consult closely with London, yet a global power shift in favour of the US caused Australian diplomats to pursue actively a much closer relationship with the United States to meet their own security requirements. New Zealand also recognised the need for US protection but remained sceptical of American intentions and aimed, wherever possible, to align their policies with Britain to counteract US dominance. In short, while both countries maintained close British ties, active Australian efforts to pursue closer US-Australian strategic cooperation—often at the expense of cooperation within the British Commonwealth—caused significant discord in the trans-Tasman relationship.

Until at least the mid-1950s, the United States also proved unwilling to consult seriously with Australia and New Zealand. This lack of consultation created significant discord in the relationship. In the early years of the Truman Administration, Washington gave little consideration to Australia's and New Zealand's roles in the US containment strategy. Only after the Cold War escalated in Asia during the late 1940s and early 1950s did the United States give far more attention to developments in Asia and the Pacific, and in so doing, began to consider new ways in which to combat the spread of Communism in this region. This in turn drew Washington's gaze to Australian and New Zealand shores. ANZUS became possible because of this shared desire to respond to mutual security threats in the Pacific theatre, even if the three powers disagreed over many strategic issues. As the 1950s progressed, the alliance even offered Australia and New Zealand an unprecedented—albeit still minor—role in global strategy.

Since ANZUS was forged at such a momentous time in world history and subsequently played a significant role in the development of Australian and New Zealand foreign policies, historians have unsurprisingly devoted considerable attention to its conclusion. Early studies were especially critical of the Australian relationship with the United States. This was epitomised by Alan Renouf, former Head of

the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, who characterised the country's general approach to foreign policy as childish because of its marked inclination to stay with "mother" Britain and then the United States.<sup>7</sup> As more archival records became available, however, it became clear that these views were simplistic and did not properly reflect that the post-war period was one in which Australian foreign policy actually "gained considerable maturity, and its capacity to act independently grew with the professionalism of its diplomatic service."<sup>8</sup> Recent scholarly developments on Australian foreign policy during the early Cold War highlight this evolution, especially in analyses of individual diplomats and of the complexities that bedevilled the formulation of policy by the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Defence.<sup>9</sup>

Another theme that presented itself was the ongoing struggle Australia faced in managing its relationships with Britain and the United States while simultaneously building its own independent role in foreign affairs. Christine de Matos aptly described this challenge as a "juggling act", which became a common feature of the Australian approach to international crises in the 1940s and 1950s amidst a growing rift in Anglo-American relations.<sup>10</sup> Given Britain's complete inability to protect Australian interests during World War II and afterwards, a post-war strategic shift toward the United States was logical and should have been quite straightforward. Instead, Canberra still maintained a close

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7 Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), 3-14. See also Joseph Camilleri, *Australian-American Relations: The Web of Dependence* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980).

8 Joan Beaumont, "Making Australian Foreign Policy, 1941-1969", in Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe, with Gary Woodard eds. *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 3.

9 Examples include Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2006); David Lowe, *Australia Between Empires: The Life of Percy Spender* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010); Cotton, James. "R.G. Casey and Australian International Thought: Empire, Nation, Community", *The International History Review* 33, no. 1 (2011), 95-113, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2011.555380>; Arthur Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-Up View, 1950-1980*, Peter Edwards ed. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008), <http://press.anu.edu.au/?p=101541>

10 Christine de Matos, "Diplomacy Interrupted? Macmahon Ball, Evatt and Labor's Policies in Occupied Japan", *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 2 (2006), 193, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2005.00414.x>

relationship with London, and, as a result, often had to walk a tightrope in times of crisis by balancing its relationships with its two great and powerful allies.

An unwillingness to abandon close ties to Britain, then, speaks to something much deeper in the relationship. Australians still saw themselves as inherently British-Australians, so much so that when Prime Minister Ben Chifley visited London in 1948 to discuss a Western Union against the Soviet threat in Europe, he argued that only the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand “fully represented the British tradition” despite British insistence on including Southeast Asian countries as part of Commonwealth strategy in the Middle East. This rather embarrassing suggestion, as Neville Meaney argued, points out that being British “meant more to the Australian prime minister than the British themselves.”<sup>11</sup> These types of views still persisted through the 1950s, especially as then Prime Minister Robert Menzies—who had once described himself as British to the “bootheels”—strongly supported British actions in the Suez Canal region despite widespread international condemnation, including from the United States.<sup>12</sup> Australia’s alliance with the US was indeed important and necessary, yet inclinations to support the British line even after the conclusion of ANZUS demonstrates the strength of pro-British sentiments in Australia as well as the complexities that existed in these relationships.

New Zealand historians have similarly focused on Commonwealth relations, but have also stressed the country’s small-power status as a key feature of New Zealand’s increasingly the country’s growing independent outlook. As W. David McIntyre claimed, “New Zealand began to assert an independent voice in international affairs and not simply in empire affairs” in the post-war years, despite the United States acting as a “more aloof and unpredictable ally” than Britain.<sup>13</sup> To

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11 Neville Meaney, “Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography”, *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001), 80-81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610108596148>

12 Stuart Ward, “The ‘New Nationalism’ in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World”, in Joan Beaumont and Matthew Jordan eds., *Australia and the World: A Festschrift to Neville Meaney* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2013), 191.

13 W. David McIntyre, “From Dual Dependency to Nuclear Free”, in Geoffrey Rice, W. H. Oliver and B. R. Williams eds., *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne:

be sure, however, Wellington's view of its role in the post-war world was fundamentally shaped by its place in the British Commonwealth. This was because, in the words of Frank Corner, the New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner in London, "New Zealand at heart [had] always been content with a 'colonial' position and had readily accepted the leadership of Britain." Similarly, he suggested in 1954 that "if New Zealand entered the American orbit [...] this would be a great pity."<sup>14</sup> Wellington, in short, wanted US protection but was reluctant to align itself too closely with Washington in case it damaged relations with London. As Australian National University historian T. B. Millar first concluded somewhat derisively in 1968, New Zealand was more inclined to "cling closer than did Australia to the skirts of Mother England." As part of its clinging, "New Zealand have thus from the beginning looked at the world through different eyes, from an increasingly different viewpoint than Australians, and have seen an increasingly different world."<sup>15</sup>

American historians have already extensively analysed almost all aspects of US foreign policy under the first two post-war US Presidents, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. These studies focus on the attribution of responsibility for the development of the Cold War, the emergence and implementation of global containment strategies, examinations of key individuals and their impact on policymaking decisions, and explanations of the ways in which post-war US foreign policy shaped the international system for the duration of the twentieth century and beyond.<sup>16</sup> This is well-trodden ground; this book's focus

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Oxford University Press, 1992), 520-527. Notable works on NZ foreign policy during this period include: Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World Since 1935* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993); Ann Trotter, *New Zealand and Japan, 1945-1952: The Occupation and the Peace Treaty* (London: The Athlone Press, 1990); Malcolm Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire: New Zealand's Involvement in Middle East Defence and the Suez Crisis, 1947-1957* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994).

- 14 Frank Corner to Joseph Saville Garner, 27 July 1954, as quoted in James Waite, "Contesting 'the Right of Decision': New Zealand, the Commonwealth, and the New Look", *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 5 (2006), 893, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2006.00583.x>
- 15 T.B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968), 182.
- 16 More recent examples include Wilson Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin, 2011); William McClenahan, *Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy* (Baltimore: John



lies instead with the roles Australia and New Zealand played in these US strategic and policy decisions. Examinations of US relations with small overlooked countries, such as the Pacific Dominions, offer a new perspective on how Washington managed its alliances as part of the broader East-West struggle. To this end, Tony Smith used the term “pericentrism” to describe the role of junior members of Cold War alliances who “tried to block, moderate, and end the epic contest” but also “played a key role in expanding, intensifying, and prolonging the struggle between East and West.”<sup>17</sup> Fitting neatly within Smith’s “pericentric” framework, Australia’s and New Zealand’s small but not insignificant role in influencing US foreign policy during the early Cold War provides a unique insight into such a significant period of international history.

There were certainly many important dimensions to this early trilateral relationship. Some key examples include the impact of these countries’ domestic policies on international affairs, increasing trade imports and exports, establishing closer cross-cultural ties, and contrasting ways of approaching the challenges presented by Communism and the post-war international order. This book touches on some of these considerations as they became relevant to the development of ANZUS, yet its principal focus is on the key strategic and foreign policy issues that impacted high-level diplomatic relations. As a secondary theme, it also explores the roles of key individuals who shaped the nature of the relationship. Notable among them are Australian External Affairs Ministers Herbert Evatt, Percy Spender and Richard Casey; New Zealand’s Head of External Affairs Alister McIntosh and Minister in the United States Carl Berendsen; Chief US negotiator for ANZUS and US Secretary of State during the Eisenhower Administration John Foster Dulles; and to a lesser extent British prime ministers Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden.

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Hopkins University Press, 2011); Hannah Gurman, *The Dissent Papers: The Voices of Diplomats in the Cold War and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). For a recent historiographical examination of these issues, see Frank Costigliola and Michael Hogan eds. *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, 2nd edn. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

17 Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War”, *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (2000), 567–591, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0145-2096.00237>

The book is split into two parts. Part One explores the post-war origins of the ANZUS alliance between 1945 and 1951. In this section, Chapters One and Two analyse mutual security issues such as defence planning after the end of World War II, contestation over control of key Pacific island bases, the Japanese occupation, and trans-Tasman involvement in British defence strategies and nuclear development. By early 1949, trilateral views on these issues left the three countries at odds and with no solid foundation for closer cooperation through a regional defence arrangement. Diplomatic developments during these years also reveal that Australia and New Zealand were not yet prepared to abandon their close political ties to Britain in the face of US dominance.

Despite a somewhat acrimonious start to the post-war relationship, Chapter Three considers some of the international developments in the late 1940s that made concluding a formal defence treaty more viable. These include the outbreak of the Korean War, the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the election of new conservative governments in Canberra and Wellington. Following on from these developments, Chapter Four details negotiations over the ANZUS Treaty and highlights the contrasting types of commitment Australia, New Zealand and the United States were aiming to conclude with one another as well as the underlying reasons for these choices. Again, trans-Tasman ties to Britain surfaced as a key factor that complicated closer relations with the United States, especially as policymakers in London saw the conclusion of ANZUS as a significant blow to its international prestige and sought to undermine the treaty's practicality and usefulness.

Part Two explores how ANZUS worked when it came into force between 1952 and 1956. Chapter Five touches on a range of post-treaty issues, including contrasting views surrounding the treaty's actual scope and machinery, dealing with the question of British membership, the development of separate discussions for the joint defence of Southeast Asia, and uncertainty surrounding future of ANZUS after the election of Dwight Eisenhower in January 1953. These initial post-treaty developments provide no clear evidence of an alliance that was practical or even useful for serious consultation or to respond to issues of mutual concern in the Pacific theatre. Then, Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight explore trilateral responses to three international crises: the

1954 Dien Bien Phu Crisis in Indochina, the 1954-55 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis in the Taiwan Straits, and the 1956 Suez Crisis. These case studies provide snapshots of the ways ANZUS worked in practice, as well as illuminating the difficulties that threatened the efforts of the ANZUS powers to agree on a united response. These chapters also highlight that the usefulness of ANZUS often hinged upon British participation when responding to mutual dangers in the Pacific.

Each chapter seeks to answer several pertinent questions about the nature of the early post-war relationship. How did US global leadership impact its post-war relationships with Australia and New Zealand? How and why did Britain complicate relations between the ANZUS partners? Despite shared geopolitical interests, why did Australia and New Zealand disagree so often on fundamental strategic and diplomatic issues? Why did Australia, New Zealand and the United States have different views toward ANZUS but still commit to its conclusion? Was ANZUS ultimately useful in practice? How did the trilateral relationship develop over the first decade of the Cold War period, and what were the factors and who were the individual policymakers that shaped these changes? By including the views, policies and interests of all three countries in its pages, this book addresses these questions about the ANZUS relationship during the early Cold War.