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# Region and regionalism in the immediate postwar period

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) Government of Prime Minister Ben Chifley (1945–49) is credited with founding the internationalist, ‘middle power’ tradition in Australian foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Internationalism is particularly associated with the role of External Affairs Minister HV (Doc) Evatt (1941–49) in the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. The internationalist treatment of the history of Australia’s foreign policy was developed during the Hawke (1983–91) and Keating (1991–96) period of ALP Government, along with the discourse of Australia’s ‘engagement’ with Asia.

Internationalism is typically contrasted with the realist, power and interest-based ‘great and powerful friends’ tradition characteristic of Coalition governments.<sup>2</sup> It emphasises an outward-looking, activist foreign policy agenda, with cooperative policies grounded in ‘Australia’s identity as an *independent*, medium-sized power located *in* the Asia-Pacific region’.<sup>3</sup> In recent decades, internationalism has privileged

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1 See David Lee and Christopher Waters, eds, *Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997); Allan Patience, *Australian Foreign Policy in Asia: Middle Power or Awkward Partner?* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 53–54, 59–61.

2 See Josh Frydenberg, John Langmore and Melissa Parke, ‘The Liberal/Labor Tradition’, in *Australian Foreign Policy: Controversies and Debates*, ed. Daniel Baldino, Andrew Carr and Anthony J Langlois (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014), 19–38; Michael Wesley and Tony Warren, ‘Wild Colonial Plays? Currents of Thought in Australian Foreign Policy’, *Australian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 1 (2000): 9–26; and Owen Harries, *Benign or Imperial? Reflections on American Hegemony* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2004), 78–83.

3 Meg Gurry, ‘Identifying Australia’s “Region”: From Evatt to Evans’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (1995): 17, emphasis in original.

multilateralism and Australia being a ‘good international citizen’ through constructive participation in international organisations and a rules-based international order. By contrast, the conservative tradition is held to focus on bilateralism and alliance diplomacy with the United States (US) as furthering Australia’s national interests. The dependence and fear of abandonment commonly associated with the ‘great and powerful friends’ tradition has been the subject of sustained criticism since the Vietnam War era.<sup>4</sup> In my view, the internationalist treatment of the history of Australia’s foreign policy has tended to overemphasise intentions rather than consequences. For example, initiatives undertaken by ALP governments, such as Whitlam’s ‘representative’, ‘reformist and optimistic’ 1973 proposal for a ‘new regional community’, have been taken as evidence of genuine engagement with Asia,<sup>5</sup> even when they failed in practice, because of their ‘better’ motivations and vision for Australia as compared with Coalition governments at the height of the Cold War.

This chapter re-examines the nature and drivers of Australian foreign policymaking, and conceptions of Australia’s place in the world, in the final turbulent years of the Pacific War (1941–45) and in its immediate aftermath. It shows that during the late 1940s, the ALP Government was ambivalent about whether Australia was, or should be, a part of Asia. The newly independent countries of the region, particularly India, were quite accommodating toward Australia, but Canberra’s reciprocation was only half-hearted. For example, the Chifley Government never once sent a minister to an Asian regional meeting, preferring instead to send observers or departmental officials. It was only under the Menzies Coalition Government (1949–66) that Cabinet ministers represented the Australian Government in Asia.

On the surface, the Australian Government’s ambivalence toward Asia is partly accounted for by Evatt’s preoccupation in the postwar years with the UN and his role as President of the General Assembly from 1948 to 1949. The ALP’s steadfast privileging of the UN and its agencies, and resistance to any perceived duplication of its functions, was a barrier in the 1940s to Australian membership of any specifically Asian regional organisation. Dedication to the UN organisation was, however, tempered by British

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4 On the theme of abandonment and dependence, see Allan Gyngell, *Fear of Abandonment: Australia in the World Since 1942* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2017); Bruce Grant, *The Crisis of Loyalty: A Study of Australian Foreign Policy* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1972); and Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).

5 Gurry, ‘Identifying Australia’s “Region”’, 25–26.

Empire loyalty, uncertainty about Washington's postwar intentions in the Western Pacific, and concerns for stability in Australia's 'near north'. In the immediate postwar years, Australia's commitment to Indonesian independence was as much about security and stability in its region, and adherence to UN principles of dispute resolution, as it was motivated by solidarity for the Indonesian nationalist cause. For these reasons, Canberra also sought a British Commonwealth sphere of influence across the Malayan archipelago and islands of the Southwest Pacific in which Australia would predominate. This was believed to be consistent with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter on regional arrangements. The coming of the Cold War to East Asia with the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949 also accounts for the greater emphasis given to Asia by the subsequent Menzies Government. It is only after 1950 that Canberra unequivocally sees Australia as geographically and politically a part of Southeast Asia.

At a deeper level, this chapter shows that two perspectives deriving from the shock of the Pacific War permeate the Chifley Government's foreign and security policy outlook. The first is a backward-looking preoccupation in preventing the last war with Japan, or a similar pattern of invasion threat from Asia. Deriving from this, the second is a dogmatic unwillingness, particularly on the part of Evatt, to see the world from a standpoint other than that of Australia's. These perspectives informed the Chifley Government's ambivalence toward the Asian region and its failure to recognise the emerging Cold War dynamics of the late 1940s. Rather than Australia seeking to become part of the Asian region, the Chifley Government's security outlook brought insular Southeast Asia into what it considered to be *Australia's region*.

This was supported intellectually by a paternalistic vision of Australia carrying a special responsibility for this area on behalf of the British Commonwealth and Western civilisation. These dynamics provided the conditions for the Australia–New Zealand–Malaya (ANZAM) Agreement, the Commonwealth defence planning arrangement in Southeast Asia and Australia's Cold War policy of forward defence in the decolonising countries of the region. The origins of ANZAM date from 1946 and Australia assumed primary responsibility for defence planning in the area in 1950.<sup>6</sup> Under the Menzies Government, Australian military deployments

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6 Alastair Cooper, 'At the Crossroads: Anglo–Australian Naval Relations, 1945–1971', *The Journal of Military History* 58, no. 4 (1994): 700–01.

to the Malayan Emergency (1955) and Indonesian Confrontation (1965) were undertaken under ANZAM auspices as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR).

From the Asian side, the ALP's tentative engagement during the 1940s was seriously qualified by its strong postwar commitment to the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* or 'White Australia' policy.<sup>7</sup> Neighbouring countries particularly resented the rigid and insensitive application of the policy in the late 1940s by ALP Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell.<sup>8</sup> Under the subsequent Coalition Government, the bipartisan policy was administered in a lower key and more discretionary manner.<sup>9</sup> The White Australia policy ceased to be a significant barrier to Australia's regional integration as intensifying Cold War pressures from 1950 drove the non-communist countries of East Asia into much closer political and security relationships. However, it remained a major stumbling block in Australia's generally poor relations with India in the 1950s.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter first examines the nature of Australian foreign policymaking in the immediate postwar period, with a particular focus on Evatt as principal decision-maker. It evaluates the internationalism of Evatt and his senior departmental officials, and how this clashed with the outlook of the Defence establishment, and also at times with London and Washington, especially as the Cold War began to solidify from 1947. The chapter then turns specifically to Asia. It examines the shifting regional definitions of the period and how Australia saw itself in relation to Asia. The first important statement of this is in the January 1944 Australia–New Zealand, or ANZAC, Agreement. The provisions of the ANZAC Agreement and their further development at the November 1944 Wellington Conference provide a crucial insight into the concerns and preoccupations of the ALP

7 Christopher Waters, 'War, Decolonisation and Postwar Security', in *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia, Volume 1: 1901 to the 1970s*, ed. David Goldsworthy (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; and Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)), 128–31; Christopher Waters, 'Creating a Tradition: The Foreign Policy of the Curtin and Chifley Labor Governments', in Lee and Waters, *Evatt to Evans*, 46.

8 See, for example, Department of External Affairs (DEA) files: 'South East Asia: Australian Migration Policy, 1945–1949', National Archives of Australia (NAA) A1838/3004/11/3, Parts 1 and 2.

9 Gwenda Tavan, 'The Limits of Discretion: The Role of the Liberal Party in the Dismantling of the White Australia Policy', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 3 (2005): 418–28.

10 See Eric Meadows, "'He No Doubt Felt Insulted": The White Australia Policy and Australia's Relations with India, 1944–1964', in *Australia and the World: A Festschrift for Neville Meaney*, ed. Joan Beaumont and Matthew Jordan (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2013), 81–98.

Government that endured throughout its tenure in office. These concerns informed Australia's ambivalent attitude in the 1940s to nascent Indian initiatives toward Asian regionalism.

## Evatt, internationalism and the Cold War

Australia's foreign policymaking during the period of the Curtin and Chifley ALP governments is dominated by the mercurial figure of Herbert Vere (Doc) Evatt, Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949. Apart from occasionally decisive interventions from Prime Minister Chifley, Australia's foreign policy in the postwar years was essentially Evatt's policy.<sup>11</sup> One of the key exceptions to this, as David Fetting has illustrated, was Chifley's personal sympathy for the Indonesian nationalist cause, and his 'pronounced and direct' role in Australia's support for independence from Dutch colonial rule.<sup>12</sup> Chifley's more radical position can be contrasted with Evatt's evolutionary approach to decolonisation through UN processes and trusteeship arrangements. Similar to the ill-fated French Union in Indochina, Evatt preferred autonomy for an Indonesian Republic within a Netherlands Union or Commonwealth, where Dutch control of external policy would be maintained.<sup>13</sup>

11 Neville Meaney, 'Dr HV Evatt and the United Nations: The Problem of Collective Security and Liberal Internationalism', in *Australia and the United Nations*, ed. James Cotton and David Lee (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), 37; Alan Renouf, *Let Justice be Done: The Foreign Policy of Dr H.V. Evatt* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1983), 4; Peter Crockett, *Evatt: A Life* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 185; Alan Watt, *Australian Diplomat: Memoirs of Sir Alan Watt* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), 81; Peter Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy 1901–1949* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 171–72; Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe, with Garry Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making 1941–1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 57. This was also recognised by other countries. For example, the US Embassy in Australia wrote to the State Department on 13 May 1949 that Evatt 'makes the country's immediate foreign policy almost single-handed'; The Chargé in Australia (Foster) to the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 77.

12 David Fetting, 'J.B. Chifley and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945–1949', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 59, no. 4 (2013): 520; see also Fetting, 'An Australian Response to Asian Decolonisation: Jawaharlal Nehru, John Burton and the New Delhi Conference of Non-Western Nations', *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 2 (2014): 202–19.

13 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 201; House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 46, Friday, 15 November 1946, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 1st Period, 339; see also David Lee, 'Indonesia's Independence', in *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia, Volume 1: 1901 to the 1970s*, ed. David Goldsworthy (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; and Canberra: DFAT, 2001), 148–52.

Evatt was supported by a small coterie of public servants in the new Department of External Affairs (DEA), most notably by his key adviser and personal secretary, John Burton, who became Secretary of the Department from 1947 to 1950. The public servants that worked with Evatt attest to the minister's erratic, disorganised and unprofessional operating style, and consequently very difficult working relationships.<sup>14</sup> All agree, however, that Evatt's energy and commitment in asserting the claims of small to medium powers in the writing of the UN Charter was very influential and placed Australia on the world stage at a critical historical juncture.<sup>15</sup> Most agree that Evatt was also instrumental in the forging of an active and independent Australian foreign policy, one that privileged Australia's national interests rather than those of the British Empire.<sup>16</sup> Evatt was not reticent about promoting this.<sup>17</sup> For example, in March 1946, Evatt told Parliament that since VJ (Victory over Japan) Day, Australia's 'status and prestige' in 'international affairs' had 'dramatically increased'.<sup>18</sup>

The principles of Evatt's postwar foreign policy gave primacy to the UN and the collective security mechanism of the Security Council. This was to be supported under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter by British Commonwealth regional security arrangements in Australia's near north, in which Canberra would take a leading role.<sup>19</sup> Evatt's postwar priorities for Australia were not entirely consistent with those stated by

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14 Carl Bridge, 'Diplomat', in *Paul Hasluck in Australian History: Civic Personality and Public Life*, ed. Tom Stannage, Kay Saunders and Richard Nile (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1998), 135, 140; Paul Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941–1947* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 14–16, 29; Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats*, 141, 160; Jeremy Hearder, *Jim Plim Ambassador Extraordinary: A Biography of Sir James Plimsole* (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2015), 41, 59–60; Ken Buckley, Barbara Dale and Wayne Reynolds, *Doc Evatt: Patriot, Internationalist, Fighter and Scholar* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994), x, 183.

15 Geoffrey Bolton, *Paul Hasluck: A Life* (Perth: UWA Press, 2014), 148–49, 161; Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 195, 207, 214; William J Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order: Evatt and San Francisco, 1945* (Canberra: Australian Foreign Policy Publication Programme, ANU, 1993), 158; Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 235; Buckley, Dale and Reynolds, *Doc Evatt*, 415–16.

16 Christopher Waters, 'Conflict with Britain in the 1940s', in *Australia and the End of Empires: The Impact of Decolonisation in Australia's Near North, 1945–65*, ed. David Lowe (Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1996), 69–70; Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats*, 140; Keith Waller, *A Diplomatic Life: Some Memories*, Australian in Asia Series No. 6 (Brisbane: Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Griffith University, 1990), 6.

17 Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order*, 123.

18 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 187.

19 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 46, Friday, 15 November 1946, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 1st Period, 346–47.

Prime Minister Curtin during the war.<sup>20</sup> During the war Curtin was also Defence Minister and his views were more in line with those of the Defence Committee than the more idealistic vision of a postwar liberal international order held by Evatt and elements of the DEA. In January 1944, Curtin specified Australia's priorities as first 'national defence', then British Empire cooperation and, lastly, a worldwide or regional collective security mechanism.<sup>21</sup> The Defence Committee argued in 1944 that 'total reliance should not be placed on any system of collective security'. Neither could Australia's defence rely solely on the assistance of a foreign ally. Nor would the UN render military alliances obsolete: any new world organisation would not 'preclude the collaboration of individual countries with a view to ensuring peace in a particular region or safeguarding some special mutual interest'.<sup>22</sup>

The February 1946 *Appreciation of the Strategical Position of Australia* remained sceptical of the 'fragile' structure of the UN and prioritised close British Commonwealth coordination. Unlike the last war, this was to 'be a continuing process and not a mere ad hoc arrangement in the face of a desperate situation'.<sup>23</sup> The 1947 *Appreciation* was even more doubtful about the UN. It stated that collective security through the UN 'may be effective in dealing with minor powers only'. Therefore, it was considered 'unlikely' that the Security Council would 'function effectively' and 'no great reliance' should be placed on it. During the 1940s, the Defence Chiefs of Staff always placed greater emphasis on Commonwealth defence cooperation than collective security through the UN Security Council.<sup>24</sup>

A theme that emerges in re-evaluating the substantial literature on the Evatt era is a conflation between his 'progressive' internationalist ideology on the one hand, and the assumption that his outlook on the world was 'forward-looking' in a historical sense, on the other. It is evident from the archival record and literature on the period that Evatt's outlook in

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20 'Australia–New Zealand Conference: The Defence of the Southwest Pacific Region', Statement by The Rt. Hon. J Curtin, MP, Prime Minister of Australia, Canberra, 18 January 1944, NAA A816/104/301/1.

21 Ibid.

22 'World Organization: Post-Hostilities Planning and Australian–New Zealand Agreement', Review of Appreciation–Future of Southwest Pacific Region, January 1944, NAA A816/104/301/1.

23 'An Appreciation of the Strategical Position of Australia', February 1946, in Stephan Frühling, ed. *A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), 69–71.

24 'An Appreciation by The Chiefs of Staff of the Strategical Position of Australia', September 1947, NAA A5954/1628/3.

the second half of the 1940s was primarily focused toward the inter-war period and circumstances leading to the war. In his work on the UN Charter, Evatt was trying to fix the problems of the League of Nations.<sup>25</sup> Evatt's postwar security policies in Australia's near north understandably sought to prevent a resurgence of Japanese militarism or guard against any similar pattern of invasion threat from Asia.<sup>26</sup>

Evatt's ideas appear to have been heavily influenced by the assumptions of Gladstonian and Wilsonian liberal internationalism, although according to Neville Meaney, there is little evidence that Evatt thought systematically about this until becoming Minister for External Affairs during the war.<sup>27</sup> His liberal internationalism is particularly evident in his Wilsonian appeals to 'world public opinion' during his Presidency of the UN General Assembly.<sup>28</sup> Evatt did not seem to be aware of the critiques of inter-war idealism exemplified by EH Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.<sup>29</sup> Other authors note that Evatt's idealism was also mirrored in his obsession with the proposed text of the UN Charter.<sup>30</sup> This reflected his background as a constitutional lawyer, but resulted in a mentality that viewed achievements with respect to the text, or procedures of the UN, as real-world achievements in international peace and security. The US Embassy in Canberra noted in May 1949 that Evatt, similar to later observations about ALP Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (1972–75), 'follows a highly academic approach to international problems'.<sup>31</sup>

Evatt was determined to assert the rights of smaller states in the new world organisation, and limit as far as possible the veto provision of the great powers on the UN Security Council.<sup>32</sup> It was only at critical points in the

25 David Lee, 'The Curtin and Chifley Governments, Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation', in Lee and Waters, *Evatt to Evans*, 52; Crockett, *Evatt*, 232.

26 Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 3 (1992): 324; Crockett, *Evatt*, 234.

27 Neville Meaney, 'Dr HV Evatt and the United Nations', 35; Hasluck also notes that while Evatt 'must have read a good deal on international law', he had very little knowledge about modern history or international political affairs, *Diplomatic Witness*, 26.

28 Christopher Waters, 'Anglo-Australian Conflict Over the Cold War: H.V. Evatt as President of the UN General Assembly, 1948–49', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22, no. 2 (1994): 301–02.

29 Meaney, 'Dr HV Evatt and the United Nations', 36.

30 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 184, 186, 194, 214.

31 The Chargé in Australia (Foster) to the Secretary of State, *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 77.

32 'Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day–1st November, 1944', NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17.

negotiations that Evatt appeared to have been brought to the realisation that the UN could only exist and function at the agreement of the victorious great powers of the Grand Alliance.<sup>33</sup> Power politics and great power prerogative were ultimately the foundation of the UN organisation despite its liberal international veneer. An acceptable formula was needed through which the great powers would participate effectively to remedy the failures of the League of Nations in maintaining international peace and security. A comprehensive veto power was therefore required so that the vital interests of the great powers as providers of security could be insulated from serious challenge by the activities of the organisation.<sup>34</sup> All states were not equal. Evatt was never able to completely accept this. For example, on 15 November 1946, Evatt said in Parliament:

it is impossible to mix a policy based on power politics with any enthusiastic or effective support of the United Nations Charter, which is based on entirely different principles.<sup>35</sup>

Alan Renouf suggests that Evatt ‘could not accept the fact that Australia did not command the amount of attention he felt it deserved, because it did not have enough power’.<sup>36</sup>

Evatt’s obsession about rectifying the problems of the recent past made him somewhat blind to the realities of the postwar world. The emergence from the war of two continental-sized superpowers with massive military strength, industrial resources and global influence meant that the postwar world would continue to be defined by the competitive dynamics of power politics—even more so. During his period as External Affairs Minister, Evatt never reconciled with this and continued to privilege the role and efficacy of the UN even as the Security Council became dysfunctional because of frequent Soviet use of the veto.<sup>37</sup> For example, in March 1946, Evatt argued in Parliament that Russia’s intention in seeking to expand its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe was not necessarily for ‘political domination’, but ‘merely to protect Russia against any repetition of the *cordon sanitaire* which united all reactionary influences in Europe against

33 Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order*, 81–82.

34 Kenneth Anderson, ‘United Nations Collective Security and the United States Security Guarantee in an Age of Rising Multipolarity: The Security Council as the Talking Shop of the Nations’, *Chicago Journal of International Law* 10, no. 5, (2009): 59–61.

35 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 46, Friday, 15 November 1946, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 1st Period, 346; see also Waters, ‘Anglo–Australian Conflict Over the Cold War’, 294–316.

36 Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 285.

37 Bridge, ‘Diplomat’, 138–39.

it' in the inter-war period.<sup>38</sup> Evatt remained deeply concerned after the war about a resurgence of fascism. In his view, the deepening pessimism in the West regarding Soviet intentions was unjustified.<sup>39</sup>

But the beginnings of Australia's engagement with Asia are, ironically, to be found in Evatt's focus on preventing the last war with Japan, and consequent efforts to bolster Australia's regional security. A number of observers that worked with Evatt commented on his inability immediately after the war to view the world from perspectives other than that of Australia.<sup>40</sup> Evatt's vision of engagement with the near north was quite different in conception if not in effect from the subsequent Coalition Government's Cold War approach to the region. For security purposes, Evatt brought the near north—insular Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific—into what he considered Australia's region. In contrast, for Coalition External Affairs ministers in the 1950s, Percy Spender (1949–51) and Richard Casey (1951–60), Cold War geopolitics drew a peripheral Australia into the Asian region, which necessitated closer political and security relations. Evatt's Australia-centric security assumptions laid the groundwork for ANZAM and Australia's deep engagement with the decolonisation process in the Malayan archipelago in the 1950s and 1960s.

Evatt's focus on the past, his continued fixation on Japan, and his actions as President of the UN General Assembly frustrated London and Washington. US officials considered Evatt's attitude toward communism and that of his 'high ranking officials' as suspect and a possible security risk.<sup>41</sup> At a meeting of US State Department officials and British Embassy staff in Washington on 27 May 1948, Undersecretary of State Robert A Lovett noted:

[the] quixotic attitudes of the Australian representatives on the Good Offices Committee in Indonesia and on the United Nations Temporary Commission in Korea ... certainly could not be described as directed towards fostering the purposes of security in the Pacific.<sup>42</sup>

38 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 204.

39 *Ibid.*, 205; see also Buckley, Dale and Reynolds, *Doc Evatt*, 307.

40 For example, Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 283–84.

41 Bridge, 'Diplomat', 138; Waters, 'Anglo-Australian Conflict Over the Cold War', 312–13.

42 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Undersecretary of State (Lovett), Washington', 27 May 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 550.

ME Dening, Assistant Undersecretary at the British Foreign Office, said he had:

found the high ranking officials in Mr. Evatt's Ministry and Mr. Evatt himself somewhat unrealistic as regards Communist designs and methods and although he was prepared to attest to the soundness of the view of the Prime Minister, he could give no assurance regarding the security of the Australian Government as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

The Americans thought more highly of the ALP Government's efficacy in UN affairs. The State Department suggested:

Dr. Evatt's egotism can, with skill, be turned into constructive channels and when we are satisfied that the Australians will follow our line of thinking he, as Australia's spokesman, should be encouraged to take the initiative.<sup>44</sup>

Evatt's continued obsession about a resurgence of Japanese militarism in the late 1940s and dedication to securing a harsh peace treaty were inconsistent with the view developing in Washington. By early 1948, reports from the US were arguing that the changing world situation 'arising from the steady deterioration of China, deterioration of [the] Korean situation, and Russian expansionism has already outdated initial United States' post-surrender policy' in Asia.<sup>45</sup> The US was firmly established in Japan and Tokyo's former League of Nations' mandated territories in the Pacific, and in 1947 considered that the 'importance of [a] regional defence arrangement covering [the] South Pacific' had 'diminished'.<sup>46</sup> British and US officials regarded the 'Anzac Powers' continued fear of Japan as 'pathological'.<sup>47</sup>

By contrast to Evatt and the DEA, the emerging Cold War situation was by 1947 the focus of the Australian defence and intelligence communities. In the September 1947 *Appreciation of the Strategic Position of Australia*, the Defence Chiefs of Staff stated that 'the possibility of war with U.S.S.R.

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43 Ibid.

44 'Policy Statement of the Department of State', 18 August 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 1.

45 Australian Embassy Washington to DEA Canberra, 23 March 1948, NAA A1838/515/2, Part 1.

46 Australian Consul-General New York to DEA Canberra, 19 November 1947, NAA A1838/TS382/8/2/1, Part 3.

47 'Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Marshall Green of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, Washington', 28 May 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 552.

does exist' at the global level but was unlikely before 1950 or 1951.<sup>48</sup> The Joint Intelligence Committee's report on the *Appreciation* in February 1949 was more direct:

A state of 'war' at present exists between the U.S.S.R. and the Western Powers although it does not involve the employment of orthodox hostilities ... It is best described as a 'cold war' in which Soviet aggression is characterised by the exploitation of minorities and disaffected elements in foreign countries, and the manipulation of international organisations in her own interests with the ultimate objective of communising the world.<sup>49</sup>

By March 1948, the term 'Cold War' had started to appear in Australian DEA despatches, mirroring the discourse emerging in Washington and from the Defence establishment.<sup>50</sup>

Evatt remained unconvinced. In an article published in *The New York Times* on 4 April 1948, Evatt continued to emphasise his same postwar themes while failing to address the emerging Cold War dynamics: 'Australia and New Zealand', as 'young democracies rapidly growing in power and influence', had proved 'to be valiant and indispensable allies' in 'redressing the world balance in favour of liberty against international fascism'.<sup>51</sup> Communism is not mentioned in the article, which is almost entirely focused on Japan. Decolonisation, however, is addressed, but it is a conservative vision. Evatt recognised the legitimate desire for self-government in the region, but also wrote:

[w]e should not allow our sympathy for the dependent peoples to blind us to the real achievements of the colonial powers ... In very many cases the present desire for freedom is itself a product of the Western tradition, thought and teaching.<sup>52</sup>

Evatt argued that for the Netherlands Indies and French Indochina, the appropriate solution would be 'complete or considerable self-government' while permitting 'continued Dutch and French participation

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48 'An Appreciation by The Chiefs of Staff of the Strategic Position of Australia', September 1947, NAA A5954/1628/3.

49 'Defence Committee Agendum: The Strategic Position of Australia—Appreciation by the Joint Intelligence Committee', 14 February 1949, NAA A816/14/301/352.

50 Australian Embassy Washington to DEA Canberra, 5 March 1948, NAA A1838/515/2, Part 1.

51 'There is the Pacific also', Text of article published in *The New York Times*, 4 April 1948, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 3.

52 Ibid.

in the political and economic development of these regions'. Evatt continued that independence does not equal democracy and made the point that nationalist movements sometimes contained 'Fascist and totalitarian elements'.<sup>53</sup>

Evatt remained fixated on Japan as late in his term of office as November 1949, even after the drastically altered regional circumstances with the communist victory in the Chinese civil war and declaration of the People's Republic on 1 October 1949. In a press release on 11 November, Evatt made the familiar statement that he was 'strongly opposed to any procedure which would preclude Australia from being regarded as a party principal in all matters arising out of war with Japan'.<sup>54</sup> Evatt continued these themes in Parliament, with his speeches dominated by a focus on the Second World War and the value of the UN. With respect to Indonesia, Evatt also made the point that his and the government's interest in referring the matter to the UN Security Council was one of 'general principle' as 'a loyal member of the United Nations' rather than any particular sympathy for the Indonesian nationalist cause above others.<sup>55</sup> By the end of his ministerial tenure in 1949, Evatt was criticised by the Opposition 'for his unswerving loyalty and devotion to the United Nations', rather than to Australia.<sup>56</sup>

The main themes of the Chifley Government's foreign policy may be summarised as an obsessive and enduring fear of Japan and its pattern of wartime aggression in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, dedication to the UN as a world organisation and rigid adherence to its principles, and a conservative, evolutionary view of decolonisation within the framework of the European empires. The Australian Government's view of the country's place in the world and its ambivalent postwar relations with Asia can only be understood through these lenses. For the ALP governments of the 1940s, the war with Japan had drastically altered Australia's sense of security and its place in the world, and the Southwest Pacific war theatre continued to provide a frame of reference for Australia's idea of region.

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53 Ibid.

54 'Statement by the Minister for External Affairs, The Right Hon. H. V. Evatt', 11 November 1949, NAA A1838/381/3/1/2, Part 1.

55 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 6, Wednesday, 9 February 1949, 18th Parliament, 2nd Session, 2nd Period, 76, 80–82.

56 Senate, *Official Hansard*, No. 9, Wednesday, 2 March 1949, 18th Parliament, 2nd Session, 2nd Period, 824.

## The Southwest Pacific war theatre

The archival record shows that from the Second World War until the consolidation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1967) in the early 1970s, Australia, under both ALP and Coalition governments, saw itself, and was viewed by its neighbours, as a part of what we now term Southeast Asia. The Chifley Government's outlook was different to the Coalition to the extent that it viewed insular Southeast Asia as part of Australia's region. In either case, Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific region was not an innovation of the Whitlam or Hawke-Keating periods.

In March 1942, President Roosevelt (1933–45) proposed that with the exception of Russia, the world be divided into three war theatres: the Atlantic under joint British and American responsibility; an Indian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean area under British responsibility; and the Pacific area, including China, under US operational responsibility.<sup>57</sup> Directives were issued on 18 April 1942 establishing these areas. The Pacific theatre was further subdivided into the Southwest Pacific area under the command of General Douglas MacArthur in Australia, and three further North, South and Eastern Pacific sectors to be commanded directly from Washington by Admiral Ernest King. New Zealand was placed in the Southern Pacific area and therefore separated from Australia in the Southwest Pacific. The dividing line between the two theatre sectors ran through present-day Solomon Islands, thus excluding much of Melanesia and Western Polynesia from Australia's area. This was met by protests from Evatt, presumably because he wanted Australia associated with the largest possible strategic expanse of Pacific islands, but Washington overruled him on the understanding that there would be a high level of coordination and interoperability between the two areas.<sup>58</sup>

MacArthur was responsible for 'all the United Nations' Forces in Australia, New Guinea and the islands northwards of Australia'.<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note in this context that the 'United Nations' was initially understood as the military alliance fighting against the Axis powers, and

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57 'History of Establishment of Southwest Pacific Area', Department of Defence Co-ordination, 24 November 1942, NAA A5954/569/4.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

which would be the basis for the postwar international organisation.<sup>60</sup> The UN was not initially conceived as a neutral and pluralist international body, and the idea that it should be a continuation of the wartime Grand Alliance persisted among the Coalition parties in Australia well into the 1950s. The majority of King's Pacific theatre command was under the operational responsibility of Admiral Chester W Nimitz covering also 'army installations and troops in the Aleutians, Hawaii, Fiji Islands, Solomons, New Hebrides, New Caledonia and New Zealand'.<sup>61</sup>

The Second World War theatre sector of the Southwest Pacific included the Australian continent, eastern Indian Ocean and what is now recognised as insular Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Timor-Leste and the Philippines), in addition to New Guinea in Melanesia.<sup>62</sup> Australia's defence region during the war was thus geographically focused north and westwards and identified with what we now term Southeast Asia. This understanding of Australia's region continued in various guises in the immediate postwar years and endured until the late 1960s when the formation of ASEAN in 1967 signalled the beginnings of a cultural understanding of postcolonial Southeast Asian identity that excluded Australia.

## The Australia–New Zealand Agreement

After the tide had turned against Japan in 1943, Australia confirmed this understanding of its region in the January 1944 Australia–New Zealand Agreement, sometimes termed the ANZAC or Canberra Pact. In the literature on the period, this initiative by the Curtin Government is viewed essentially as a riposte from Evatt to the great powers for Australia's exclusion from consultation on the Moscow Declaration of October

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60 See, for example, Australian Legation Washington to DEA Canberra (for the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs), 17 September 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/8; 'Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day—1st November, 1944', NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17; and Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order*, 72.

61 'History of Establishment of Southwest Pacific Area', Department of Defence Co-ordination, 24 November 1942, NAA A5954/569/4.

62 'Directive to the Supreme Commander in the Southwest Pacific Area', Appendix A in 'History of Establishment of Southwest Pacific Area', Department of Defence Co-ordination, 24 November 1942, NAA A5954/569/4.

1943 on international organisation, the 1943 Cairo talks on the postwar settlement in Asia and the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks talks on establishing the UN.<sup>63</sup>

This remains a convincing interpretation. It was stated publicly by Evatt on a number of occasions,<sup>64</sup> and is reflected in the text of the ANZAC Agreement. It is also demonstrated in Evatt's statement on the Agreement's signing, that in 'substance', Australia and New Zealand had declared a 'Pacific Charter' presumably comparable to the August 1941 'Atlantic Charter'.<sup>65</sup> Evatt wrote to US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull (1933–44), on 24 February 1944:

We feel strongly that Australia and New Zealand are entitled to the fullest degree of preliminary consultation, especially in relation to Pacific matters. At the recent Cairo Conference decisions affecting the future of certain portions of the Pacific, and vitally affecting both Australia and New Zealand, were not only made but publicly announced without any prior reference either to Australia or New Zealand.<sup>66</sup>

Evatt worried that the British dominions would have 'less real say in the peace settlements than under Lloyd George in 1919'.<sup>67</sup>

An article from *The Times*' correspondent at the Canberra Conference captured the mood:

The proceedings of the conference were pervaded by the sense that ... Australia and New Zealand, by their links with the Imperial Commonwealth, by their constancy to the ideals for

63 Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War', 320; Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 110; Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order*, 19; Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 102–03; Alan Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, 1938–1965* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 73; Gary Woodard, *Evatt's Manifesto: The ANZAC Pact* (Sydney: Evatt Foundation, 1987); Buckley, Dale and Reynolds, *Doc Evatt*, 233–34.

64 For example, 'For the Press: Reply by Dr. Evatt in Debate in House of Representatives on Australian-New Zealand Agreement', 30 March 1944, NAA CP13/1/19; House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 187.

65 'The Australian–New Zealand Charter', Department of Information, Australia House London, 21 January 1944, NAA A2937/160/28/2/44.

66 'Telegram Received from External Canberra, by External Affairs Office, London', 28 February 1944, NAA A2937/160/28/2/44; see also W MacMahon Ball, 'Australia as a Pacific Power', September 1944 (Prepared for the Institute of Pacific Relations Conference, 1945), NAA A1838/381/3/1/1.

67 'Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day–1st November, 1944', NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17.

which the war is being fought, and by their immunity from invasion, are qualified to bear the highest responsibility for the common security and welfare.<sup>68</sup>

The two governments asserted their claims to representation 'at the highest level on all armistice planning and executive bodies'.<sup>69</sup> They also emphasised that it was 'a matter of cardinal importance' for Australia and New Zealand to 'be associated, not only in the membership, but also in the planning and establishment, of the general international organization referred to in the Moscow Declaration of October, 1943'.<sup>70</sup> The signatories staked their claim to 'full responsibility for policing or sharing in policing' after the cessation of hostilities in the Southwest and South Pacific, before making the controversial statement seemingly directed at the US that bases and installations constructed during the war did not afford any territorial claims to sovereignty in peacetime.<sup>71</sup> The signatories were at pains to point out that the Agreement was not directed against any other countries but rather invited other states to adhere to these principles.<sup>72</sup>

The initial British response to the ANZAC Agreement was generally supportive, although muted on the status of former enemy territories and possible changes of sovereignty in the Southwest and South Pacific areas. Australia's views on this were simply 'noted'.<sup>73</sup> The Dominions Secretary later wrote to the War Cabinet that public statements from Australian leaders regarding the Agreement were 'unexceptional', but it was deemed unlikely that independent resort to such an arrangement by Australia and New Zealand would 'help them in achieving their object'.<sup>74</sup> Evatt's proposals for an international meeting regarding the Pacific settlement and a South Seas Commission, or Regional Council, were regarded by Britain as premature and subordinate to the formation of a world organisation.<sup>75</sup>

68 'The Canberra Conference', *The Times*, 22 January 1944, in NAA A2937/160/28/2/44.

69 'Australian–New Zealand Agreement', 21 January 1944, New Zealand Treaty Series 1944, No. 1, New Zealand (NZ) DEA, Wellington, in NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*; see also Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 127–30.

72 'Statement to Parliament, 10 February, 1944 on the Australia–New Zealand Agreement by the Rt. Hon. Dr. H.V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs', NAA A1066/P145/183.

73 Dominions Office to Australian and New Zealand Governments, 12 February 1944, NAA A2937/160/28/2/44.

74 'New Zealand–Australia Conference: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs', 10 November 1944, The National Archives (TNA) UK, Prime Minister's Office Records (PREM) 4/50/13.

75 Dominions Office to Australian and New Zealand Governments, 12 February 1944, NAA A2937/160/28/2/44.

In November 1944, ministers from Australia and New Zealand met at Wellington under the auspices of the Pact to discuss a prospective peace settlement and coordinate policy on postwar international organisation and regional security. After the content of the ANZAC Agreement and associated issues were fleshed out at the Wellington Conference, British criticism became more pointed. The criticisms revolved around two issues. The first was Australia's proposal that after the war colonial administration should be accountable to international supervision in the form of an International Colonial Commission.<sup>76</sup> The Commission would be an agency of the new world organisation and comprised of both colonial and non-colonial powers. All colonies would be subject to supervision, not just former League of Nations' Mandates, or dependent territories of the defeated powers.<sup>77</sup> The War Cabinet in London was vehemently opposed to this, arguing that Australia's inconsistent position on this prejudiced the position of the British Empire in discussions with Washington over the future of colonial policy after the war.<sup>78</sup>

The second criticism from London was that Australia and New Zealand had 'issued without consultation with us or with the other Commonwealth Governments' a public 'declaration of policy on matters affecting us all'.<sup>79</sup> This criticism must have been particular galling for Evatt considering one of the primary motivations for the ANZAC Agreement was a feeling that Australia was being disregarded in postwar planning, particularly in the Asia-Pacific. Australia was expected to consult the United Kingdom (UK) about its postwar plans, while the deliberations of the big three—the US, Soviet Union and Britain—were not subject to Australia's input. Nor was the UK interested in Australian proposals regarding colonial trusteeship. There was some apparent Australian backpedalling on colonial policy after the British criticisms. For example, the Australian Government communicated to the Dominions Office on 19 November 1944 that supervision of colonies by any international or regional body was not

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76 'Colonial Policy and Future of Mandate System', Australian–New Zealand Conference, Wellington, October 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

77 'Colonial Policy–Mandates', Australian–New Zealand Conference, Wellington, October 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

78 Dominions Office, London to New Zealand and Australian Governments, 14 November 1944, TNA PREM 4/50/13.

79 'New Zealand–Australia Conference: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs', 10 November 1944, TNA PREM 4/50/13.

intended to interfere with the sovereignty or control of the colonial power. It would be more of an expert body that might make 'positive suggestions' for promoting the welfare of non-self-governing peoples.<sup>80</sup>

The first criticisms of the Australia–New Zealand Agreement from the US Government similarly revolved around its premature nature given the war was a long way from over, and that formal discussion of a postwar settlement might prompt divisions among the allies.<sup>81</sup> Despite this, in a lengthy reply to Cordell Hull via the American Minister in Canberra, Evatt rejected most of the American concerns while complaining that 'matters of tremendous consequence to Australia and New Zealand postwar arrangements are under consideration by the United States Government', without any consultation with Canberra and Wellington.<sup>82</sup>

According to W MacMahon Ball, writing in September 1944, the Australian public showed little interest in the ANZAC Agreement. The 'general feeling', similar to the overseas criticism, was that such a pact was 'subordinate ... to the course of the war and the decisions taken overseas'.<sup>83</sup> The most favourable response came from General Charles de Gaulle's Free French Government, which shared Australia's views on changes to sovereignty and territorial claims in the region, and welcomed the formation of any regional organisation or commission in which it would be a member.<sup>84</sup> In Australia, the Opposition argued that the Agreement was amateurish and premature, an 'act of those who are more preoccupied about the peace for which we all yearn than about a victorious war without which no lasting peace can be obtained'.<sup>85</sup> According to the Menzies Opposition, annoying the US with an unnecessary initiative, parts of which Washington was sure to oppose, was not the best way of securing their assistance and cooperation after the war.<sup>86</sup>

80 Commonwealth Government of Australia to Dominions Office, London, 19 November 1944, in 'New Zealand–Australia Conference: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs', 10 November 1944, TNA PREM 4/50/13; see also DEA Canberra to Fraser (NZ Prime Minister), 6 December 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/22.

81 'Telegram Received from External Canberra, by External Affairs Office, London', 28 February 1944, NAA A2937/160/28/2/44.

82 Ibid.

83 Ball, 'Australia as a Pacific Power'.

84 'Translation of a Communication from the French Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, Algiers, to the French Embassy, London, enclosed with External Affairs Letter of 19th September 1944', in 'Relations with Pacific Powers: Exchange of Views, French Position in the Pacific', Australian–New Zealand Conference, Wellington, October 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

85 Senate, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 15 March 1944, 17th Parliament, 1st Session, 2nd Period, 1308. There was no discussion of the Agreement in the House of Representatives.

86 Ibid., 1309–10.

Evatt conceded at the Wellington Conference in November 1944 ‘that America does not appear to seek changes in sovereignty south of the Equator’, although he and New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser (1940–49) claimed credit for this as the effect of the Australia–New Zealand Agreement. US control would ‘be limited to ex-Japanese Mandated Islands’.<sup>87</sup> This assumption was not entirely accurate. After the war, the US Navy did seek the continued use of its large base at Manus Island in the Admiralties. Manus was part of the Australian mandated territory of New Guinea, but outside the zone designated to British Commonwealth responsibility after the dissolution of the Southwest Pacific theatre on 2 September 1945.<sup>88</sup> Postwar negotiations over the granting of base rights faltered over a number of problems such as reciprocal base rights for Australian forces on US territory, how the base would fit in with wider regional security arrangements, and questions over access to the base in the event that one party remained neutral in any conflict relevant to the area.<sup>89</sup> The US decision to leave Manus Island was made in September 1946 and the US Navy vacated the base at the end of 1947.<sup>90</sup> Evatt never publicly acknowledged that the ANZAC Agreement caused significant consternation in Washington, although Fraser noted its ‘temporarily adverse effect’.<sup>91</sup> The only successful practical initiative from the ANZAC Pact was the creation of the South Pacific Commission, a grouping of the six sovereign powers controlling Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.<sup>92</sup>

The Melbourne *Herald* suggested that since the Americans had just ‘saved life, home, and land’, a ‘thankful and comradely resolution might have been expected’, rather than Evatt’s ‘direct affronts’ to Washington.

87 ‘Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day–1st November, 1944’, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17.

88 Australian Legation Washington to DEA Canberra, 6 September 1945, NAA A5954/569/11; ‘U.S. Seeks 10 Pacific Bases’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 1945, in NAA A5954/569/11; ‘America Wants Pacific Bases’, *The Herald*, Melbourne, 20 September 1945, in NAA A5954/569/11; ‘Admiralty Islands’, File Note, 29 October 1945, NAA A5954/569/11.

89 Amry Vandenbosch and Mary Belle Vandenbosch, *Australia Faces Southeast Asia: The Emergence of a Foreign Policy* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 27–32; House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 200–201; ‘Dr. Evatt’s Statement in the House of Reprs. 8.11.46’, NAA A1838/380/1/9; Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 146–47.

90 ‘Sad Story of the Base at Manus Island’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1950, 2.

91 ‘Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day–1st November, 1944’, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17.

92 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 9, Wednesday, 26 February 1947, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 2nd Period, 163.

According to *The Herald*, the ALP Government was ‘putting up claims for Australia that depend[ed] first upon other Powers’ [sic] winning the war for us’, but we were then ‘indifferent to the interests and claims of these Powers’.<sup>93</sup>

There is truth in these criticisms. The ‘optics’ of the Agreement could only have looked very bad from the standpoint of Australia’s allies. Now that the worst of the danger to Australia had passed, the ALP Government was opportunistically moving toward an advantageous postwar settlement in its region, while its great power allies remained fully engaged in defeating the Axis powers. Evatt even appeared to be claiming leadership among the UN alliance. On 30 January 1944, in response to criticisms of the Agreement, Evatt made the presumptuous statement:

that the Australian and New Zealand Governments decided to make a start now, with a view to the clarification of the United Nations’ objectives in the Pacific both in war and peace.<sup>94</sup>

W MacMahon Ball explained:

Australia’s experiences in this war, and particularly the closeness of the Japanese threat to the Australian mainland, together with the magnitude of her war effort in many overseas theatres, has produced in Australia a new sense of the dangers, the rights and the obligations of nationhood ... The Australian government has repeatedly insisted that our achievements in war gives us the right and the obligation to play an active and important part in the planning of the post-war world.<sup>95</sup>

This theme is a constant in the documentary record from 1944 into the postwar years.<sup>96</sup> It impresses upon the reader the unprecedented sense of the threat perceived to Australia and acute recognition of the immense resources committed and military effort expended in the war effort. In February 1947, for example, Evatt again ‘demanded full participation at the highest level in the final settlement with Japan’. He said Australia’s claim to this was ‘unassailable’, because of its ‘all-out effort in the Pacific

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93 Quoted in Ball, ‘Australia as a Pacific Power’; Alan Watt makes a similar point; see *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy*, 76.

94 ‘For the Press: Reply by Dr. Evatt in Debate in House of Representatives on Australian–New Zealand Agreement’, 30 March 1944, NAA CP13/1/19.

95 Ball, ‘Australia as a Pacific Power’.

96 For example, ‘Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, Held at Wellington, November, 1944: Record of Proceedings, First Meeting, First Day–1st November, 1944’, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/17.

war'.<sup>97</sup> While understandable, the ALP Government's attitude in this respect was myopic and unlikely to gain any traction among the great powers. All the major protagonists of the war had mobilised massive resources and made great sacrifices on a scale vastly exceeding that of Australia.<sup>98</sup>

Ball interpreted that much of the shrillness and impetuosity of the Australian Government around the ANZAC Pact was that in the past Australians had always thought of war as an expedition. But 'in 1942, with a sense of sudden shock, we thought of war for the first time as invasion'. That explained 'why, in the Australia–New Zealand Pact, and other official statements', Australia placed 'such emphasis on plans for regional defence and development'.<sup>99</sup> The government felt that the prewar apathy of northern hemisphere powers 'about South Pacific needs, and a consequent neglect in providing for the security of this area' were the reasons for its acute vulnerability.<sup>100</sup> This apathy had been shared by Australia, but the ANZAC Agreement showed that the signatories were now committed to undertake new and heavy responsibilities for the defence and development of this region of the world.<sup>101</sup>

## Region and regionalism in the postwar world

The ANZAC Pact contains an explicit definition by the Australian Government of its region and place in the world. The Treaty stated:

within the framework of a general system of world security, a regional zone of defence comprising the wartime South West and South Pacific areas shall be established and that this zone should be based on Australia and New Zealand, stretching through the arc of islands north and northeast of Australia, to Western Samoa and the Cook Islands.<sup>102</sup>

97 House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 9, Wednesday, 26 February 1947, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 2nd Period, 169.

98 Crockett, *Evatt*, 224.

99 Ball, 'Australia as a Pacific Power'.

100 *Ibid.*; see also House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 46, Friday, 15 November 1946, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 1st Period, 342.

101 Ball, 'Australia as a Pacific Power'.

102 'Australian–New Zealand Agreement', 21 January 1944, New Zealand Treaty Series 1944, No. 1, NZ DEA, Wellington, in NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

The geographical area designated in the Treaty thus included insular Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Western Polynesia. The US later privately labelled this 'an Anzac Monroe Doctrine for the Southwest Pacific'.<sup>103</sup> It was never intended that Australia would defend this area unaided, but it needed to be kept from the control of any potentially hostile power and its defence would require permanent Australian bases and installations in the islands to the north of the continent.<sup>104</sup> Australian advocacy for decolonisation or trusteeship was always 'secondary to the needs of defence and regional security'.<sup>105</sup> Establishing Australian bases in the 'island screen' to the north was a theme Evatt continued to pursue in the immediate aftermath of the war,<sup>106</sup> but was thwarted by the resumption of Dutch control over the East Indies and Portuguese sovereignty in East Timor. The experience of the war and Australia's more independent security outlook meant that it would have to engage much more deeply with whatever political entities emerged in Southeast Asia.

The Southwest Pacific war theatre was dissolved on 2 September 1945 and control of Australian forces was transferred from MacArthur's command back to the Australian Government. Postwar responsibility for this area except for the Philippines passed to British Commonwealth control.<sup>107</sup> The British Southeast Asia Command was allocated control of the Netherlands East Indies, except 'for Borneo and the islands to the

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103 'Policy Statement of the Department of State', 18 August 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 1.

104 'Australia–New Zealand Conference: The Defence of the Southwest Pacific Region, Statement by The Rt. Hon. J. Curtin, M.P., Prime Minister of Australia, Canberra, 18 January 1944', NAA A816/104/301/1; 'Defence in the Pacific', *The Times*, 19 January 1944, in NAA A2937/160/28/2/44; 'Australian and New Zealand Interests in World Organisation', Australian–New Zealand Conference, Wellington, October 1944, NAA A989/1944/630/5/1/11/16.

105 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 123.

106 Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 144–46; Wayne Reynolds, 'Dr H.V. Evatt: Foreign Minister for a Small Power', in *Brave New World: Dr H.V. Evatt and Australian Foreign Policy 1941–1949*, ed. David Day (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996), 153–54; Buckley, Dale and Reynolds, *Doc Evatt*, 226, 232.

107 Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs London to DEA Canberra, 13 August 1945, NAA A5954/569/11; Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area (MacArthur) to Allied Land Forces, Allied Naval Forces, Allied Air Forces, Forland, First Australian Army, First Australian Corps, SEAC, C-in-C., Pac., Adv. C-in-C., POF, Prime Minister Australia, Prime Minister New Zealand, Lieut. Governor-General Netherlands Indies (Melbourne) Warcos, 29 August 1945, NAA A5954/569/11; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs London to DEA Canberra, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Australian Legation Washington, 31 August 1945, NAA A5954/569/11; 'Statement by the Minister for Defence (Mr. Beasley), House of Representatives, Sept. 7, 1945: Re-organisation of South-West Pacific Area', 7 September 1945, NAA A5954/569/11.

east thereof', which were to be Australia's responsibility.<sup>108</sup> The Australian occupation of these areas would be progressively phased out and eventually limited only to New Guinea and the Australian mandated territories.<sup>109</sup> Despite the claims made by Curtin and Evatt during the war, no attempt was made by the Chifley Government to remain in occupation of any forward military bases on foreign territory.<sup>110</sup>

From the late 1940s until early 1960s, policymakers applied the geographical label 'Southeast Asia' variously depending on the context. For example, the countries of French Indochina, Burma, Siam, Malaya, a putative Indonesian Republic and Portuguese Timor were canvassed by Australia in 1947 as the basis for a potential Southeast Asian regional organisation under UN auspices.<sup>111</sup> But the term was sometimes also applied to the area from New Zealand to the Indian subcontinent to include the Commonwealth countries of Ceylon, India and Pakistan.<sup>112</sup> In the immediate postwar era, the geographical designation 'Asia' also tended to be focused westward (somewhat akin to the present Indo-Pacific concept), rather than the dominant East Asian emphasis of recent decades, with countries from the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia included in regional meetings such as the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in India and the 1949 New Delhi Conference on Indonesia.<sup>113</sup> Australian

108 Department of Defence Memorandum for the Secretaries, Departments of Navy, Army, Air, Supply and Shipping, External Territories, Treasury—Treasury (Defence Division), 1 September 1945, NAA A5954/1891/5; 'Copy of a Minute (C.O.S. 62/6) to the Prime Minister', Annex 1 in 'Occupational Commitments—Memorandum for Canadian Ministers', 23 January 1946, TNA PREM 8/176.

109 'Statement by the Minister for Defence (Mr. Beasley), House of Representatives, Sept. 7, 1945: Re-organisation of South-West Pacific Area', 7 September 1945, NAA A5954/569/11.

110 Renouf, *Let Justice be Done*, 163–64.

111 'Regional Plans in South East Asia', 5 March 1947, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2; 'Australia Feeler for Regional Pact with S.E. Asia', *The Canberra Times*, 28 February 1947, in NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2.

112 DEA Canberra to Australian Political Representative Singapore (Officer), 5 March 1946, NAA A1838/382/8/3/1, Part 1; Australian Commission for Malaya (Massey) to Secretary DEA, 22 August 1946, NAA A1838/411/1/1/1, Part 2; 'Press Release: New Delhi Conference on Indonesia', 20 January 1949, NAA A1838/380/1/9; Chifley to Fraser (NZ Prime Minister), 10 March 1949, NAA A1838/851/18/3; LR McIntyre (DEA) to Lt. Colonel DS Bedi (Indian High Commissioner Canberra), 17 March 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1/1, Part 4; and 'Indian Approach to Australian—South East Asian Relations', in Australian High Commission New Delhi (Stuart) to DEA Canberra, 28 August 1950, NAA A1838/3004/11, Part 1.

113 Julie Suares, 'Engaging with Asia: The Chifley Government and the New Delhi Conferences of 1947 and 1949', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 57, no. 4 (2011): 495–510; 'Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the President of the Security Council', 22 January 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

defence planning continued to focus on the former Southwest Pacific war theatre, which with some revision would become the ANZAM region.<sup>114</sup> However understood, Australia defined itself as part of Southeast Asia.

This was explicitly acknowledged in Australian policy documents and in Australian and Asian public discourse at the time. For example, in February 1947, the *Canberra Times* wrote ‘Australia will look to countries in the South East Asia area for her future peace and prosperity ... Australia realises that her whole future is bound up with this area’.<sup>115</sup> From Singapore, it was reported in April 1947 that ‘the local press has shown an awareness of Australia’s emergence ... as an influential nation with a particularly vital interest in the affairs of South East Asia’ and “‘destined to play a role undreamt of a generation ago’”.<sup>116</sup> On 30 September 1948, a DEA political appreciation for the prime minister addressed ‘the position of Australia, as a South-East Asian country, in the event of a conflict between one or more of the Western powers and one or more of the Eastern European countries’.<sup>117</sup> Even the post-independence Indian press, while criticising the White Australia policy in May 1948, recognised that Australia was ‘part and parcel of Asia geographically and economically’.<sup>118</sup>

With emerging Indian initiatives toward regional organisation in the late 1940s, Australia’s recognition by postcolonial Asian leaders as being part of the region tended to be variable depending on the purpose of the meetings. Australian inclusion was justified on geographic and economic grounds, but exclusion on political and cultural grounds was also in evidence. Despite Nehru’s view that Australia and New Zealand were part of Asia,<sup>119</sup> Canberra was excluded from invitation as an official participant in the 1947 Asian Relations Conference convened in New Delhi by the Indian Council of World Affairs, as a “‘non-Asian country’”,<sup>120</sup> but the Australian Institute for International Affairs was invited to send two

114 ‘Report by the Joint Planning Committee at Meeting Held on Friday, 25th June, 1948, Report No. 28/1948—The Zone Vital to the Security of Australia’, 25 June 1948, NAA A5954/1628/3.

115 ‘Australian Feeler for Regional Pact with S.E. Asia’, *The Canberra Times*, 28 February 1947, in NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2.

116 Cited in C Massey (Australian Commissioner Singapore) to DEA Canberra, 10 April 1947, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2.

117 ‘Political Appreciation’, 30 September 1948, NAA A1838/TS381/3/3/1/1, Part 1.

118 ‘Australia’s Reputation’, DEA transcript of article from *The Indian Daily Mail*, 22 May 1948, NAA A1838/381/3/1/1, Part 1.

119 See Vineet Thakur, ‘An Asian Drama: The Asian Relations Conference, 1947’, *The International History Review* 41, no. 3 (2018):673–695.

120 Report of Conference Proceedings, cited in Soares, ‘Engaging with Asia’, 498.

non-government observers.<sup>121</sup> Similar to the later Bandung Conference in 1955, this partial exclusion was on postcolonial political, rather than geographical, grounds, as the ‘most important issue’ for the Conference ‘was how to end the foreign domination of Asia, both politically and economically’.<sup>122</sup> Reflecting this, the Australian High Commissioner at New Delhi, IG Mackay, reported to Canberra that ‘[o]ur observers sense anti-European feeling’, but were ‘visited privately by members’ of some of the delegations.<sup>123</sup>

Australia was, however, officially invited to the 1949 New Delhi Conference on Indonesia on geographical grounds—as a part of the region.<sup>124</sup> This was met, according to Julie Soares, with a ‘favourable yet mixed response’ by the Chifley Government. Soares argues that this response was due to concerns over the perception that Australia might be seen to be siding with the ‘extremist agendas’ of Asian countries against Europeans, but, most importantly, that the ‘conference would seek to override the Security Council when the government’s long-standing position was that all disputes should be settled within the framework of the United Nations’.<sup>125</sup> This latter point is strongly supported by the archival evidence, especially on the part of Evatt who did not see the New Delhi Conference as brokering a solution to the conflict in Indonesia independently of the UN.

Canberra’s support for Indonesia’s independence from 1947, and the 1948 MacMahon Ball mission to Asia, are often considered as indications of how Australia might have forged a more independent foreign policy in the region during the Cold War had the ALP been returned to office in 1949.<sup>126</sup> But it is important to remember that while Ball may have had strong connections with Burton and the more liberal international elements within External Affairs,<sup>127</sup> the DEA was not the Australian

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121 Australian High Commissioner New Delhi (Mackay) to DEA Canberra, 24 March 1947, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2; ‘Note on Asian Regionalism’, 23 May 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

122 Soares, ‘Engaging with Asia’, 498.

123 Australian High Commissioner New Delhi (Mackay) to DEA Canberra, 26 March 1947, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 2.

124 Australian High Commissioner New Delhi (Gollan) to DEA Canberra, 7 January 1949, NAA A1838/381/3/2.

125 Soares, ‘Engaging with Asia’, 503.

126 Gareth Evans, ‘The Labor Tradition: A View from the 1990s’, in Lee and Waters, *Evatt to Evans*, 13.

127 Christopher Waters, ‘The MacMahon Ball Mission to East Asia 1948’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40, no. 3 (1994): 351–63.

Government, nor did it represent the influential views of the Defence Department. Despite Chifley's and the Australian labour movement's distaste for Dutch colonialism and sympathy for the Indonesian nationalist cause,<sup>128</sup> the Australian Government's support for Indonesian decolonisation in the late 1940s was driven as much by security fears over instability in a region of Australia's vital interest,<sup>129</sup> as it was by any principled commitment to the self-determination of colonial peoples. As Fetling notes, even Burton held the view that an Indonesian settlement was to serve Australia's primary interest of maintaining 'security and stability', and 'preventing violence and disorder in Australia's immediate environs'.<sup>130</sup>

Suares's conclusion, that the 'two New Delhi conferences lends weight to the view that the government's post-war foreign policy towards Asia was radical and innovative' is difficult to sustain when a broader focus is taken into account.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, in Commonwealth defence planning in the late 1940s, and later in ANZAM, there was little to no regard for Indonesian sovereignty, thus calling into question the Chifley Government's dedication to internationalism and Asian engagement in practice. Interestingly in this respect, in its early phases, ANZAM was referred to as 'ANZIM', with the 'I' designating Indonesia. The letter 'I' was changed in the title 'because of the potential of conflict of intent in relation to foreign territory', but no actual difference was made to the ANZAM area or to Commonwealth defence planning within it.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, ANZAM delivered to the Australian Government the 'neo-imperialist' island defence screen Evatt had wanted throughout the 1940s.<sup>133</sup>

Rather than a minister, Australia sent two senior External Affairs officials to the New Delhi Conference, Secretary John Burton and CW Moodie, whose 'main objective' was 'to explore means by which the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, can assist in bringing about in Indonesia, a speedy, just and lasting settlement to the present

128 Fetling, 'J.B. Chifley and the Indonesian Revolution', 517–31.

129 See DEA Canberra to Australian High Commissioner London, 27 December 1948, NAA A1838/382/8/1; and 'An Appreciation by The Chiefs of Staff of the Strategical Position of Australia', September 1947, NAA A5954/1628/3.

130 Fetling, 'An Australian Response to Asian Decolonisation', 205–06.

131 Suares, 'Engaging with Asia', 510.

132 See Department of Defence, *ANZIM to ANZUK—An Historical Outline of ANZAM*, Historical Monograph No. 96 (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1992).

133 Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 87, 214.

dispute'.<sup>134</sup> It seemed very important for the Australian Government that the 'conference does not conflict in any way with the powers or the jurisdiction of the Security Council'.<sup>135</sup> Unlike the Menzies Coalition Government that followed, the Chifley ALP Government did not want to be part of any exclusively Asian meetings or organisation, along with its concern that the Conference might circumvent UN Security Council processes. For example, Burton wrote to Evatt on 18 January 1949 that 'care must be taken at this Conference to ensure that continuing Committee or any such arrangement does not by degrees form into regional group'.<sup>136</sup>

The Conference Resolution condemned the Dutch military actions launched on 18 December 1948 as 'a flagrant breach of the Charter of the United Nations'. It made a number of recommendations to achieve a settlement, on which it requested the UN Security Council report progress to the General Assembly in its April 1949 session.<sup>137</sup> Burton's report on the Conference made the point that there was a strong desire for a regional organisation that did not include colonial or other outside powers, and that Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–64) intended to pursue this. According to Burton, the Conference was more important to Australia than its strict relevance to the Indonesian issue, however: 'It has shown that we can work with this group and that they are willing and anxious to work with us and in accord with the Charter'. Burton regarded it as important that in future Australia be represented at ministerial level and treat the deliberations with the importance afforded to any other international conference.<sup>138</sup> This recommendation was put into practice by the Menzies Government.

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134 DEA Canberra to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations London, Australian Embassy Washington, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Wellington, 5 January 1949, NAA A1838/381/3/2.

135 'Press Release: New Delhi Conference on Indonesia', 20 January 1949, NAA A1838/380/1/9; also 'Memorandum for the Minister: Asian Conference on Indonesia', 26 January 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

136 Australian High Commissioner New Delhi to DEA Canberra, 18 January 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

137 'Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the President of the Security Council', 22 January 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

138 'Memorandum for the Minister: Asian Conference on Indonesia', 26 January 1949, NAA A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4.

After the meeting, India suggested a framework for continuing contact between the countries of the Conference with a view to a future regional organisation as Burton had anticipated.<sup>139</sup> This was opposed by the Chifley Government on the basis 'that a regional organization should not stretch in an unwieldy fashion from the Philippines right across to Egypt'.<sup>140</sup> The DEA was also very concerned that any new regional organisations were within the framework of the UN. Considering the many functional UN agencies established by that time, the 'duplication' from another organisation 'would be appalling'.<sup>141</sup> It is clear from the documents that the Chifley Government saw regional organisation as technical and functional, rather than for the more intangible purpose of building regional consciousness and solidarity as it became later with the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) (1966–75) during the Cold War. Whereas for the Chifley Government the handling of Indonesian decolonisation was a technical and procedural matter for the UN Security Council, this did not apply to British decolonisation in Southeast Asia, which remained the responsibility of the Commonwealth, and to which the next chapter turns.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there were significant tensions in ALP Government foreign and defence policy between its staunch commitment to internationalism at the global level, its ambivalence toward regionalism with independent Asian states, and its paternalistic attitude towards decolonisation in Southeast Asia. Indeed, the evidence suggests that during the late 1940s the Australian Government was not prepared to deal with newly independent Asian states on the basis of sovereign equality. There were no ministerial visits to Asia, with Australia represented by DEA officials or observers. It was the Menzies Government that forged Australia's bilateral and multilateral relations with the non-communist and non-aligned states of Asia.

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139 Ibid.

140 Australian High Commissioner New Delhi to DEA Canberra, 2 February 1949, NAA A1838/381/3/2.

141 'Asian Consultative Machinery', DEA Brief for the Secretary, 10 February 1949, A1838/383/1/2/1, Part 4; also 'Regional Arrangement in South East Asia', 25 March 1949, NAA A1068/DL47/5/6.

It thus seems anachronistic or misplaced to apply the internationalist, 'middle power' label, and the discourse of Asian engagement as it developed in the 1990s, to the Chifley Government. It seems relatively clear from the documentary record that the ALP of the 1940s did not seek to 'engage' with a decolonising Asia outside UN processes. Indeed, it did not need to: the most strategically relevant parts of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, were considered to be in Australia's region and within the British Commonwealth sphere of influence after the war. In addition, the more realist outlook of the defence and intelligence establishments always balanced the internationalist tendencies of Evatt and the DEA. Evatt's paternalistic and evolutionary view of decolonisation in Asia within the framework of the European empires is also hardly consistent with liberal international notions of self-determination. In this there is much more continuity between the Chifley and Menzies governments than the internationalist narrative of Australia's foreign policy suggests.

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