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Decolonisation and Commonwealth responsibility

Most studies of Australia's postwar foreign and security policies posit a sharp break between the Chifley and Menzies governments.[1] A fresh reading of the archival sources reveals, however, a major continuity between the two governments. Both governments repeatedly expressed a similar notion of responsibility to the British Empire and Commonwealth in their regional policies toward Asia, suggesting less divergence than the literature maintains. As a part of this, Australia assumed significant responsibilities for the decolonisation of former British dependencies in Asia, whether directly in a security sense as in Malaya, and later Malaysia, or with the provision of aid and technical assistance through the Colombo Plan.

This continuity between the two governments derived from Evatt's security focus on preventing the pattern of Japan's wartime advance toward Australia. Evatt's obsessive concern for postwar security in Australia's 'near north' was a strong driver for the development of a robust Commonwealth sphere of influence across insular Southeast Asia and the South Pacific in which Australia would seek to play a leading role. In this, Evatt's security outlook and that of the defence establishment converged, although for different reasons. The Defence Department was more attuned to securing Australia's approaches in the context of emerging Cold War dynamics in East Asia. Evatt, who continued to worry about a resurgence of Japanese militarism, denied these dynamics until the end of his tenure in office

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1   For example, David Lee, *Search for Security: The Political Economy of Australia's Postwar Foreign and Defence Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 107.

in 1949. Nonetheless, Evatt's continued focus on Japan after the war laid the foundations for ANZAM (the Australia–New Zealand–Malaya Agreement), under the umbrella of which Australia's Cold War forward defence deployments to Malaya and Borneo were undertaken during the 1950s and 1960s.

My argument in this chapter is that the motive of Commonwealth responsibility has not been given sufficient explanatory weight in interpreting Australia's engagement with Asia under both Australian Labor Party (ALP) and Coalition governments during the early decades of the Cold War from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s. Australia's assumption of greater Commonwealth responsibilities in the region, partly because of Britain's postwar resource constraints, led to a deep involvement in Southeast Asian decolonisation, which transcended Cold War security interests. The responsibility felt by Australian political elites to assist in the orderly decolonisation of the Straits Settlements, Malayan Peninsula and British Borneo Territories cannot be adequately understood within a Cold War ideological framework of anti-communism. Nor can it be fully explained by the instrumental logic of forward defence. The evidence suggests that in its approach to Southeast Asian decolonisation, Australia was driven as much by normative sentiments of responsibility to the British Commonwealth as it was by calculations of Cold War strategic interest.

This sense of Commonwealth responsibility began to decline in the 1960s, and markedly from 1966 with the advent of the Suharto regime in Indonesia and the ending of Sukarno's Confrontation policy against Malaysia, which largely concluded the British decolonisation process in Southeast Asia. As Gregory Pemberton points out, the 'end of Confrontation' had the 'important effect' of reducing 'the basis for close co-operation with Britain, which had always acted as a brake on Australia's closer accommodation with America. It allowed Australia to concentrate more on helping the US in Vietnam'.[2] Gary Woodard notes similarly, the 'British relationship remained far more important than is generally conceded right up to the time an Australian battalion joined the Vietnam war alongside the Americans, but without the British'.[3]

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2   Gregory Pemberton, *All the Way: Australia's Road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 332.

3   Gary Woodard, *Asian Alternatives: Australia's Vietnam Decision and Lessons on Going to War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 2. A similar point is made by Derek McDougall, 'The Malayan Emergency and Confrontation', in *Munich to Vietnam: Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States Since the 1930s*, ed. Carl Bridge (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 139.

This chapter also challenges the assumptions of Australia's foreign policy traditions in a number of ways. Conceptually, the internationalist tradition foregrounds a set of broadly liberal norms through which Australia's interests are pursued, while the 'great and powerful friends' tradition emphasises the pursuit of security interests that reflect the strategic concerns of Australia's great power allies, particularly the United States (US). The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that, at least in Australian approaches to decolonisation in Southeast Asia, the reverse was the case. For the Chifley ALP Government, perceptions of its security interests in Australia's near north informed and structured its Commonwealth responsibilities. For the Menzies Coalition Government, its British Commonwealth responsibilities sometimes took precedence over US conceptions of strategic interest in Southeast Asia until the mid-1960s.

Empirically, the chapter locates the origins of Australia's Commonwealth responsibilities and, consequently, its forward defence policy in the late 1940s period of the Chifley ALP Government. The stated principles of the ALP Government's postwar foreign and security policy gave primacy to the United Nations (UN) and the collective security mechanism of the Security Council. However, 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.[4] As the previous chapter has shown, the Chifley Government's postwar policies in Australia's region sought to prevent a resurgence of Japanese aggression or guard against any similar pattern of invasion threat from Asia.[5] The internationalist narrative of the history of Australia's foreign policy privileges the former of these principles. The evidence suggests that the latter should be given much greater emphasis.

The primary vehicle for maintaining security in Australia's near north was the ANZAM Agreement (1950–71), the British Commonwealth defence planning arrangement in Southeast Asia. The formal origins of ANZAM date from mid-1947, after the concept was developed at the 1946 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London. Australia assumed primary responsibility for planning in the ANZAM

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4   House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 46, Friday, 15 November 1946, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 1st Period, 346–47.
5   Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 3 (1992): 324.

area in 1950.[6] Under the Menzies Coalition Government, Australia's military deployments to the Malayan Emergency (1955) and Indonesian Confrontation (1965) were undertaken under ANZAM auspices as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR). Australia's forward defence policy was not due to subservience to US Cold War priorities in Southeast Asia.[7] As this chapter demonstrates, the US never agreed with the ANZAM concept and saw little value in it. To Washington it was a relic of Empire, the Pacific War and the Chifley Government's enduring fear of Japan. But as a Commonwealth initiative, ANZAM allowed the Menzies Government to engage with a decolonising Southeast Asia during the Cold War within a familiar British Commonwealth normative and practical framework. There was a close Commonwealth identification with the decolonising British dependencies in Southeast Asia, which Menzies' oft-cited 'imperial imagination' could readily accommodate.[8]

The chapter first briefly provides the conceptual underpinnings of the relationship between interests and norms, before introducing responsibility as an under-theorised motive in foreign policy analysis. It then establishes the grounds for responsibility within the British Commonwealth during the immediate postwar period. The third section shows that despite his 'internationalism', it was Evatt, not Menzies, who initiated the paternalistic theme that the Australia Government carried a special responsibility for a decolonising Southeast Asia on behalf of the British Empire and Western civilisation. Section four examines the Menzies era of the 1950s. It demonstrates through the examples of ANZAM and Australia's military commitments to Malaya and Borneo that during this early period of the Cold War, responsibility to the Commonwealth remained an important driver of policy, independent of the US relationship.

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6   'Submission No. 407—Pacific Defence Arrangements—Memorandum by Ministers for External Affairs and Defence', Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 683, 24 March 1953, National Archives of Australia (NAA) A1838/TS687/1, Part 3; Department of Defence, *ANZIM to ANZUK— An Historical Outline of ANZAM*, Historical Monograph No. 96 (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1992); see also Alastair Cooper, 'At the Crossroads: Anglo-Australian Naval Relations, 1945–1971', *The Journal of Military History* 58, no. 4 (1994): 699–718. The military organisation was known as the ANZAM Chiefs of Staff, consisting of the Australian chiefs of staff and representatives from the UK and New Zealand, but 'acting through the Australian Higher Defence Machinery'; see 'The ANZAM Region', UK Commonwealth Relations Office, 29 November 1951, in NAA A1838/TS687/1, Part 1.
7   Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 152.
8   Frank Bongiorno, 'The Price of Nostalgia: Menzies, the "Liberal" Tradition and Australian Foreign Policy', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 3 (2005): 414; see also PJ Boyce, 'The Bonds of Culture and Commonwealth in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1971): 71–72.

Norms, responsibility and the British Commonwealth

Norms for behaviour can be defined as the principles, standards and rules, both substantive and procedural, which prescribe or proscribe social action in situations of choice, by carrying a moral obligation that they ought to be followed.[9] Norms reflect intersubjective consensus about appropriate behaviour for a given identity in particular social contexts.[10] The conceptual separation between self-interest and norms rests on their instrumental and non-instrumental characters. Instrumental actions are contingent, future-oriented and concerned with the achievement of outcomes. Normative behaviour, by contrast, is relatively rigid, process-oriented and non-instrumental,[11] in that the anticipated consequences of normative action are not reducible to utility or means-ends consistency. These logics of action have been dichotomised in the International Relations literature as 'logics of expected consequences' versus 'logics of appropriateness', with the former traditionally dominating the latter as an explanatory device in foreign policy analysis.[12]

While conceptually distinct, the two logics are not mutually exclusive in practice.[13] That there is always an element of self-interest in state behaviour does not preclude that a normative element can also inhere in such behaviour.[14] March and Olsen advance four interpretations of the relationships between the two logics of action: that the logic holding

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9   Andrew Hurrell, 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations', in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A Simmons (London: Sage, 2002), 143.

10   Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 22; Vaughn P Shannon, 'Norms are What States Make of Them: The Political Psychology of Norm Violation', *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (2000): 300; and Ronald L Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 54.

11   Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 98–99.

12   James G March and Johan P Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 949–54.

13   Shannon, 'Norms are What States Make of Them', 298.

14   Chris Brown, 'Ethics, Interests and Foreign Policy', in *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, ed. Karen E Smith and Margot Light (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22–23; Gregory A Raymond, 'Problems and Prospects in the Study of International Norms', *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (1997): 218; Richard K Herrmann and Vaughn P Shannon, 'Defending International Norms: The Role of Obligation, Material Interest, and Perception in Decision Making', *International Organization* 55, no. 3 (2001): 621–23.

greater clarity, or precision, in situational context will dominate decision-making; that the weaker of the logics refines decision-making based on the stronger; that the relationship between the two logics is developmental in that instrumental action will become rule-based over time; and that the logics are sequential, in that one structures the field of action of the other.[15] The last of these perhaps holds the greatest salience in the period under consideration here. But the purpose of this chapter is not to systematically identify the balance between, or the sequencing of, norms and interests in Australia's foreign policy decision-making. Rather, it is to demonstrate that norms, which carry moral obligations, held greater significance during this period than is generally afforded in the literature.

Responsibility is a normative concept, defined as 'the obligation to fulfill certain duties, to assume certain burdens, to carry out certain commitments'.[16] Or, put another way, obligation 'is the owing of a duty; and behind it, claiming the performance of that duty, is responsibility'.[17] As a political concept, responsibility is a duty owed to someone or some organisation, and as AC Ewing writes, a 'political organization is indeed largely a system of responsibilities'.[18] The term responsibility is relatively recent historically and surprisingly under-theorised as a political concept. It dates from the late 18th century and the development of parliamentary and republican systems of 'responsible government'.[19]

The grounds of political responsibility lie in '*cultural* responsibility', in that the 'political responsibilities of nations reflect and protect the cultural values of societies'. This cultural responsibility 'provides the connection by which political and moral responsibility influence each other'.[20] According to Richard McKeon, a 'responsible community reflects a tradition of responsibility based on the character of the community' and is 'responsive to the requirements of common values and of the common good'.[21] Responsibility is thus normative rather than self-interested as it

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15   March and Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders', 952–54.
16   Paul Ricoeur, *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12.
17   Clyde Eagleton, *The Responsibility of States in International Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1928), 3.
18   AC Ewing, 'Responsibility Toward Oneself and Others', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 11, no. 39 (1957): 51.
19   Richard McKeon, 'The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 11, no. 39 (1957): 23–24.
20   McKeon, 'The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility', 25.
21   Ibid.

is dedicated to the *common* good defined according to a set of cultural values. Applied to communities in the plural, the notion of responsibility implies interdependence, 'where independent communities assume responsibilities with respect to each other', and 'constitute a kind of inclusive community'. Responsibility within this broader inclusive community is based on common values and a common rationality.[22] For the self-governing Dominions, the organic, intangible bonds of the British Commonwealth were an independent community of values with a common rationality, to which responsibility was felt to be owed.

The 1931 Statute of Westminster established the Commonwealth of the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland within the British Empire. Their 'free association' and 'unity' was symbolised 'by a common allegiance to the Crown'.[23] In 1948, the British Government likened the Commonwealth to:

> a living organism, within which the members are able to develop in their own way. It has no fixed constitution, no central legislature or executive authority; the only formal link is the Crown … The States Members of the British Commonwealth are entirely self-governing; different parties are in power in each according to the will of their people expressed at general elections. Geographical position and particular problems influence and modify the external policy of each, though common interests and traditions lead by and large to common foreign policies.[24]

With Indian independence in 1947 and establishment of the Republic of India in 1950, the 'British' label was omitted in favour of the term Commonwealth of Nations, although there was never any formal, constitutional title for the British Empire or Commonwealth.[25] But the bond between the British settler Dominions and the UK, particularly Australia and New Zealand as the most 'British' of the self-governing Dominions, remained very strong. In 1955, H Duncan Hall argued that 'the New Zealander or the Australian often feels he is more

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22   Ibid., 26.
23   *Statute of Westminster*, 1931.
24   'Themes of Publicity about the Commonwealth and Empire', 1948, The National Archives (TNA) UK, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Records (FCO) 141/2062.
25   James ES Fawcett, *The British Commonwealth in International Law* (London: Steven & Sons, 1963), 1.

Commonwealth-minded and more British than the British'.[26] Unlike India and other non-British member states, Australia and New Zealand felt 'obliged to make common cause with Britain'.[27]

Writing in 1961, Ivor Jennings likened the British Commonwealth to 'a mutual protection society',[28] while Hedley Bull later described it as 'a transnational community'.[29] Hall used the metaphor of a 'family' with 'unity of spirit and identity of purpose' to describe the loyalty of the members of the Commonwealth to one another, and 'their solidarity in vital matters of common concern'.[30] There were no formal alliance obligations in the Commonwealth, with responsibilities 'imposed not by one nation on another, but by each nation on itself'. Nor were the obligations necessarily mutual. They existed partly in a member's 'own interest, but partly also because sentiment would insist on it'.[31] Hall states that the 'feeling of responsibility was not merely for the good government of the local territory, or country; it extended to the whole family of the Commonwealth'.[32]

In a 1950 speech, Menzies argued that despite the membership of India as a republic, the 'Australian relationship to the United Kingdom, to Canada, to New Zealand, to most of the British Commonwealth countries, is structural or organic'.[33] Among the 'British peoples' of the Commonwealth, there was 'an instinctive unity of feeling' that 'displays itself instantly in times of trial'.[34] Menzies emphasised sentiment over interests, in reiterating the Commonwealth association as one of 'common duty and common instinct'.[35] Stuart Ward summarises that 'these sentiments underlined Menzies' sense of the innate, organic and inviolable nature of the bonds uniting the British world'.[36]

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26   H Duncan Hall, 'The British Commonwealth', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 99, no. 4 (1955): 253.

27   JDB Miller, *The Commonwealth in the World*, 3rd edn (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1965), 54.

28   Ivor Jennings, *The British Commonwealth of Nations* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1961), 89.

29   Hedley Bull, 'Britain and Australia in Foreign Policy', in *Australians and British: Social and Political Connections*, ed. JDB Miller (Sydney: Methuen Australia, 1987), 103.

30   Hall, 'The British Commonwealth', 251.

31   Jennings, *British Commonwealth of Nations*, 94.

32   Hall, 'The British Commonwealth', 253.

33   Robert Menzies, 'The British Commonwealth of Nations in International Affairs', Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, Adelaide, 26 June (Sydney: Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1950), 4.

34   Menzies, 'The British Commonwealth of Nations in International Affairs', 15.

35   Ibid., 25.

36   Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 21.

The interplay between interest and sentiment in Menzies' foreign policy outlook is a theme canvassed in the literature.[37] However, the more diffuse notion of sentiment has not been theorised as a norm of responsibility and systematically analysed against the evidence as it is here. And while ALP leaders Chifley and Evatt did not speak of the British Empire and Commonwealth in the same sentimental idiom as Menzies, their statements examined below carry similar normative connotations. The following section analyses the Chifley Government's claims of responsibility in Southeast Asia on behalf of the British Commonwealth.

Australia and Commonwealth responsibility in Southeast Asia

The Menzies Opposition criticised the Chifley Government, and Evatt in particular, for ignoring Australia's region for a preoccupation with the new UN organisation.[38] On my reading, this criticism was largely overstated. Christine de Matos makes the point that Evatt's policy outlook was characterised by a deep tension between his 'long-term suspicion and fear of Japan' on the one hand, which kept him focused on the Asia-Pacific, and his 'international liberalism' and 'dedication to the United Nations' on the other.[39] In the immediate postwar years, the Chifley Government's dedication to the UN was tempered by British Empire loyalty, uncertainty about Washington's intentions in the Western Pacific, and a visceral concern for security and stability in the region to Australia's immediate north. For these reasons, Evatt sought a British Commonwealth sphere of influence across the Malayan archipelago and islands of the Southwest Pacific in which Australia would predominate, which De Matos labels 'vaguely neo-imperialist'.[40]

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37   See Bongiorno, 'The Price of Nostalgia', 400–17; Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*; and David McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 1 (2006): 72–73.

38   See, for example, Senate, *Official Hansard*, No. 9, Wednesday, 2 March 1949, 18th Parliament, 2nd Session, 2nd Period, 798–831. On this theme, see David Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948–1954* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), 20–21; and Lowe, 'Divining a Labor Line: Conservative Constructions of Labor's Foreign Policy, 1944–49', in *Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy*, ed. David Lee and Christopher Waters (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 62–74.

39   Christine De Matos, *Imposing Peace & Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 5, 28–29.

40   De Matos, *Imposing Peace & Prosperity*, 23.

This chapter also resonates with the work of Wayne Reynolds, who argues that the dominant perspectives on this period place too much emphasis on the turn to the US in December 1941, the fall of Singapore in February 1942 and steady decline of the Anglo-Australian relationship thereafter, culminating in 'all the way with LBJ' and the Vietnam War. In this view, the onset of the Menzies era marked a sharp reversal from the progressive liberal internationalism of the Chifley Government. For example, David Lee argues that 'sweeping changes' were ushered in with 'the change of government in December 1949 … above all, this meant greater defence preparations and a readiness to fit into Anglo-American strategic plans'.[41] Along with his growing sycophancy toward Washington, the Anglophile Menzies sought to revive the British Empire relationship in the 1950s, best demonstrated by the aberration of allowing British nuclear testing at Woomera and his support for London in the 1956 Suez Crisis.[42]

Reynolds demonstrates, however, that rather than championing the rights of small states in the UN as the internationalist interpretation holds, Evatt actually sought the special status for Australia of a 'security power' in postwar arrangements. In this, the British 'Fourth Empire' after the war was crucial to Australia.[43] Christopher Waters recognises the enduring value of the British Empire to Evatt and Chifley, but argues that they were nationalists first, 'determined that Australia would have the freedom to act … in the postwar world' independently of British interests or Commonwealth unity. I agree with Waters that Evatt and Chifley overestimated British power after the war,[44] but it is perhaps more accurate to interpret that the Chifley Government sought to further Australia's security interests, especially in the Asia-Pacific, through the material, institutional and political resources of the British Commonwealth, rather than in opposition to it, or independently of it.

Despite his later mythologising as an internationalist, it was Evatt who initiated the theme between 1944 and 1946 that Australia and New Zealand 'as the main centres of civilisation' carried a 'special responsibility' for the security and welfare of the Southwest Pacific and

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41   Lee, *Search for Security*, 107–08.
42   Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb*, 6.
43   Ibid., 25, 31–32.
44   Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995), 18–19.

South Pacific areas on behalf of the British Commonwealth.[45] It was the 'two British Pacific Dominions' that 'must uphold Western civilisation in this part of the world'. Their 'responsibility' could not 'be abdicated'.[46] Chifley said, similarly:

> Australia today has become the great bastion of the British-speaking south of the Equator. Strategically and economically our country has assumed a position in the Pacific on behalf of the British Commonwealth of Nations.[47]

Bongiorno makes the point that in his regional foreign policy approaches 'Evatt drew on a narrative of empire in which he had a large emotional and intellectual investment'.[48] In this he was consistent with the ALP prime ministers John Curtin (1941–45) and Ben Chifley.[49]

Both Britain and Australia recognised that Australia and New Zealand would carry a much greater and immediate responsibility for Commonwealth political affairs and security interests in Asia and the Pacific, due to the UK being weakened by the war.[50] This was understood as responsibility for the 'formulation and control' of strategic policy on behalf of the Commonwealth in line with broader Commonwealth policy.[51] The September 1947 *Appreciation of the Strategical Position of Australia* stated that the 'recent war has reduced the military and economic strength of the United Kingdom considerably'. It was necessary that:

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45 'Statement to Parliament 10th February, 1944 on the Australia–New Zealand Agreement by the Rt. Hon. Dr. H.V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs', 10 February 1944, NAA A1066/P145/183; and 'Dr. Evatt's Statement in House of Reps. 8.11.46.', 8 November 1946, NAA A1838/380/1/9.

46 '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.

47 Quoted in Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for The Atomic Bomb*, 46–47.

48 Frank Bongiorno, '"British to the Bootstraps?" H.V. Evatt, J.B. Chifley and Australian Policy on Indian Membership of the Commonwealth, 1947–49', *Australian Historical Studies* 125 (2005): 20.

49 James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 28, 35–36.

50 See excerpt from article in *Sunday News*, Singapore, 7 July 1947, in NAA A1838/TS382/8/2/1, Part 2; 'Appreciation of the Strategic Position of Australia, September, 1947', NAA A816/14/301/352; 'The Strategic Position of Australia—Review by the Chiefs of Staff Committee: Conclusions of the Council of Defence', 20 April 1948, NAA A816/14/301/352; 'Australia and Singapore', *The Straits Times*, Singapore, 21 March 1947, in NAA A1838/TS382/8/2/1, Part 2; and 'Dr. Evatt's Statement in House of Reps., 6.6.47', 6 June 1947, NAA A1838/380/1/9.

51 'The Strategic Position of Australia—Review by the Chiefs of Staff Committee: Conclusions of the Council of Defence', 20 April 1948, NAA A816/14/301/352.

> Australia should make greater efforts for self-sufficiency and also contribute to the military and economic strength of the British Commonwealth than in the past. By virtue of her geographical position, Australia should assume increased responsibilities in British Commonwealth matters in the Indian Ocean, South East Asia and the Pacific.[52]

In August 1948, the US State Department confirmed, 'Australia sees herself as spokesman for the British Commonwealth and senior member of the Anzac partnership in all matters relating to the Pacific area'.[53]

By March 1946, the Empire defence concept that gave rise to ANZAM had been instigated. This was further developed at the 1946 conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers held in London in April and May.[54] In advance of the conference, Evatt told the Australian Parliament 'that an entirely new concept in British Commonwealth relations' was now emerging, which reconciled 'full dominion autonomy with full British Commonwealth co-operation'. It involved the 'possibility of a dominion acting in certain regions or for certain purposes on behalf of the other members of the British Commonwealth, including the United Kingdom itself'. It was nearly at a stage where 'a common policy can be carried out through a chosen dominion instrumentality in an area or in relation to a subject-matter which is of primary concern to that dominion'.[55] According to Reynolds, this was 'a blueprint for the Fourth Empire', to which Evatt and the Chifley Government were fully committed.[56]

The Chifley ALP Government expressly conceived Australia's increased Commonwealth responsibilities in Asia in the context of emerging decolonisation. Referring to the imminent independence of India and Burma, Evatt made the point in February 1947, that as 'Britain relinquishes its special responsibilities in those areas, the degree of Australia's initiative and responsibility must be substantially increased'.[57] The origins of the ANZAM Agreement, Australia's close engagement with Southeast Asian

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

53   'Policy Statement of the Department of State', 18 August 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, doc. 1.

54   Department of Defence, *ANZIM to ANZUK*.

55   House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 11, Wednesday, 13 March 1946, 17th Parliament, 3rd Session, 2nd Period, 191.

56   Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb*, 40.

57   House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 9, Wednesday, 26 February 1947, 18th Parliament, 1st Session, 2nd Period, 173.

decolonisation during the Cold War, and the conditions for Australia's forward defence deployments to Malaya and Borneo are located in the Chifley Government's view, derived from its wartime experience, of Southeast Asia as Australia's region and Commonwealth responsibility.

Decolonisation and Commonwealth responsibility in the Cold War

For the Menzies Coalition Government, elected on 19 December 1949, it was the Cold War in Asia that drove regional policy rather than the ALP Government's enduring fear of Japan. Reflecting this, the new External Affairs Minister Percy Spender's (1949–51) rhetoric on taking office was different in tone and content from that of Evatt. It was projected outwards into the region, in contrast to Evatt's customary attitude of defensiveness vis-à-vis a resurgent Japan. For example, on 3 January 1950 Spender said:

> Australia, which with New Zealand, has the greatest direct interest in Asia of all Western peoples, must develop a dynamic policy towards neighbouring Asian countries. We should give leadership to developments in that area.[58]

Leadership in Asia was given policy expression through two initiatives, the Colombo Plan and ANZAM Agreement. The Colombo Plan was a Commonwealth development initiative originally offered to former British colonies in South Asia and to the remaining colonial dependencies of Malaya, the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca and Singapore) and the British Borneo territories. It was subsequently extended to include all South and Southeast Asian states throughout the 1950s. The Plan was drafted at a meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers held at Colombo from 9 to 14 January 1950, the first such meeting to include the newly independent Asian states of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.[59] Spender remarked on 3 January prior to attending the Conference that '"Commonwealth relations strikingly manifest the movement of the world's centre towards the East. The location of the Conference at Colombo reflects the importance attached to this area"'.[60] The Plan

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58 Quoted in 'Australia's Role in S.E. Asia', *The Age*, 3 January 1950, in NAA A1838/381/3/1/1, Part 1.
59 Daniel Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 33.
60 Quoted in 'Australia's Role in S.E. Asia', *The Age*, 3 January 1950, in NAA A1838/381/3/1/1, Part 1.

was an umbrella scheme to assess development needs identified by the recipients and to provide technical assistance, education and training. Aid funding and delivery were then arranged bilaterally between the donors (Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and recipients.[61]

Spender was instrumental in providing the political impetus for formulating and implementing the Plan, which was launched in July 1951,[62] although its intellectual contours lay in the final years of the previous ALP Government.[63] Australia's motives for taking a leading role in the Plan involved both normative commitments and longer-range strategic interests. Raising living standards in South and Southeast Asia was viewed as an obligation by the Australian Government,[64] with Canberra's political objectives for the Plan defined as attaining 'Commonwealth solidarity and Asian-Western friendship'.[65] Indian Finance Minister, Chintaman Deshmukh, in commenting on Australia's contribution to the Colombo Plan in 1952, said '"the significance of such friendly assistance far transcends its material value"'.[66] Socio-economic development in the region would in turn lessen the attractiveness of socialist ideology and protect against communist subversion.[67] By demonstrating Australia's commitment to Southeast Asia in this way, Spender also sought to attract greater US involvement. This came to fruition when Washington's aid program in Southeast Asia was associated with the Colombo Plan in late 1950 and the US formally entered the Plan as a donor country in 1951.[68]

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61   David Lowe and Daniel Oakman, 'Introduction', in *Australia and the Colombo Plan 1949–1957*, ed. David Lowe and Daniel Oakman (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2004), xxv; BR Tomlinson, '"The Weapons of the Weakened": British Power, Sterling Balances, and the Origins of the Colombo Plan', in *The Transformation of the International Order of Asia: Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Colombo Plan*, ed. Shigeru Akita, Gerold Krozewski and Shoichi Watanabe (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 34–35.

62   See David Lowe, 'Percy Spender and the Colombo Plan', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40, no. 2 (1994): 162–76; and Lowe, 'Canberra's Colombo Plan: Public Images of Australia's Relations with Post-Colonial South and Southeast Asia in the 1950s', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002): 185–88.

63   See Lowe and Oakman, 'Introduction', xxvii–iii.

64   House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 23, Wednesday, 4 June 1952, 20th Parliament, 1st Session, 4th Period, 1370.

65   'Political Objectives of the Colombo Plan', 19 March 1952, NAA A1838/3004/11, Part 1.

66   Quoted in House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 23, Wednesday, 4 June 1952, 20th Parliament, 1st Session, 4th Period, 1371.

67   Oakman, *Facing Asia*, 36–42.

68   Lowe, 'Percy Spender and the Colombo Plan'.

Australia's responsibilities for Commonwealth security in Southeast Asia, which is the main focus of the chapter, were discharged primarily under the umbrella of the ANZAM Agreement. ANZAM denoted the Commonwealth zone of defence in Asia, in which Australia carried planning responsibility from 1950.[69] ANZAM covered a wider sweep of geography than is suggested by its title. It was defined as:

> an area of the South West Pacific and Indian Oceans including Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, New Guinea and Australia and New Zealand. It does not include Burma, Siam, Indo-China, the Philippines or countries north of these.[70]

The Malayan area thus included the Indian Ocean from the East Pakistan–Burma border to the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia and all of insular Southeast Asia, and the surrounding waters of the South China Sea, including the Gulf of Thailand except for the Philippine Islands. The Agreement gave British recognition to the areas of responsibility claimed and delineated earlier by Australia in the 1944 Australia–New Zealand Agreement (the ANZAC Pact).

In March 1951, the ANZAM area of responsibility was recognised by the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Radford, on behalf of the US, although with the proviso that Washington would not necessarily treat this as a separate region in a war situation, but as a sub-area of CINCPAC in which the ANZAM command would be subject to US direction.[71] The 1951 Radford-Collins Agreement was revised in 1957 and remains in effect today. Boundaries between ANZAM and US spheres of responsibility were designated, and command and control coordinated.[72] That the Agreement was entered into by Australia under Rear Admiral Collins, rather than a Royal Navy representative, shows that Australia's Commonwealth defence responsibilities for Southeast Asia and the Pacific were considered by Britain to be primary. According to

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69   Cooper, 'At the Crossroads', 700–01; 'The Future of ANZAM', Memorandum by the UK Chiefs of Staff, 22 December 1952, in NAA A5954/1424/3; 'Pacific Defence Arrangements: Memorandum by Ministers for External Affairs and Defence', Cabinet Submission, NAA A1838/TS687/1, Part 3.

70   'The ANZAM Region', UK Commonwealth Relations Office, 29 November 1951, in NAA A1838/TS687/1, Part 1; also 'The Future of ANZAM', Memorandum by the UK Chiefs of Staff Committee, 22 December 1952, in NAA A5954/1424/3.

71   'Recognition of the States of the ANZAM Region as a Possible Theatre of War', Annex 4 to Defence Committee Minute no. 249/1952, NAA A5954/1421/4.

72   'Boundaries of the ANZAM Region', Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Radford-Collins Conference, 14 June 1951, NAA A816/14/301/437; 'ANZAM Planning for the Defence of Malaya and South East Asia', March 1955, NAA A5954/1459/1.

FA Mediansky, the Radford-Collins Agreement is seen by Washington 'as constituting an Australian obligation' under the Australia–New Zealand–United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty.[73]

Australia's 'special role' in Southeast Asia through ANZAM was reiterated throughout the first half of the 1950s, along with the recurring theme of its Commonwealth responsibilities. In March 1953, the Menzies Government stated quite explicitly that the purpose of the ANZAM arrangement was to recognise Australia's 'special role'.[74] The British Commonwealth connection and ANZAM responsibilities in Southeast Asia remained of high importance to Australia independently of its Cold War security interests and relationship with the US. This can be seen in that Washington always remained unconvinced of the strategic value of ANZAM because any overt aggression from communist China would need to be halted much further north. If the Malayan Peninsula were being threatened by a Chinese land invasion, this would mean an unlikely last-ditch stand by Commonwealth forces at the Songkhla Position on the thin Kra Isthmus in southern Thailand, effectively signifying the collapse of the 'free world' position in mainland East Asia.[75] The report from the June 1956 ANZAM Staff Meeting in Singapore explicitly stated that there 'is little chance of ANZAM alone being able to fulfil its strategic function in war, because the United States does not agree with the present ANZAM concept'.[76]

Also, by the mid-1950s, Cold War tensions in Southeast Asia had become focused on internal communist subversion. Lacking naval capacity, defence planners did not consider an external invasion of the Malayan area by communist forces realistic. In a Cold War strategic sense, ANZAM's traditional defence planning focus was largely redundant compared with the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (1954–77), which dealt

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73   FA Mediansky, 'The Defence of Australia and the American Alliance', *Australian Outlook* 41, no. 3 (1987): 157.

74   'Australia's Special Role in the ANZAM Region', Memorandum of Australian Government's Observations of United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff Memorandum C.O.S. (52) 685, Attachment to 'Future of ANZAM', Memo from PA McBride (Defence Minister) to Menzies, 18 March 1953, NAA A1209/1957/5670.

75   See 'Defence of Malaya, Summary View of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (Admiral Radford) during Discussion with Australian Prime Minister (Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies) on March 18th, 1955', 18 March 1955, NAA A5954/1563/1; 'Annex A: Relationship between ANZAM and SEATO', in 'Report on the ANZAM Staff Meeting, Singapore, June 1956', NAA A816/53/11/301/1051; and 'ANZAM', 23 May 1957, NAA A1209/1957/5682.

76   'Annex A: Relationship between ANZAM and SEATO' in 'Report on the ANZAM Staff Meeting, Singapore, June 1956', NAA A816/53/11/301/1051.

with both overt aggression and subversion, covered all the countries directly concerned and, most importantly, also included the US.[77] Washington considered ANZAM 'misdirected and ill-intentioned', with a practical lack of capability to carry out its plans, and consequently with an implicit and unwelcome reliance on US assistance in 'forces and materiel'.[78]

David Lee notes that Washington was interested in defence planning in this area only under the umbrella of SEATO and, more generally, ANZUS.[79] The Eisenhower administration's (1953–61) policy was that, in the event of war in East Asia, holding operations would be conducted in such peripheral areas as Malaya, while 'a massive counter stroke' was taken directly against the Chinese mainland—in all likelihood nuclear, and therefore only subject to planning in a very general sense.[80] Lee argues that this devaluing of the ANZAM concept was the origin of the Australia's 'turn' to the US.[81] My point here is to emphasise that rather than contributing meaningfully to US Cold War strategy, Australia's security responsibilities to the Commonwealth through ANZAM served to foster a deep Australian involvement in the British decolonisation process across the Malayan Peninsula and archipelago.[82]

In the context of decolonisation in Asia, scholars have made the implausible argument that in the mid-1950s Australia was faced with a sharp choice 'between joining an emerging pan-Asian regional solidarity that gained expression at Bandung in 1955, and fitting into the rigid, hub-and-spokes security architecture centred on the United States and containing communism'.[83] Yet, attendance at the April 1955 Bandung Conference, which instigated the non-aligned movement, was not the Australian Government's choice to make, despite criticisms at the time by the former secretary of the External Affairs Department, John Burton (1947–50).[84] The idea for a conference of Afro-Asian nations was

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77   Ibid.
78   Department of Defence, *ANZIM to ANZUK*.
79   Lee, *Search for Security*, 132.
80   Department of Defence, *ANZIM to ANZUK*.
81   Lee, *Search for Security*, 133–34.
82   For a detailed account of Australia's diplomatic and security role in the decolonisation of Malaysia and Singapore, see Andrea Benvenuti, *Cold War and Decolonisation: Australia's Policy towards Britain's End of Empire in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017).
83   Martin Griffiths and Michael Wesley, 'Taking Asia Seriously', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2010): 15; see also Alison Broinowski, *About Face: Asian Accounts of Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2003).
84   Australian Embassy Djakarta to Department of External Affairs (DEA) Canberra, 15 April 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 4.

announced in December 1954 by Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. Of these, only Indonesia resolutely opposed inviting Australia, ostensibly because of Canberra's support for the continuing colonial status of West Irian and its position in East New Guinea.[85]

Had Australia pushed for an invitation, the archival records indicate this would have been supported diplomatically by India, although it is doubtful whether this would have overcome a veto by Jakarta.[86] While not explicitly anti-colonial or anti-'white', the common denominator binding the 30 participants from Asia, the Middle East and North Africa was deemed by Canberra to be

> a common feeling, shared in varying degree, of being dispossessed, of having a smaller share of the world's wealth and privileges than they were entitled to, on a basis of population, need, or merit.[87]

The pros and cons of pressing for inclusion at this and any similar future meetings were debated within the Australian Government.[88] But a country with Australia's history and institutions was not a natural fit for a meeting based on this rationale, despite its Commonwealth connections and close relationships with a number of participating non-communist regional states.[89] There was also very little 'pan-Asian solidarity' at Bandung as the primary sources show, rather a number of mutually suspicious camps: Indonesia and the 'non-aligned' countries; the People's Republic of China (PRC) and communist states; and the non-communist states of Asia,

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85   'Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, 1955: Volume II – Agenda Papers', December 1954–January 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 2; 'The Bogor Meeting', JCG Kevin (Australian Ambassador Djakarta) to Sir Richard Casey (Minister for External Affairs), 6 January 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 2; 'A Report on the Asian-African Conference at Bandung', Professor GP Fitzgerald, Australian National University, 20 June 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 7.

86   'Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, 1955: Volume II – Agenda Papers', December 1954-January 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 2; *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 April 1955, in NAA A1838/3002/1/1, Part 2; Christopher Waters, 'After Decolonization: Australia and the Emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement in Asia, 1954–55', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (2001): 165–66; David Walker, 'Nervous Outsiders: Australia and the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung', *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 125 (2005): 44–45.

87   'Asian-African Conference Bandung 18th–24th April, 1955', Cabinet Submission: Casey's Report on Conference, 30 April 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 7.

88   Ibid.

89   Menzies is quoted as saying that 'Australia has never contemplated being present ourselves in view of the origins and general nature of the conference'; in Australian High Commission London to DEA Canberra, 5 February 1955, NAA A5954/1454/5.

some Western-aligned, some not.[90] As Finnane points out, 'some of those countries were at war with each other within a few years of agreeing at Bandung to the principle of "coexisting peacefully"'.[91]

Commonwealth responsibility: Emergency and confrontation

In the 1950s, it was responsibility to the British Commonwealth that provided the normative framework for Australia's involvement with Asian decolonisation and nation-building, rather than anti-colonial, rights-based notions of self-determination. Reflecting this, Casey said in 1952 that '[w]e are on our own feet, an autonomous British nation, with internal responsibilities to our own people, and with external responsibilities to the British Commonwealth and to the democratic world'.[92] Canberra's military deployments to the Malayan Emergency and to Borneo in the *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) between Indonesia and Malaysia were also taken somewhat reluctantly and belatedly,[93] suggesting duty or obligation to Britain and the Commonwealth were important motivating factors, rather than direct threats to Australia's Cold War security interests.

The decision in 1955 by Australia and New Zealand to commit ground forces alongside Britain against the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), and its Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) guerrillas during the Emergency (1948–60), was undertaken under ANZAM auspices and as part of the SEATO area.[94] Australian air assets had been involved since 1950.[95] During the Pacific War, members of Malaya's large Chinese minority were most effective in resistance to the Japanese occupation and

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90   Australian Embassy Djakarta to DEA Canberra, 23 April 1955, NAA A1838/3002/1, Part 5.

91   Antonia Finnane, 'Bandung as History', in *Bandung 1955: Little Histories*, ed. Antonia Finnane and Derek McDougall (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2010), 1.

92   'Text of Report to the Australian Parliament, on International Affairs, by the Rt. Hon. R.G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs', 4 June 1952, NAA A1838/3004/11, Part 1.

93   See McDougall, 'The Malayan Emergency and Confrontation', 130–39; Benvenuti, *Cold War and Decolonisation*, 26.

94   'Statement by the Prime Minister', DEA Canberra to Washington, London, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Karachi, New Delhi and Djakarta, 1 April 1955, NAA A5954/1459/1.

95   For detailed accounts of Australia's involvement in the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, see Peter Edwards, with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992); and Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950–1966* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

had remained loyal to Britain. In January 1946, the British proposed a Malayan Union to create a unitary state with citizenship and equal rights for Malays and non-Malays alike. All persons born in the proposed Union or in Singapore would be entitled to citizenship, in addition to those who had resided there for a period of 15 years before 1942. Other residents or immigrants could apply for citizenship after five years. The Union proposal aroused political consciousness among Malays and was opposed by large sections of ethnic Malay society. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)—which was to dominate politics and government for many decades—was formed in March 1946 under Dato Onn bin Jafaar as a reaction to this. Plans for a Malayan Union were subsequently dropped by London in favour of a Federation of Malaya, which was promulgated on 1 February 1948 as the final constitutional step before full independence from the UK. This was generally considered a victory for conservative Malay opinion. The Malay Sultans retained sovereignty, Malays were afforded special privileges, and eligibility for citizenship by non-Malays was tightened considerably. The Chinese community was left with a sense of betrayal over these developments and many joined the MCP.[96]

In the immediate postwar years, the MCP adopted a peaceful strategy of political agitation. The shift to an armed struggle was prompted by a reduction in rubber prices on world commodity markets and a concomitant decrease in the wages of Chinese workers in Malaya. A series of strikes resulted in employers seeking harsher government measures against strikers and communist political agitators. The colonial government responded with a strengthening of existing laws introduced in 1940 that declared strikes illegal and allowed for union leaders to be arrested or deported. In conjunction with these developments, Chin Peng took leadership of the MCP and decided that the time was right to seize power by force of arms. European plantation and estate managers were targeted for assassination in an attempt to disrupt the tin and rubber industries. After the murder of five Europeans on 16 June 1947, a state of emergency was declared by the government and the MCP was made illegal.[97] Between 1948 and 1955, some 83,000 communist sympathisers were detained (most were later released) and 28,000 were deported to

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96   See Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 264–69; J Kennedy, *A History of Malaya*, 2nd edn (London: MacMillan, 1970), 265–269; Benvenuti, *Cold War and Decolonisation*, 30–32.
97   Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 269–74; Kennedy, *A History of Malaya*, 271–72.

China or to their country of origin.[98] The MCP retained the capacity to strike at mining installations and plantations in the countryside, but the larger popular uprising envisaged by Peng did not eventuate.[99]

It was estimated by the British that 90 per cent of MNLA forces were ethnic Chinese.[100] Thus, in addition to direct military countermeasures, Commonwealth security forces moved Chinese squatter communities into 'new villages' to sever the ties between the guerrillas and their social and material bases of support known as the Min Yuen ('masses movement'). 'White areas' free of communist forces were then rewarded with the relaxing of food rationing and lifting of curfews. This forced the communist 'bandits', as they were described by the British security forces, to make raids on Indian labour settlements and on Malay communities, which were generally hostile to them and more heavily policed. The movement lost momentum with a series of amnesties and as Malaya moved closer to full independence, and a new political party, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) (1949), formed an alliance with UMNO in 1952.[101] By the time of Malayan independence in 1957, the insurgency had been reduced to a low level of intensity. The Malayan Emergency was finally declared over in 1960, although communist guerrillas continued to operate on a small scale until the 1980s.

On 4 January 1955, Casey wrote to Menzies that 'it was indisputable that Australia should make a direct contribution to the defence of Malaya', because it was an area of primary Commonwealth responsibility. In Menzies' official announcement of Australia's contribution, the prime minister made the point that Commonwealth forces in Malaya would not be 'massive' but would prevent communist interference with Malaya's 'present orderly progress towards democratic self-government, a progress which enjoys the deeply sympathetic interest of Australia'.[102]

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98 'Federation of Malaya: Detention, Deportation and Rehabilitation Policy', High Commission for the Federation of Malaya to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 June 1955, The National Archives (TNA) UK, Dominions Office and Commonwealth Relations Office Records (DO) 35/6270.
99 Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 269–74.
100 'Federation of Malaya: Detention, Deportation and Rehabilitation Policy', High Commission for the Federation of Malaya to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 June 1955, TNA DO 35/6270.
101 Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 269–74; Kennedy, *A History of Malaya*, 272–77; Benvenuti, *Cold War and Decolonisation*, 34–35.
102 'Statement by the Prime Minister', DEA Canberra to Washington, London, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Karachi, New Delhi and Djakarta, 1 April 1955, NAA A5954/1459/1.

Evatt, then ALP Opposition leader, criticised the government's military commitment to Malaya 'as an affront to local nationalist opinion and therefore not in line with Australia's "good neighbour policy" towards South East Asian countries'.[103] The deployment of the CSR was met with some protest by the small Labour Party of Malaya, and more importantly by some UMNO branches, particularly in Singapore, on the grounds that it was unnecessary because there was an amnesty in place for members of the communist insurgency, and that the presence of foreign forces would retard plans for *Merdeka* (independence).[104] However, Malay leaders and local newspaper opinion generally welcomed Australia's military involvement. Leader of UMNO and the post-independence Prime Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, defended the Commonwealth assistance publicly on a number of occasions, most notably in a 45-minute speech in Singapore in October 1955.[105] The Australian Government assessed that there was no serious opposition to its troop deployment from local sources or other Asian countries. Alan Watt, at that time Australia's Commissioner to Singapore, argued that there was 'a great fund of goodwill towards Australia' because of the 'friendly reception' and good treatment of hundreds of Malays and Chinese in the Australian education system as part of the Colombo Plan. The point was also made in relation to the White Australia policy that the ethnic Malay sections of the British Territories Southeast Asia could readily understand Australia's restrictive immigration policy given their attitude toward the region's Indian and Chinese minorities.[106] Australia's Asian partners in SEATO— Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand—also provided 'a noteworthy degree of support'.[107]

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103 See 'Australian and New Zealand Position in Malaya', Note for the Colonial Secretary's Visit to Malaya, Commonwealth Relations Office, 19 July 1955, TNA DO 35/6270.

104 See 'Australian Troops for Malaya: Malayan Press Reaction', Australian Commission Singapore to DEA Canberra, 5 October 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2; Hamilton (Office of the Australian Commissioner for Malaya, Singapore) to DEA Canberra, 4 October 1955, 8 October 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2; Australian Commission Singapore to DEA Canberra, 14 November 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2; 'Australian Troops—Local Criticism', HM Loveday (Assistant Commissioner Kuala Lumpur) to DEA Canberra, 16 November 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2; and 'Malaya and Australian Forces', DEA Canberra to All Posts, 22 November 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2.

105 'Australian Troops for Malaya: Malayan Press Reaction', Australian Commission Singapore to DEA Canberra, 5 October 1955, NAA A5954/1402/2; and 'Speech by Tungku Abdul Rahman at U.M.N.O.', Australian Commissioner's Office Kuala Lumpur to DEA Canberra, 12 January 1956, NAA A5954/1402/3.

106 'Record of a Discussion at "Mallaig" 17 January 1955', Attachment to a Personal Letter from Watt to Tange, 26 March 1955, NAA A1838/3022/10/4, Part 1.

107 'Australian Forces for Malaya', DEA Savingram to all Posts, 13 April 1955, NAA A5954/1456/9.

The continued deployment of the CSR in the independent Federation of Malaya in 1957 required that Australia be formally associated through an exchange of letters accompanying the Anglo–Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA). This was renewed in 1963 as the Anglo–Malaysian Defence Agreement to cover the expanded territory of the new Federation of Malaysia with the incorporation of Singapore, and the Borneo territories of Sarawak and Sabah in the face of Indonesian and Filipino opposition.[108] According to defence planners, Canberra's 'association' with AMDA did not constitute a formal Treaty obligation to Kuala Lumpur, rather it registered Australia's 'direct concern in the security of Malaysia'.[109] Chin Kin Wah makes the point that AMDA and the later Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) were 'not so overtly identified with the system of Cold War alliances that centred on the American security role'. Rather, they 'are more readily identified with the process of colonial disengagement'.[110] These defence agreements recognised the direct and shared security responsibilities of the British Commonwealth countries, primarily the UK, Australia and New Zealand, with postcolonial Malaysia.[111] This is not to suggest that Australia viewed the problems of Malaysian decolonisation in isolation from the regional Cold War context; indeed, 'public justification for the dispatch of Australian ground forces … tended to emphasize the regional threat from communism'.[112]

Australia's intensifying involvement in the security of the decolonising Southeast Asian states in the late 1950s reflected the recognition, at least in elite policy circles, that while Australia had considered itself geographically as part of Asia during and since the war, these ties were becoming deeper. Australia still considered itself a 'Western' country, but 'aware that in the long run' its 'future is more intimately bound up with Asia than with Western Europe'.[113] In a June 1958 *Sydney Morning*

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108 Chinese-majority Singapore subsequently seceded from the Malaysian Federation in 1965.

109 'Report by the Joint Planning Committee at Meetings Concluding on 19 September 1963', 20 September 1963, NAA A5799/50/1963.

110 Chin Kin Wah, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements: Twenty Years After', *The Pacific Review* 4, no. 3 (1991): 194.

111 'Report by the Joint Planning Committee at Meetings Concluding on 19 September, 1963', 20 September 1963, NAA A5799/50/1963.

112 Chin Kin Wah, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements and AMDA', *Occasional Paper No. 23*, July (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1974), 11–12; see also Wah, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore: The Transformation of a Security System 1957–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13.

113 'Conference on Co-operation in Information Activities in South East Asia', 13 May 1958, NAA A1838/2020/9/2.

Herald article, the Coalition Minister for External Affairs Richard Casey (1951–60) wrote that geographically 'Australia is an Asian country'. This geographical position gave rise to political ramifications in a decolonising region:

> we have to develop policies which take full account of our desire to maintain friendly relations with our Asian neighbours. We can no longer take the passive attitude towards them that we took when their affairs were guided by our European allies.[114]

A large portion of this task was undertaken under Commonwealth auspices, with the mutual understanding that Britain expected Australia and New Zealand 'to accept an increasing role and responsibility in South East Asia'.[115]

This Commonwealth responsibility was again evident in Australia's direct security role in opposing Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* of the formation of Malaysia. Between 1963 and 1966, Indonesia sought to destabilise the new, expanded Malaysian Federation, with a view to breaking it up and absorbing the Borneo territories of Sarawak and Sabah. Infiltration and cross-border raids by 'volunteers' began in early 1963. Indonesian regular forces joined them in 1964. This was regarded by Canberra as a disturbing and 'important situation' developing in Australia's 'area of primary strategic interest'.[116] In January 1965, the first Australian combat forces were introduced in the form of an infantry battalion and SAS squadron, again as part of the CSR, and authorised to conduct cross-border, hot-pursuit operations into Indonesian territory.[117]

On 25 September 1963, Menzies had announced to Parliament Australia's in-principle commitment to support the new Malaysia's 'territorial integrity and political independence' from 'armed invasion or subversive activity'. This was justified according to the Commonwealth values of 'mutual confidence and a golden rule of mutual obligation'.[118] Menzies stated:

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114 RG Casey, 'Australia's Place in the World', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1958, in NAA A1838/3004/1, Part 2.
115 'United Kingdom "Study of Future Policy", Brook Committee: Draft Observations by Department of External Affairs', 30 June 1960, NAA A1838/TS691/3, Part 6.
116 'Report by the Joint Planning Committee at Meetings Concluding on 19 September 1963', 20 September 1963, NAA A5799/50/1963.
117 DEA Canberra to Australian Embassy Washington, 29 January 1965, NAA A1838/TS696/6/4/1, Part 5.
118 'Speech by Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P. on Malaysia Defence', 25 September 1963, NAA A1209/1963/6630.

> Malaysia the new nation is here. The processes of its creation have been democratic … We have publicly and unambiguously said that we support Malaysia which is, never let it be forgotten, a Commonwealth country, just as our own is.[119]

Because the Federation Government could not defend the larger area of the offshore Borneo territories on its own, there was anticipated to be little Malayan public feeling against the deepening of Commonwealth military involvement in 1963.[120] Despite Menzies' statement above, reluctance to become involved in Borneo was much more evident on the part of Australian decision-makers than any resistance to the idea in Kuala Lumpur.[121] Canberra recognised that with the waning of UK interests in the area, deeper involvement by Australia might antagonise Jakarta and could possibly lead to similar infiltration and conflict in New Guinea.[122]

David Goldsworthy argues that for Australian policymakers, 'there was the felt obligation to help Britain defend its post-colonial construct Malaysia against Indonesia's Confrontation',[123] where British policy was in tension with the US Cold War strategy in the region of not 'unduly antagonising Sukarno and pushing him further into the hands of the Indonesia Communist Party'.[124] In this case, Australia's Commonwealth responsibilities overrode its relationship with Indonesia and Washington's Cold War priorities.[125] On 18 January 1965, Acting Prime Minister John McEwen 'expressed disappointment' that Indonesia was 'persisting in this policy of military "confrontation"'. But he said that the Australian

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119 Ibid.

120 T Critchley (Australian High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur) to DEA Canberra, 23 January 1963, NAA A1838/3027/9/5.

121 Peter Edwards, 'Singapore and Malaysia, 1965', 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), 188–89.

122 'Australia's Strategic Position—Report by the Defence Committee', 4 February 1963, in *A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945*, ed. Stephan Frühling (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), 303–34.

123 David Goldsworthy, 'Australian External Policy and the End of Britain's Empire', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 1 (2005): 28.

124 Peter Edwards, *Learning from History: Some Strategic Lessons from the 'Forward Defence' Era* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2015), 15.

125 British sources also suggest that External Affairs Minister Garfield Barwick (1961–64) returned from the SEATO Council meeting held in Manila in April 1964 with US assurances that the ANZUS Treaty would cover any Australian force deployment to Borneo; see 'Australia and South and South-East Asia in Recent Years', UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Research Department Memorandum, 30 March 1970, TNA FCO 51/160.

Government 'is quite clear as to its obligations to Malaysia, a free and independent nation and a fellow member of the Commonwealth, and … firm in respect of its responsibilities'.[126]

The mildness, or lack, of reaction in Jakarta to Australia's involvement was somewhat perplexing to officials at the time. Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia, KCO Shann, wrote to Menzies on 12 May 1965 that the Indonesian Government continued to treat Australia with 'calmness and even friendliness'.[127] While noting that the Sukarno regime by 1965 was a 'madhouse', Shann surmised that it must:

> be useful for Indonesians to be able to show they can get on with some of their neighbours, particularly if one of them is white and anti-Communist. It is still just possible that they continue to think of us as somehow different from Britain and Europe, that we have an equalitarian democratic identity of our own, and that we want to come to terms with the region in which we live. Or expressed in other words, the Indonesians have not yet made up their minds whether it is our support for their independence struggle or our present opposition to their international policies which is the aberration.[128]

Shann advised that Canberra should continue Australia's Colombo Plan aid in Indonesia and practical assistance in New Guinea.[129]

Konfrontasi was ended in August 1966 by the new Suharto regime. External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck (1964–69) wrote that the 'friendliness and respect' shown toward Australia by the new Indonesian Government seemed 'genuine'. There were no matters of further dispute and, indeed, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik expressed that there was 'a large measure of common interest'.[130] Hasluck was conscious that the Australian Government should move quickly to 'build on the improved opportunities we have with Indonesia'.[131] It was noted by a range of archival sources after Confrontation was formally ended that

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126 'South East Asia: Statement by the Acting Prime Minister', 18 January 1965, NAA A1838/ TS696/6/4/1, Part 5.
127 KCO Shann (Ambassador Djakarta) to Menzies (Acting Minister for External Affairs), 12 May 1965, NAA A4231/1965/South East Asia/South Asia/East Asia.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 DEA to Washington, London, Wellington, repeated UN New York, Ottawa, 11 August 1966, NAA A1838/3004/13/17, Part 5.
131 Hasluck to Plimsoll, 14 December 1966, NAA A1838/541/4/4, Part 1.

Australian–Indonesian bilateral relations continued unabated during the crisis. Lines of communication had been kept open, Indonesian students continued to attend Australian universities, development aid programs continued to be provided, and negotiations over the border demarcation of West Irian were successfully completed.[132] This demonstrates the Menzies Government's deep and nuanced engagement with its region up until the mid-1960s and the complexities of managing—relatively successfully it should be emphasised—the competing postcolonial claims and relationships in the Malayan archipelago.[133]

Conclusion

An analysis of the motive of Commonwealth responsibility in Australian postwar approaches to decolonisation in Southeast Asia reveals that the foreign policy traditions typically used as interpretative frames for this period are flawed. The Chifley ALP Government sought to protect Australia's security interests in Southeast Asia through claiming a British Commonwealth responsibility for the region. On the other hand, for the Menzies Coalition Government, British Commonwealth responsibilities structured its conception of regional interests, which were sometimes in tension with US Cold War strategic priorities. For both governments, the norm of Commonwealth responsibility was an important motivating factor.

From the immediate postwar period until the mid-1960s, Australia's engagement with the decolonisation process in Southeast Asia was driven not only by Cold War security interests, but also by strong normative sentiments of Commonwealth responsibility. This is evident in the Colombo Plan, ANZAM defence planning arrangement and Australia's participation in the CSR in Malaya and Borneo. The origins of the ANZAM Agreement, Australia's close engagement with Southeast Asian

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132 See 'Australia and South-East Asia', Address by the High Commissioner in India, Sir Arthur Tange, to the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Madras State, 9th October 1967, NAA A1838/3004/11, Part 8; 'Text of Prime Ministers Speech at President Soeharto's Banquet on 13th June 1968', Australian Embassy Djakarta to DEA Canberra, 13 June 1968, NAA A1838/3004/11/48, Part 2; 'Australia and South and South-East Asia in Recent Years', UK FCO Research Department Memorandum, 30 March 1970, TNA FCO 51/160.

133 See also Edwards, 'Singapore and Malaysia, 1965', 187; and Garry Woodard, 'Best Practice in Australia's Foreign Policy: "Konfrontasi" (1963–1966)', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 1 (1998): 85–99.

decolonisation during the Cold War, and the conditions for Australia's early forward defence deployments are located in the Chifley Government's view, derived from its wartime experience, of insular Southeast Asia as Australia's region and Commonwealth responsibility.

It was Evatt, associated with the internationalist tradition of the ALP, who asserted Australia's responsibilities for the region on behalf of the British Empire and Commonwealth in the immediate aftermath of the war. This was continued by the Menzies Coalition Government, which, along with its familiar Cold War rhetoric, consistently emphasised in the 1950s and 1960s Australia's Commonwealth responsibilities in Southeast Asia. This demonstrates that there is much more continuity between the foreign and defence policies of the two governments than is typically portrayed in the literature on Australia's foreign policy traditions. Under Menzies, Australia's commitment to ANZAM and Malaya in the face of US scepticism and military deployment to Borneo in tension with Washington's Cold War strategy, and at the risk of open conflict with Indonesia, are not consistent with instrumental calculations of strategic interest or subservience to US priorities.

The following chapter turns directly to the Cold War dynamics of the period and analyses Australia's relationships of solidarity with the non-communist states of East Asia and its central place in regional organisations of the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to Australia's involvement with decolonisation across the Malayan Peninsula and archipelago, Chapter 4 shows that rather than distancing Australia from Asia, the Cold War drew Australia deeply into the region. The circumstances of the Cold War provided for a mutual sense of solidarity with the non-communist states of East Asia, with which Australia mostly enjoyed close relationships.