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'An undoubted right to speak': Projecting Australia's influence in the postwar Asia-Pacific, 1942–45

On 27 December 1941, Prime Minister John Curtin advised that Australia 'looks to America, free of any pangs to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'.[1] These words have been popularly heralded as the turning point in Australian–US relations and the basis of a smooth and natural progression to a postwar relationship and the eventual ANZUS alliance.[2] Certainly, Curtin's message was a public acknowledgement that Australia faced an imminent crisis in the Asia-Pacific to which Britain was unable to respond and the nation now depended on the US for its security. His message, however, was not indicative of Australia's shift from strategic dependence on Britain to the US, or even a particularly pronounced Australian–US affinity.

1   'John Curtin, "The Task Ahead",' in F.K. Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia in Documents. Volume 2: 1939–1970* (Melbourne: Wren Publishing, 1973), 51.
2   For examples of works emphasising Curtin's 'look to America' aphorism as a turning point, see Gareth Evans, 'The Labor Tradition: A View From the 1990s', in *From Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy*, eds David Lee and Christopher Waters (Canberra: Allen & Unwin with the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1997), 12; Malcolm Fraser with Cain Roberts, *Dangerous Allies* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2014), 73–80; Bruce Grant, *Crisis of Loyalty: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson for Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1972), 15–16.

With Australia's wartime experiences the focal point for much of the existing literature concerning the nation's foreign policy, much of this story has been chronicled elsewhere. This is particularly so in the case of the wartime origins of External Affairs Minister H.V. Evatt's particular brand of assertive regionalism.[3] This chapter builds on this work through a focus on developments after the crisis years of the Pacific War, as Australian policymakers realised the US could not necessarily be relied on to build a postwar order conducive to its national interest. It holds that Australian assertiveness was not limited to Evatt's initiatives, placing him alongside other key thinkers. Their shared goal was articulating Australia's status in the Asia-Pacific and setting out a strategy for managing in the region in the postwar period. The result was an Australian-led plan for renewed Commonwealth cooperation, which aimed to regionalise defence planning and establish a friendly yet robust counterweight to US influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The great powers' grand strategy

The early months of the Pacific War were ones of crisis for Australia. The initial foundation of Allied strategy in the war against Japan was the American–British–Dutch–Australian Command (ABDACOM), hastily established at the Arcadia Conference (22 December 1941 – 14 January 1942).[4] ABDACOM was formed without prior consultation with either the Dutch or the Australians, and directives came only from Britain and the US. This led Evatt to label it an 'AB organisation' rather than 'a true ABDA organisation'.[5] More critically, the initial ABDACOM boundaries excluded the continent of Australia, yet expected the nation's forces to be made available for the defence of the area. It was only because of strong representations by the Australian government that Britain agreed to expand the ABDACOM boundaries. This expanded boundary included part of the northern Australian mainland, while the ANZAC Area (Australia and New Zealand) was established as an associated support

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3   Examples of the many works dedicated to Evatt's life and his foreign policy legacy include Alan Renouf, *Let Justice Be Done: The Foreign Policy of Dr H.V. Evatt* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1983); Ken Buckley, Barbara Dale and Wayne Reynolds, *Doc Evatt: Patriot, Internationalist, Fighter and Scholar* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994); David Day (ed.), *Brave New World: Dr H.V. Evatt and Australian Foreign Policy, 1941–1949* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

4   Wigmore, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945*, 646–9.

5   'Evatt to Casey, 7 January 1942', NAA: A981, WAR 54.

area.[6] The expansion of ABDACOM was significant not only in terms of providing for local defence, but also because it linked to the Australian government's hopes to insert itself into the grand strategy of the great powers. Australia was anxious to institute an ANZAC Area with itself as a main base in the Pacific theatre, rather than it being at the periphery of Allied activities.[7]

The loss of Malaya and Singapore and the rapidly deteriorating situation in the NEI highlighted the strategic neglect of the Asia-Pacific region and frustrated Australian–British relations. Tensions famously came to a head in February 1942. In January, the British government requested the 6th and 7th divisions of the AIF be transferred from the Middle East to the NEI to join British troops in creating a defensive line against Japan's southward advance.[8] The Australian government initially supported this request, seeing in the concentration of the AIF in the Pacific theatre an opportunity, as Secretary for Defence Frederick Shedden informed Curtin, to strengthen 'our claim to a voice in the higher direction of operations in this region'.[9] In mid-February, with the 7th Division in transit, the Supreme Commander of ABDACOM, General Archibald Wavell, informed Australia that the NEI could not be held and the 7th Division should be diverted to Burma. Senior Australian military officials—cognisant of Australia's insecurity in the wake of Singapore's recent collapse—advised the 6th and 7th divisions should be returned home for local defence. On 19 February, Curtin informed the British government of his decision to return the two divisions to Australia.[10] Remarkably, Churchill ignored this directive, instructing the British Admiralty, which was overseeing the transport of the Australian division, to deliver the troops to Burma. This incensed Curtin, who accused Churchill of threatening the security of Australia and the men on board

6   For Curtin's initial response to the ABDACOM machinery and boundaries, see 'Doc. 185, Memorandum of Conversation by Stewart (Division of European Affairs), 12 January 1942', in Frederick Aandahl, William M. Franklin and William Slany (eds), *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1958) [hereinafter *FRUS: The Conferences*].
7   Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 228–30; Horner, *High Command*, 147–9.
8   Joan Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Asia and the Pacific', in *Australia's War, 1939–45*, ed. Joan Beaumont (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 33–4.
9   'Shedden to Curtin, 9 January 1942, NAA: MP1217, 573', cited in Horner, *High Command*, 149. Curtin repeated this assessment to Earl Page, the Australian representative to the London Pacific War Council and British War Cabinet. 'Doc. 334, Curtin to Page, 15 February 1942', in Hudson and Stokes, *DAFP*, vol. 5.
10   'Doc. 345, Curtin to Page, 19 February 1942', in Hudson and Stokes, *DAFP*, vol. 5.

the convoy of ships. He insisted the troops be returned home.[11] While the British government quickly complied, the episode had made clear that Australia's views on strategic planning in the Pacific theatre were of little account to Britain.

As British power in the Asia-Pacific region collapsed and Australia was left exposed, the Curtin government pursued greater cooperation with the US. In early 1942, Evatt spent six weeks in the US, where he successfully petitioned for increased war supplies (mainly aircraft) and the creation of the Pacific War Council (PWC) in Washington—a body established for intergovernmental consultation and decision-making concerning Allied strategy in the Pacific theatre—in which Australia was directly represented.[12] The PWC did not play an effective role in strategic decision-making, as it remained largely advisory in function.[13] Owen Dixon, who served as the Australian representative on the PWC, later described the body as neither effective nor well informed, with no agenda or minutes kept and discussions 'always' avoiding the 'critical issues' of the war in the Pacific.[14]

Australia was presented with a new opportunity for direct representation in Allied strategic decision-making when the Pacific theatre was named an area of US strategic responsibility in March 1942. ABDACOM was replaced with the South West Pacific Area (SWPA), which encompassed Australia, New Guinea, Papua, the Philippines, the western part of the Solomon Islands and most of the NEI. With Malaya, Singapore and the NEI having already fallen and Japan on the verge of capturing the Philippines, the US needed a new base from which to launch actions against the Japanese. Australia was the only viable option. General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines and travel to Australia, where he took up the role of Supreme Commander of the SWPA, with authority over Allied naval, land and air forces in the area.[15] Newspapers across Australia documented the enthusiastic crowds who welcomed

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11 'Doc. 366, Curtin to Attlee (Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs), 23 February 1942', in Hudson and Stokes, *DAFP*, vol. 5.
12 'Doc. 446, Evatt to Curtin, 29 March 1942' and 'Doc. 649, Evatt to Curtin, 18 April 1942', in Hudson and Stokes, *DAFP*, vol. 5. There was already a London PWC on which Australia was represented by Earl Page.
13 Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 157.
14 'Doc. 187, War Cabinet Minute, 12 May 1943', in R.G. Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949. Volume 6: July 1942 – December 1943* (Canberra: AGPS, 1983) [hereinafter *DAFP*, vol. 6].
15 Beaumont, 'Australia's War', 35; Horner, *High Command*, 181.

MacArthur, who looked to be the nation's salvation. The arrival of US troops and equipment in the coming months appeared to confirm this.[16] Privately, senior Australian military officials and MacArthur agreed that an attack on Australia or its supply lines was highly possible in the near future. MacArthur advised the 'first step' in organising Australia as an effective base was 'to make Australia secure'.[17] The defence of Australia finally appeared to be a strategic priority, and Curtin, MacArthur and Shedden worked closely to develop a comprehensive plan to achieve this goal.[18]

Despite the initial promise of a voice in strategic decision-making, Australia's new status in the SWPA came with limitations. The Allies' grand strategy—the so-called Beat Hitler First policy—named Germany 'the prime enemy' and prioritised the Atlantic and European theatres. Until Germany was defeated, the Pacific War would be a holding war with 'the minimum force necessary' provided for defensive operations.[19] Joint US–Australian operations in the SWPA resulted in significant victories at Midway and in the Coral Sea; however, the US continued to refuse MacArthur's and the Australian government's requests for the increased reinforcements necessary to launch a counteroffensive against Japan.[20] Evidently, Australia's immediate security concerns were only to be accommodated when they did not jeopardise the great powers' grand strategy. Australia's place in this grand strategy foreshadowed the challenges the nation would face in seeking to influence the management of the postwar Asia-Pacific region.

16   'American Troops Here: USA Announces', *The Courier-Mail*, [Brisbane], 18 March 1942, 1; 'Enthusiastic Thousands Give Welcome to MacArthur', *The Sun*, [Sydney], 22 March 1942, 1; 'General MacArthur: City's Rousing Welcome', *The Age*, [Melbourne], 23 March 1942, 3.

17   'Advisory War Council Meeting, 26 March 1942, NAA: A2684, 967', cited in Horner, *High Command*, 183.

18   For the cooperation between Curtin, MacArthur and Shedden and the machinery for strategic decision-making in Australia, see Horner, *High Command*, 189–91.

19   'Doc. 115, Memorandum by the US and British COS, 31 December 1941', in Aandahl et al., *FRUS: The Conferences*.

20   For a full account of MacArthur's and Australia's representations to the US and Britain, see Horner, *High Command*, 186–203; Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 152–65.

Securing Australia in an American lake

By the second half of 1942, as the immediate threat of Allied defeat passed, Australia's attention turned to postwar planning. A significant marker of this turn was the Department of Post-War Reconstruction, established in December 1942, which was responsible for coordinating Australia's transition to a peacetime economy.[21] The rapid success of Japan's Pacific campaign had exposed the political and strategic weaknesses of the arc of islands to Australia's north, while British and US neglect of the area in strategic planning forced on the Australian government the realisation that it would have to take on greater responsibility for regional defence in the postwar world. Australia's future defence would rely on the preservation of strategic isolation, as the Commander-in-Chief of the AMF explained on behalf of the Defence Committee:

> It follows that the preservation of this isolation should be our strategic aim. While this is our chief aim, we cannot separate our safety from that of the island groups that lay in proximity on the North and East, since the seizure of these by any hostile power would facilitate the approach to our shores and remove this isolation.

This could be achieved through the control of the islands to Australia's north and establishment of a system of bases as 'forward defence localities'.[22]

Evatt incorporated strategic isolation into his wartime diplomacy. In particular, he had designs on the Indonesian Archipelago. Following Japan's invasion of the NEI in February 1942, the Australian government hosted the NEI administration in exile. Evatt viewed the management of the NEI as a particularly weak link in the arc of islands to its north, arguing that, having been left virtually defenceless by the Dutch, they were a 'liability of dire consequence to Australia'.[23] As Margaret George established, Evatt hoped wartime cooperation with the NEI administration would translate into a role in the postwar reconstruction of the colony. The goal was the establishment of a military base in the NEI, which would be added to Australia's own South Pacific mandates

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21   Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015), 5–15, 122–58.
22   'Blamey to Shedden, 15 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
23   'Doc. 330, Evatt to Bruce, 20 November 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.

and bases in northern Australia to form a defensive shield.[24] Evatt pressed the NEI administration to grant Australia shared control of the colony following the war or, failing this, a long-term lease of Timor and Dutch New Guinea. The Dutch consistently refused any such arrangement and would not accept that Australia had any special role in the future management of the NEI.[25]

As Evatt pursued Australian security interests in the NEI, the future management of colonies and dependent territories faced immense changes. The US promoted a liberal international system as the future basis for global peace. This vision was, in effect, a stipulation of the US entrance into World War II. The Atlantic Charter called for a future world order founded on greater economic, territorial and strategic integrity. At the insistence of President Roosevelt and to the supreme annoyance of Churchill, the Atlantic Charter included the right for all people to choose their government. In including this detail, the US had forced an acknowledgment that the age of European imperialism was drawing to a close.[26] The US instead promoted a trusteeship system, whereby colonial territories and mandates—including those stripped from the defeated Axis powers—would gradually transition to self-governance under the patronage of trustee nations.[27]

Australia was generally supportive of trusteeship for the management of the postwar Asia-Pacific and improving the living standards of those in the region. Certainly, it was not solely altruism and a commitment to liberal internationalism that underpinned this support. Realpolitik was also at play. The DEA believed the process of self-governance would be a slow one, unfolding over decades. This time and the nature of the trusteeship system would offer an opportunity to cultivate long-lasting diplomatic, economic and security relationships, including the provision

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24   Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 14–29.

25   These exchanges can be found in 'Netherlands East Indies—Proposed establishment of Government in Australia', in Department of External Affairs: Correspondence files, multiple number series with year prefix [Main correspondence files series of the agency], 1927–45, NAA: A989, 1943/600/5/1/5.

26   Stuart Macintyre, 'Reading Post-War Reconstruction Through National and Transnational Lenses', in *Transnationalism, Nationalism and Australian History*, eds Anna Clark, Anne Rees and Alecia Simmonds (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 136, 139–41; P.G.A. Orders, *Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Challenge of the United States, 1939–46* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 97–100.

27   William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay 1941–1945: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1977), 3–4, 18, 223–4.

of military bases in Australia's trust territories.[28] Australia's strategic vision for trusteeship is captured in Evatt's private remark that trusteeship and the postwar development of the Asia-Pacific would 'allow [the] opportunity for collaboration between Australia and her Asiatic neighbours for mutual benefit while at the same time reducing the challenge that backward countries present to the living standards of white Australia'.[29] This assessment was steeped in the paternalistic and, frankly, racist ideas of 1940s international development, whereby weak and vulnerable states were seen to present a threat to themselves and their immediate region.[30]

The US, too, was forming its own plans for the management of the Asia-Pacific. From mid-1942, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox promoted the view that, as the US had invested significant capital into the development of wartime bases and dominated the Pacific War effort, it should receive certain entitlements in the peace settlement. These entitlements included sovereignty over all the bases the US had financed during the war and many of the former Japanese territories and recaptured Allied territories. Knox believed the future security of the US relied on its capacity to project its military presence.[31] The Pacific Ocean had to become, as the popular maxim of the time stated, an 'American lake', with a comprehensive system of bases that would provide for US security and commercial interests in the region. Knox's proposal was initially met with opposition, resting on concern that the pointedly anti-imperialist US should not be seen to make territorial gains in the war.[32] By mid-1943, however, the Australian legation in Washington reported that the president, Congress

28   'Australian Legation in Washington to DEA, 23 December 1942', NAA: A989, 1943/735/321.
29   'Evatt to Eggleston (Australian Minister to China), 12 October 1942', NAA: A989, 1943/735/321.
30   This thinking is exemplified in P.N. Rosenstein-Rodan, 'The International Development of Economically Backward Areas', *International Affairs* 20, no. 2 (1944): 157–65.
31   Knox, quoted in *Daily News* [Chicago], December 1942 and February 1943, in 'Doc. 71, The Chargé D'Affaires, New Zealand Legation, Washington, to the Secretary of External Affairs (McIntosh), 9 February 1944', in Robin Kay (ed.), *Documents of New Zealand External Relations. Volume 1: The Australian–New Zealand Agreement, 1944* (Wellington: A.R. Shearer, Government Printer, 1972); 'Australian Department of Information, extract from letter, 28 February 1943', in Department of External Affairs: Correspondence files, multiple number system with SPTS [South Pacific Top Secret] prefix, 1943–54, NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2.
32   Louis, *Imperialism at Bay 1941–1945*, 373; Orders, *Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Challenge of the United States*, 112–13.

and the Departments of State and the Navy had all added their support to Knox's proposal. Significantly, the Pacific territories on which the US had designs included Australia's mandate territory of Manus Island.[33]

The US extended its brand of liberal internationalism to the postwar global economy. The US favoured a multilateral global trading system in which nations would trade on the basis of commercial competitiveness and liberal trade reform, rather than as self-serving protectionist blocs. The true production capacity of the US economy had been revealed during the war. Once prewar trade restrictions were reinstated, however, the US would again face exclusion, with a likely outcome of overproduction, falling export prices and rampant unemployment. Liberal trade reform would ensure the US no longer faced the exclusionary Sterling Area and could continue with a high volume of exports and, in turn, low unemployment.[34] The pathway to liberal trade reform was codified in Article 7 of the Mutual Aid Agreement. The Mutual Aid Agreement had been made to outline the parameters of the reciprocal aid system and how mutual aid would be settled once war ended. Article 7 called for the elimination of 'all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers'.[35]

Along with fears that liberal trade reform and commercial competitiveness would threaten the Sterling Area and Australia's overseas markets, the United States' economic plans challenged Australia's plans for postwar regional security. World War II was fought around the deployment of air power and it was generally accepted that aviation would transform international communications, transport and defence in the postwar world.[36] The US was positioned to excel in the civil aviation market, with established trunk routes in both the Western and the Southern hemispheres and by far the most competitive commercial aircraft manufacturing industry. The nation accordingly favoured a system of 'open skies', in which liberal commercial practices would be applied to civil aviation, allowing commercial airlines

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33   '"View of President Roosevelt on the Future of Pacific Islands", Extracts from Australian Legation Reports, 1942–43', NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2.

34   Roger J. Bell, *Unequal Allies: Australian–American Relations and the Pacific War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 107–10; Lee, *Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century*, 83–4.

35   S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series 4: Civil. Volume IV: War Economy, 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977), 612.

36   Orders, *Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Challenge of the United States*, 19–20, 102–5; Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment*, 218–20.

to fly and land at airports anywhere in the world.[37] The US government also pushed for access to the military airfields it had financed and helped build during the war as a 'tangible return' for the labour and money it had expended.[38] Couple competitive advantage with US designs on certain Pacific bases and the nation looked set to dominate the whole system of transpacific air transport and the associated lines of communication.

Britain and the Pacific dominions opposed the open skies system. Curtin believed the South and South-West Pacific were the 'zone of security for which Australia must be specially responsible' in the postwar world. Australia required its own air industry, airfields and jurisdiction 'in order to discharge this responsibility'.[39] Britain, Australia and New Zealand cooperated to prevent the open skies system. In October 1943, informal Commonwealth discussions were hosted in London, where it was agreed that international aviation transport should be controlled by an international authority that would regulate prices, services and jurisdictions. It was also agreed the US be informed that 'any facilities created by them will carry with them no post-war rights of ownership or user[ship]'.[40] The settlement of civil aviation is a complex subject well beyond the scope of these pages, but it is indicative of Australia's suspicion that the US could not be relied on to build a regional order that supported Australia's interests and a pertinent example of the Commonwealth's role as a mediating force in the face of the domineering US.[41]

Australia was determined to be directly involved in the Pacific peace settlement. With the US having dominated the war effort and planning to control a large swathe of the region—'by force if necessary', as one

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37   '"Post-War Freedom of Air is US Aim", 18 January 1943, *Melbourne Herald*' and 'The text of an article by the United States Vice-President, Henry A. Wallace, March issue of the "American Magazine", 10 February 1943', cuttings, both in NAA: A989, 1943/735/835/1.

38   'Attachment, "US Surveys its Post-War Aviation Role", 16 January 1943, *New York Herald Tribune*, cutting, Australian Legation Washington to DEA, 18 January 1943' and '"Report on Post-War Civil Aviation, 27 July 1943", Halifax (British Ambassador to the US) to Eden (Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs), forwarded to DEA, 11 August 1943', both in NAA: A989, 1943/735/835/1; 'Senate Speech, Senator Russell, 28 October 1943', NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2.

39   'Doc. 292, Curtin to Bruce, 8 October 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.

40   Erik Benson, 'Suspicious Allies: Wartime Aviation Developments and the Anglo-American International Airline Rivalry, 1939–45', *History and Technology* 17 (2000): 21–42, at pp. 25, 34–5; 'Attachment, UK Air Ministry Memorandum to RAF Commanders Overseas, September 1943, UK High Commissioners Office to Prime Minister's Department, 16 September 1943', NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2.

41   For an overview of the civil aviation dispute and its eventual settlement, see Alan P. Dobson, 'The Other Air Battle: The American Pursuit of Post-War Civil Aviation Rights', *Historical Journal* 22, no. 2 (1985): 429–39.

Democratic congressman remarked pithily—Australia could not dismiss the possibility of being sidelined.[42] In late 1942, US Secretary of State Cordell Hull proposed a joint declaration of the Allies' trusteeship policy, along with a draft of this declaration for the Allies to consider. Hull's draft declaration included plans for the creation of regional councils, made up of local trustee nations, which would answer to an international trusteeship administration.[43] The Australian government—cognisant of America's designs on the Pacific—treated Hull's proposal with a great deal of caution.

William D. Forsyth of the DEA Pacific Division was charged with advising on the 'Pacific Question'.[44] His reports went on to inform the government's response to Hull's proposal. Before joining the DEA in 1942, Forsyth had served briefly in the Department of Information and had an emerging academic career with a particular interest in economics and Pacific affairs.[45] His regional knowledge and economics training were apparent in the final reports considering trusteeship. He criticised the existing system for managing colonies and dependent territories in the Asia-Pacific region, in terms of both Australia's national interest and the wellbeing of local inhabitants. According to Forsyth, the existing system 'was dependent on European rather than local and Pacific considerations' and it failed to provide for Australia's 'needs' or the 'progress and welfare' of the trustee inhabitants. In Forsyth's view, it had partly been the failings of the existing system for colonial management that had generated political and economic instability and driven the region towards war.[46] Australia's long-term security, therefore, depended on 'the conversion' of its immediate region 'from discord, backwardness, strategic weakness and international rivalry to economic strength, prosperity and political stability'.[47] To achieve this, Forsyth called for a 'self-subsisting' Asia-Pacific system, helped along by a regional commission that would guide trustee

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42 'Australian Department of Information, extract from letter, 28 February 1943', NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2.
43 'Attlee to Curtin, 11 December 1942' and 'Commonwealth government to Attlee, 2 January 1943', both in NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021.
44 'Attachment, Curriculum Vitae, Forsyth to Burton (DEA Secretary), 8 July 1948', NLA: MS 5700/7/16/3.
45 'Forsyth to Burton, 8 July 1948', NLA: MS 5700/7/16/3.
46 '"Departmental view on Australian Interests in the Colonial Question", 15 April 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021; 'Pacific Area Research Reports, General conclusions, [n.d. (April 1943)]', NLA: MS 5700/7/22/44. The so-called needs listed by Forsyth included regional economic interests and the development of Australian airfields and bases for national security purposes.
47 'Draft memorandum by Forsyth, 2 April 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021.

nations towards the development of good governance and economic stability.[48] He insisted Australia participate fully in the creation and management of the new regional system, encouraging the government to take on greater responsibility in the area and take 'a practical lead towards the kind of post-war settlement it wishes to see in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific'.[49]

According to Forsyth, Evatt was 'extremely pleased' with the proposal for an Asia-Pacific system with an expanded role for Australia and 'immediately took up the idea'.[50] The Australian government finally responded to Hull's trusteeship proposal in March 1943. The nation called for greater cooperation and accountability in the management of trust territories through the expanded role of regional councils, making internal supervision one of their functions. So important was the issue of accountability that Evatt argued it should be negotiated before any declaration of colonial policy was made. Much to Evatt's satisfaction, the negotiation of the international trusteeship administration and regional councils was postponed until the drafting of the UN Charter in 1945.[51] Conceivably, the emphasis on accountable regional councils and Forsyth's previous recommendation that Australia take the initiative in the future management of the Asia-Pacific region came as a result of fears the US would be unwilling to share power in the region. Forsyth stated as much in a departmental report, noting that if Britain were to lose interest or influence in the region, Australia may 'have use' for a 'counter-weight to American … influence'.[52] In calling for the expanded role of regional councils, Australia hoped to institutionalise its significance, making clear the US alone could not determine future management of the postwar Asia-Pacific region.

The future management of the Asia-Pacific continued to weigh on the minds of Australian policymakers. In April 1943, Evatt departed on a four-month trip to Washington and London, where he was tasked with

48   'Pacific Area Research Reports, [n.d. (April 1943)]', NLA: MS5700/7/22/44.
49   'Memorandum by Forsyth, 29 March 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021.
50   'William Douglass Forsyth interviewed by Mel Pratt, January–February 1972, Corrected Transcript', NLA: TRC 121/27, Folder 1/1/76.
51   'Dixon to DEA, 25 March 1943' and 'Evatt to Dixon, 31 March 1943', both in NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021. For the UN trusteeship system and Australia's role in its formation, see Matthew Jordan, 'Decolonisation', in *Australia and the United Nations*, eds James Cotton and David Lee (Canberra: Longueville Books with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012), 107–12.
52   '"The Colonial Question", 15 April 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/1021.

securing additional aircraft for the RAAF.[53] During this visit, he witnessed at first hand the United States' increasing interest in the Asia-Pacific, including surveys of the supply position of certain Pacific islands and the construction of air and naval works that appeared to be permanent and conceivably for future occupation and use.[54] He also learnt of plans for the US to assume military and administrative control of Japan following its defeat and the Big Four—Britain, China, the Soviet Union and the US— to take control of peace negotiations on behalf of smaller powers.[55] Evatt used an address at the Overseas Press Club in New York as an opportunity to push back against the big powers dominating peacemaking. He insisted Australia was a 'key Pacific nation', naturally 'concerned as to who shall live in, develop and control' this region. Accordingly, Australia was 'anxious to … play its part in the general and regional organization' for regional security.[56]

In August, as Roosevelt and Churchill met in Quebec to discuss, among other things, the organisation of the postwar world, the DEA reiterated Evatt's opposition to a 'Big-Four peace' in a cable sent to Dominion Secretary Clement Attlee. Decisions were not to be made without reference to other interested governments, the DEA insisted. Concerns were also raised about America's interest in certain Pacific islands and plans to control the occupation of Japan once it was defeated. While Australia accepted the US would go on to play a prominent role in the Pacific, it was anxious to ensure future arrangements were cooperative ones that 'take into account the interests of all powers concerned'.[57]

What Evatt learnt during his 1943 visit to Britain and America had a profound impact on his attitude towards the Asia-Pacific region. He became more outspoken and increasingly drew on the language of Australia as a Principal Power in an attempt to carve out a regional identity for the nation. On 14 October, Evatt presented to the House of

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53   'Note, Suggestions to Evatt on information to be ascertained in the course of his discussions abroad, 31 March 1943', NAA: A5954, 474/10.

54   This activity is detailed in '"Future of Pacific Islands", Extracts from Australian Legation Reports, 1942–43', NAA: A6494, SPTS 1/2; 'DEA to Attlee, 24 August 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/321.

55   Neville Meaney, 'Dr H.V. Evatt and the United Nations: The Problems of Collective Security and the Liberal International Order', in *Australia and the United Nations*, eds James Cotton and David Lee (Canberra: Longueville Books with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012), 37–8.

56   'Address at the Overseas Press Club, New York, 28 April 1943', in H.V. Evatt, *Foreign Policy of Australia: Speeches* (Sydney: Angus & Robinson, 1945), 114, 116.

57   'DEA to Attlee, 24 August 1943', NAA: A989, 1943/735/321. The sender is unclear, but is likely William Hodgson, DEA Secretary.

Representatives a report on his overseas visit. On the basis of Australia's geography, contribution to the Pacific War and economic, defensive and transport interests, he described South-East Asia and the South Pacific as 'coming within an extended Australian zone'. Accordingly, Australia 'should make a very special contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the peace settlement in South-east Asia and the Pacific'.[58] Later that day, in a meeting with John Minter, First Secretary of the US Legation in Australia, Evatt reiterated the concept of an extended Australian zone. He reportedly drew two lines across the map of the South and South-West Pacific that the two men had been consulting. The first line started at Timor, extending through to New Ireland, then down to include Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, New Caledonia and New Zealand. The second line started at the Philippines and extended to the Marshall Islands, where it then ran up to include American Samoa, Hawai`i and the Aleutian Islands. 'This', Evatt gestured to the first line, 'I think should be Australia's and this', gesturing to the second, 'should be yours … Ours is all south of the Equator and constitutes a natural line of defence'.[59] Evatt had defined Australia's regional sphere of interest and had made expressly clear that it should not be discounted by the US in future negotiations and security arrangements.

The 1944 Australia–New Zealand Agreement and the case for closer Commonwealth defence cooperation

With Australian actors having consistently and openly conveyed the nation's particular interests in the Asia-Pacific region and the expectation it would be directly involved in peace discussions, the developments at the Cairo Conference were 'shattering'.[60] In August 1943, Evatt requested Australia be represented at the Cairo Conference that was to

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58   'Ministerial Statement made by Dr Evatt in the House of Representatives, 14 October 1943', in Evatt, *Foreign Policy of Australia*, 141–2.

59   'Memorandum of Conversation between Evatt and Minter, 14 October 1943, attached Johnson (US Minister to Australia) to Hull, 29 October 1943, National Archives and Records Administration [hereinafter NARA]: 47.20/164', cited in J. Reed, 'American diplomatic relations with Australia during the Second World War' (PhD thesis, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1969), 259.

60   Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 232.

be held in November.[61] Churchill, however, assured Evatt that Australia's presence would not be necessary as the main discussions would be between himself and Roosevelt and inconsequential to Australia and its military operations.[62] Despite assurances, the decisions made at Cairo had a material impact on the overall strategy in the Pacific and the peace settlement. In addition to plans for the defeat of Japan and conditions of surrender, the US, British and Chinese leaders had agreed that, following its defeat, Japan would be stripped of all territory in the Pacific that it had seized or occupied since World War I. Formosa (Taiwan), Manchuria and the Pescadores Islands would be restored to China, while the future sovereignty of other former Japanese territories was not disclosed. Much to the Australian government's indignation, the first news it received of the decisions made at Cairo was in a press communiqué.[63]

In being excluded from what local newspapers reported as 'the most important conference on the Pacific since the outbreak of the war', Australia's influence in the Pacific had been publicly dismissed.[64] Evatt saw in this the seemingly unrestrained influence of the great power and was convinced Australia needed to act immediately or risk facing an 'untenable' position in the Pacific peace settlement.[65] He looked across the Tasman to New Zealand for support in this endeavour.

The Australian-New Zealand Agreement (ANZAC Agreement) was a treaty of cooperation signed between the governments of Australia and New Zealand on 21 January 1944 following a conference in Canberra. The earliest plans for a conference of Australian and New Zealand leaders was proposed by Evatt on his return home from Britain and the US.[66] In Evatt's preliminary correspondence with Carl Berendsen, New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia, topics for discussion included security arrangements for South-East Asia and the South Pacific, peace

61   'Doc. 260, Evatt to Glasgow (High Commissioner in Canada), 24 August 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
62   'Doc. 261, Glasgow to Evatt, 24 August 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
63   'Doc. 340, Cranborne (Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs) to Curtin, 1 December 1943' and 'Doc. 341, Bruce to Curtin, 1 December 1943', both in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
64   'Curtin Should Have Been at Cairo Conference', *Tweed Daily*, [Murwillumbah, NSW], 4 December 1943, 3.
65   'Doc. 40, Berendsen (New Zealand High Commissioner in Australia) to Fraser (Minister for External Affairs and Prime Minister), 4 December 1943', in Kay, *Documents of New Zealand External Relations*.
66   *CPD: Representatives*, 19 October 1943, No. 41, 577–6.

negotiations and the future of certain bases and dependent territories.[67] While the conference and subsequent agreement were certainly driven by Evatt, New Zealand was not, as Roger Bell has proposed, simply being carried along by the force of his enthusiasm.[68] New Zealand government documents reveal the nation's own suspicions about US encroachment in the Asia-Pacific, as well as extensive and thoughtful discussion by both parties in the drafting of the ANZAC Agreement and an emphasis on presenting a united front.[69]

The most significant clauses of the ANZAC Agreement are the three dealing with security and defence, territories and dependencies, and civil aviation. In the clause addressing security and defence, Australia and New Zealand formally defined their regional zone of strategic interest as 'stretching through the arc of islands North and North East of Australia, to Western Samoa and the Cook Islands'.[70] The two Pacific dominions declared their Principal-Power status and their 'right to speak' in decision-making pertinent to this region.[71] In a pointed reference to US plans, the agreement also stated the construction of military bases and facilities in 'any territory under the sovereignty or control of another Power' during the course of the war did not 'afford any basis for territorial claims or rights of sovereignty or control after the conclusion of hostilities'.[72]

In the clause concerning dependent territories, Australia and New Zealand disavowed changes to the sovereignty or systems of control of any dependent territories within their regional zone of influence 'except as a result of an agreement to which they are parties or in the terms of which they have both concurred'.[73] The proposed South Seas Regional Commission was a testament to this consultative theme. The commission, which would facilitate cooperation between trustee administrators in the region, took up Forsyth's earlier recommendation that Australia should take the lead in developing a postwar regional system that embodied its interests and institutionalised a voice in decision-making. Indeed, Evatt and Forsyth worked closely in the preparations for the ANZAC

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67   'Doc. 305, Evatt to Berendsen, 21 October 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
68   Bell, *Unequal Allies*, 146–57.
69   See file 'PWR, New Zealand Australia–New Zealand Relations, Conference, 1944', NAA: A989, 1943/735/168; 'Doc. 41, Nash to Fraser, 12 January 1944', in Kay, *Documents of New Zealand External Relations*.
70   'ANZAC Agreement, 21 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
71   *CPD: Representatives*, 10 February 1944, No. 6, 156.
72   'ANZAC Agreement, 21 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
73   ibid.

Conference; Forsyth produced an immense document—by his recount, some 500–600 pages—which considered all aspects of Australia's regional interests.[74]

Finally, the Pacific dominions declared their support for an international regulatory authority to preside over trunk routes while upholding 'the right of each country to conduct all air transport services within its own national jurisdiction, including its own contiguous territories'.[75] Along with adding weight to the ongoing Commonwealth–US civil aviation negotiations, this clause tacitly extended Australia and New Zealand's regional zone of influence to include both the seas and the air of the South Pacific and much of South-East Asia.

Christopher Waters asserts that news of the ANZAC Agreement was 'greeted with dismay in London', going on to contribute to the growing rift in Australian–British relations.[76] While this was certainly the case in Washington, and there were initial misgivings in London—primarily that the agreement had been signed without any prior consultation with Britain—the British government, in fact, came to appreciate the value of the agreement.[77]

Both the Australian and the New Zealand governments were irritated by the Cairo Conference and Britain's failure to consult with its dominions. However, with the ANZAC Agreement's references to international trunk routes and military facilities constructed during the war, the US was clearly the prime target of their protest. Evatt did little to mask this, informing the British High Commissioner to Australia that his motivation was to offer 'a warning to the Americans whose methods of infiltration were alarming'.[78] It was not surprising, then, that the ANZAC Agreement attracted criticism in the US. The US Minister to Australia, Nelson T. Johnson, complained to Hull of the 'utmost secrecy' with which the ANZAC Conference and agenda had been organised, while

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74 'Forsyth Interview', NLA: TRC 121/27, Folder 1/1/73.
75 'ANZAC Agreement, 21 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
76 Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1996), 25.
77 For the British government's irritation at having not been consulted, see 'Conclusions of War Cabinet Meeting, 9 February 1944', TNA: DO 35/1989.
78 'Dominions Office to Cranborne, 27 January 1944', TNA: DO 35/1989.

one Democratic congressman reportedly complained that the agreement threatened America's 'legitimate post-war aims', including 'its security and its share in air and sea trade routes in the Pacific area'.[79]

The official US response came in a letter from Hull handed to Curtin on 3 February. The Secretary of State was 'frankly disturbed' by some of the aspects of the agreement. He flagged, in particular, the proposal for a conference of all powers with territorial interests in the South and South-West Pacific, the aim of which was to provide a forum for the 'frank exchange of view on the problems of security, postwar development and native welfare'.[80] The US government believed it premature to begin negotiating postwar regional security systems, believing such a conference would encourage regional separatism, which, if left unchecked, could threaten postwar peace.[81]

An irate Evatt responded to Hull on 24 February. The general tone of his response was defensive and, among other things, he listed instances in which the US had been deceptive in its own plans for the Asia-Pacific. This included several remarks made by the president during PWC meetings (during March 1943 – January 1944) regarding the future of some territories and bases in the region. Evatt implied the US had acted against the goals of the nascent United Nations and 1943 Moscow Declarations, 'prejudice[ing] a harmonious Pacific settlement'.[82] This date stamping suggests Australia, or at least Evatt and the DEA, had been monitoring US territorial interests with a careful eye. Curtin was later informed the US government 'frankly' did 'not appreciate the attitude of Dr Evatt' or his conduct, particularly his recording of private conversations held during the PWC.[83]

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79 'Doc. 115, Johnson to Hull, 22 January 1944', in E. Ralph Perkins, S. Everett Gleason, John G. Reid, John P. Glennon, N.O. Sappington, William Slany, Velma Hastings Cassidy and Warren H. Reynolds (eds), *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, The British Commonwealth and Europe, Volume III* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965) [hereinafter *FRUS 1944*]; 'Australian Legation in Washington to Prime Minister's Department, 10 March 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
80 'ANZAC Agreement, 21 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.
81 'Doc. 40, Attachment, Johnson to Curtin, 3 February 1944', in W.J. Hudson (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–49. Volume 7: 1944* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988) [hereinafter *DAFP*, vol. 7].
82 'Doc. 56, Evatt to Johnson, 24 February 1944', in Hudson, *DAFP*, vol. 7.
83 'Doc. 128, Memorandum of Conversation, by Hull, 24 April 1944', in Perkins et al., *FRUS 1944*.

In the months that followed, the wording of the ANZAC Agreement was softened, including a modification accepting US occupation of Japan once defeated and usage rights of the nation's former territories and military bases.[84] These developments did not, however, signal Australia's rescission of its regional rights and responsibilities. The Australian government was still determined to be directly involved in the Japanese surrender and peace negotiations, with Evatt going on to publicly denounce a big-power peace as 'intolerable'.[85] During the drafting of the UN Charter at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, Evatt championed the role of small powers in the new international organisation and secured amendments to the domestic jurisdiction clause to protect against UN intervention in matters relating to immigration and economic policies and the right to extend these policies to dependent territories.[86]

Like the US, Britain expressed some initial reservations about the ANZAC Agreement. For the most part, however, the government appreciated its merits. At the time of the ANZAC Agreement's signing, British–dominion relations remained strained following the collapse of the imperial effort in the Pacific theatre. Couple this with the United States' dominance of the overall war effort and preliminary postwar planning and the future status of the Commonwealth and British power remained uncertain.[87] Robert Stewart of the Division of British Commonwealth Affairs in the US State Department judged the ANZAC Agreement to have partially resolved this uncertainty. He believed it 'all too likely' that Britain 'warmly welcomes' the agreement, 'indicating as it does that these two members of the Commonwealth do not intend to be subservient to the United States'.[88] Johnson similarly judged the agreement to represent renewed support for the Commonwealth. In this, there was a potential challenge to America's postwar plans, as Australia and New Zealand would buttress British influence, potentially outweighing the US in decision-making.[89]

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84 'Memorandum, Department of State, 12 September 1944, NARA: 847.00/9-1244', cited in Bell, *Unequal Allies*, 158.
85 H.V. Evatt, 'Risks of a Big-Power Peace', *Foreign Affairs* 24, no. 2 (1946): 195–209, at p. 200.
86 Meaney, 'Dr H.V. Evatt and the United Nations', 40–7; Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 302–6.
87 Francine McKenzie, *Redefining the Bonds of Commonwealth, 1939–1948: The Politics of Preference* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 116–17.
88 'Doc. 117, Memorandum by Stewart, 1 February 1944', in Perkins et al., *FRUS 1944*.
89 'Johnson to Stewart, 23 March 1943, Private Papers of Nelson T. Johnson', cited in Reed, 'American diplomatic relations with Australia during the Second World War', 318.

As Stewart and Johnson suspected, neither Australia nor Britain overlooked the role of the Commonwealth in the ANZAC Agreement and the regional system it sought to institute. While the two Pacific dominions were willing to assume a greater role in regional affairs, they recognised they were not yet able to shoulder the entire responsibility for regional defence. Cooperation with Britain, therefore, remained 'essential'.[90] Indeed, in the lead-up to the ANZAC Conference, Evatt informed Berendsen that he hoped to see a new era in dominion cooperation that would form 'the foundation of the British sphere of influence in the South-West and South Pacific'.[91] After the ANZAC Agreement was signed, the Australian and New Zealand governments proposed to Britain a cooperative Commonwealth defence bloc in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. In this defence arrangement—which was based on assessments made by the Australian Defence Committee and included the recommendation that an island defence perimeter be established to protect against long-range attacks on the Australian continent—Britain, Australia and New Zealand would have primary responsibility for defending the area south of the equator, while America would take responsibility for the area north of the equator. Australia and New Zealand made clear this arrangement 'should be made as part of a general scheme' for Pacific security and 'not [be] piecemeal'.[92] In effect, the Pacific dominions were seeking to create a cooperative Commonwealth defence arrangement that was informed by their particular regional circumstances and institutionalised their relevance as Principal Powers.

On the back of the ANZAC Agreement and the proposed Commonwealth defence bloc, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs Lord Cranborne assessed that closer dominion cooperation was 'all to the good'. In terms of defence, he believed it was

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90   '"The Defence of the Southwest Pacific", Statement by Curtin, 18 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1. See also David Day, 'Pearl Harbour to Nagasaki', in *Munich to Vietnam: Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States Since the 1930s*, ed. Carl Bridge (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 63–4.

91   'Doc. 35, Berendsen to Fraser, 21 October 1943', in Kay, *Documents of New Zealand External Relations*.

92   'Copy, Australian and New Zealand governments to Dominions Office, 25 January 1944, Dominions Office to Canada and South Africa High Commission, 14 February 1944', TNA: DO 35/1989. For the recommendations of the Defence Committee, see 'Doc. 6, Attachment, "Future of Southwest Pacific Region—Conference Between Australian and New Zealand Ministers", Shedden to Hodgson (DEA Secretary), 7 January 1944', in Hudson, *DAFP*, vol. 7; 'Blamey to Shedden, 15 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1.

> clearly to the good that Australia and New Zealand should have
> stated publicly that they have a primary interest in the defence of
> the Pacific. This declaration may be extremely valuable when we
> come to arrange for the post-war period. Moreover, in advocating
> the principle of regional collaboration in the Pacific between all
> the Governments concerned they have in effect adopted the ideas
> which we had been considering here.[93]

Cranborne's final point was in reference to recent British attention to the
future of inter-imperial relationships, the role of the Commonwealth in
maintaining British world power in the face of the US and USSR and
the regionalisation of imperial defence planning, in which each dominion
would assume greater responsibility for local defence. Like Australia and
New Zealand, Britain was wary of US encroachment in the Asia-Pacific
region and was not convinced it could be relied on to share power in the
postwar world. The Commonwealth could serve as a friendly yet robust
counterweight to the US.[94]

Curtin's fourth empire

Both the demeanour—'overbearing' and 'brusque to the point of being
rude'—and the portfolio of Evatt have seen him dominate material
dealing with this period.[95] Indeed, Australia's assertive wartime diplomacy
and geopolitical consciousness in foreign policymaking have largely been
characterised as Evatt's personal project.[96] Certainly, he led the way in
building a geopolitically informed foreign policy that instituted Australia's
role in the management of the postwar Asia-Pacific region. However, this
agenda was by no means his alone. Curtin, too, was considering the future
role of the Commonwealth and Australia in the changing world order and
implementing his own initiatives.

Beginning in mid-1943, Curtin built a case for closer cooperation in
the postwar imperial system. World War II and the fall of Singapore,
in particular, revealed the weakness of the existing systems for imperial

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93   '"Australian–New Zealand Agreement of 21 January 1944", Memorandum by Cranborne, War
Cabinet Meeting, 2 February 1944', TNA: DO 35/198.
94   Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, 14–17; Orders, *Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Challenge
of the United States*, 98.
95   Buckley et al., *Doc Evatt*, 183.
96   See for instance, Meg Gurry, 'Identifying Australia's "Region": From Evatt to Evans', *Australian
Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (1995): 17–31, at pp. 18–21.

communication and policymaking. Curtin championed a renewed commitment to British world leadership and the final chapter of empire evolution—what he called the 'Fourth Empire'—which would unite the disparate members of the Commonwealth under a more unified foreign and defence policy.[97] He argued directives could no longer come from Britain alone, proposing more frequent meetings of Commonwealth prime ministers, and not just in London. In theory, this would offer regular opportunities for the specific needs of the disparate parts of the Commonwealth to be voiced and incorporated into policymaking.[98] The showpiece of Curtin's Fourth Empire was a permanent imperial secretariat—a consultative body that would meet regularly to oversee the implementation of a united Commonwealth response to world affairs.[99]

From the leader who defiantly brought home the 6th and 7th divisions of the AIF, Curtin's Fourth Empire appeared to be a naive return to dependence on Britain. Moreover, as Paul Hasluck and Peter Edwards have argued, it underscored the disunity in Curtin's and Evatt's appreciation of the future thrust of Australian foreign policy.[100] James Curran identifies more merit in Curtin's proposal, yet he couches it in the language of a sentimental attachment to Britishness, rather than a pragmatic appraisal of Australia's national interest and the systems through which this could be protected.[101] A closer examination of public statements and private government documents, however, reveals a surprising pragmatism in the Fourth Empire and a level of similarity in the strategic visions of Curtin and Evatt.

Like the ANZAC Agreement, Curtin's Fourth Empire was an astute appreciation of Britain's diminishing relative influence. He believed the Commonwealth was 'the most effective structure for regional security the world has known', judging it to be 'in every country's interest and in the interest of any general security scheme that the structure should be maintained and, if possible, strengthened'.[102]

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97   James Curran, *Curtin's Empire* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 99–101; James Curran, '"An Organic Part of the Whole Structure": John Curtin's Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37, no. 1 (2009): 51–75, at pp. 60–6; 'Doc. 272, Press Statement by Curtin, 6 September 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
98   'Imperial Team Work', *The Age*, [Melbourne], 16 August 1943, 3.
99   'PM's Postwar Empire Council Plan', *The Argus*, [Melbourne], 7 September 1943, 5; 'Doc. 272, Press Statement, 6 September 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
100   Paul Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941–1947* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 137; Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats*, 154, 156–60.
101   Curran, '"An Organic Part of the Whole Structure"', 51–75.
102   '"Curtin Opens Fight for Empire Bureau", *The New York Times*, 5 May 1944', cutting, in NAA: A5954, 661/8.

Curtin reiterated the importance of maintaining British world leadership during the 1944 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. On 15 May, he called for greater Commonwealth cooperation in new international organisations, stressing his belief that 'the British Commonwealth and Empire would have much greater influence … than would the United Kingdom divorced from the Dominions'.[103] Although not explicitly stated, Curtin had implied that America alone could not be allowed to dominate the postwar global order. Cranborne appreciated Curtin's implications, having previously judged the Fourth Empire proposal to be indicative of Australia's growing impatience with 'the autocratic attitude of the United States' and seeing in this the opportunity 'to attach them closer to us'.[104] At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, Cranborne accordingly agreed that more effective systems for collaboration and consultation were required if Commonwealth influence in global affairs was to be sustained.[105]

The proposed Fourth Empire was premised on 'full and continued consultation'.[106] In this way, as Curran notes, Curtin attempted to address longstanding concerns about the imperial relationship, creating a framework in which dominion voices would be present from the outset.[107] Direct representation within the Commonwealth was intrinsically linked to Australia's Principal-Power status and postwar security plans. A September 1943 newspaper article quoted Curtin as saying his Fourth Empire proposal was 'an attempt to enhance Australia's position' and, if adopted, would 'ensure Australia's development as a world Power with a dominating influence in the Pacific'.[108] This influence was to be cultivated through the creation of regional security zones and the increasing responsibility of the dominions. Curtin saw Australia as a trustee for British civilisation—'a power to stand for Democracy' in the

103 'Minutes, Fourteenth Meeting of Prime Ministers, 15 May 1944', in Records of the Cabinet Office, War Cabinet and Cabinet: Commonwealth and International Conferences: Minutes and Papers, TNA: CAB 99/28.
104 'Annotations by Cranborne on a note to Machtig, Record of conversation between British officials in Washington and Dixon, 5 November 1943', TNA: DO 35/1478.
105 'Minutes, Fourteenth Meeting of Prime Ministers, 15 May 1944', TNA: CAB 99/28. The Foreign Office went on to echo the assessment that, without Commonwealth collaboration, Britain would likely be overshadowed by the US. 'Foreign Office Memorandum, Stocktaking after VE Day, 11 July 1945', in Records created or inherited by the Foreign Office, Foreign Office: Political Departments—General Correspondence from 1906–66, TNA: FO 371/50912.
106 'Doc. 272, Press Statement, 6 September 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
107 Curran, '"An Organic Part of the Whole Structure"', 53.
108 'Empire Council Explained', *Army News*, [Darwin], 13 September 1943, 4.

South and South-West Pacific—and he was eager to see the nation take on a greater role in its region.[109] The Commonwealth regional defence bloc would have the threefold outcome of demonstrating Australia's status in its immediate region, ensuring region-specific interests were integrated within imperial defence planning and the removal of some of the strain on Britain to police its global empire.[110]

The Fourth Empire, at least in the form proposed by Curtin, failed to gain momentum. For the most part, this was because the other dominions— principally, Canada—did not wish to form a common foreign policy. Curtin left London with a compromise. In addition to daily meetings with the Dominion Affairs Secretary, the high commissioners would have monthly meetings with the prime minister, although these soon fell by the wayside.[111]

Despite the lack of substantive outcomes, Curtin's Fourth Empire represents a significant moment in the history of Australian foreign policy. It was an acknowledgement that a postwar alliance with the US was neither likely nor beneficial to Australia's material interests. Curtin's proposal signalled a pragmatic return to Britain and the imperial diplomatic and strategic framework, challenging the 'look to America' narrative that had become synonymous with his leadership. Significantly, although Australia was returning to the imperial connection, it was not willing to return to the prewar relationship that had so often seen its interests overlooked. In the ANZAC Agreement, Australia made clear that it expected to play a major role in decision-making in its region. Curtin's proposal, with its emphasis on direct representation and the regionalisation of defence planning, was the framework through which to implement the ANZAC Agreement's agenda. As the next chapter details, elements of these two initiatives informed the blueprint for Australia's attempts to develop strategic, economic and diplomatic capabilities in the new world order.

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109 Curran, '"An Organic Part of the Whole Structure"', 59; 'Press Statement, 6 September 1943', in Neale, *DAFP*, vol. 6.
110 'Statement by Curtin, 18 January 1944', NAA: A5954, 652/1; 'Memorandum, "Improvements in the Machinery for Empire Co-operation desired by the Australian Government", Fourteenth Meeting of Prime Ministers, 15 May 1944', TNA: CAB 99/28.
111 Curran, '"An Organic Part of the Whole Structure"', 67–70.