

Abstract

The spectre of block obsolescence of major weapons platforms loomed throughout the 1980s, facing successive governments with significant challenges as they worked to make sustainable decisions on replacement or upgraded equipment for the New Zealand Defence Force.

This book identifies the critical factors that shaped and influenced defence acquisition decision-making processes from the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 and the subsequent ANZUS crisis, through to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and the following ‘war on terror’. It explores and analyses decision-making processes in relation to six acquisition decisions which have been made over a 20-year period. These are the decisions on the ANZAC frigates; the military sealift ship HMNZS *Charles Upham*; the second and third decisions on the ANZACs; the lease of the F-16 strike aircraft; the upgrading of the P-3C *Orion* maritime patrol aircraft; and the purchase of light armoured vehicles for the Army—the LAV IIIs.

Whilst many factors are brought to bear, this book outlines how it is that New Zealand’s own view of the world, external relationships, politics and political influence, and the timing of decisions are amongst the most significant elements that impact on the decision-making process, whilst individual actors play a significant part in shaping the process. Although there has been a great deal of publicity in recent years about rivalry between the Services and the place of bureaucratic politics, this book argues that nonetheless officials continued to work with rigour over time to provide the best judgement and advice possible to Ministers. Three out of six of the case studies which have been analysed—the ANZAC frigates, the upgrade of the P-3 *Orions* and the LAV III—have been implemented or are in the process of successful implementation. In each case, officials worked to ensure that they provided the Government of the day with the most appropriate advice upon which to base decisions, although that advice has not always been popular. Each case study demonstrates key aspects of the decision-making process, providing specific insights into the way defence decisions are made.