

2 AUSTRALIA, JAPAN AND THE REGION

THE WEST NEW GUINEA DISPUTE, 1952–1962

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Indonesian and Dutch claims over West New Guinea in the period 1949 to 1962 presented one of the first opportunities for regional dialogue in post-war Australia-Japan relations. The aims of this chapter are to chart changes in the Australian attitude towards Japan's role in regional affairs and to examine how dialogue on West New Guinea assisted in laying the foundations for further regional cooperation and consultation between the two countries. The chapter examines the beginnings of post-war consultation between Australia and Japan. It is argued that the diplomatic intrigues involving the West New Guinea dispute (1952 to 1962) led to a substantial effort by Australian officials to bring Japan into closer alignment with Australian foreign policy objectives. As part of this initiative, regular meetings between Australia and Japan resulted in the relatively rapid development in the quality and scope of discussions and exchange of information on regional issues. Accordingly this chapter provides evidence of the formative processes towards institutionalising regular bilateral consultation and exchange of sensitive political information on regional issues. Regular diplomatic consultation on regional issues was important as it provided a basis for broadening the structure of the bilateral

relationship and improved both countries' understanding of contemporary bilateral relations.

Overview of the West New Guinea dispute

The political landscape of early post-war Asia was dominated by the notions of nationalism and demands for independence from European colonial powers. In the case of Indonesia, Indonesian nationalists proclaimed independence in August 1945 prior to the return of the Dutch colonial administration. The desire for independence led to a protracted and armed struggle against the Dutch in the ensuing four years. After intervention by the United Nations and considerable negotiation, a resolution was reached through The Hague Round Table discussions, which took place in October and November 1949. The result was the transfer of power to Indonesian nationalists led by Sukarno in late December 1949. Dutch withdrawal and international recognition of the Indonesian Republic took place early in the following year. Importantly, the fate of West New Guinea (hereafter WNG)¹ was not decided at the 1949 Round Table conferences. Instead, the WNG question was deferred for 12 months while negotiations took place and the territory of WNG was excluded from the transfer of sovereignty.² This led to over thirteen years of episodic discussions between the Netherlands and Indonesia, which served only to inflame passions on both sides.

The WNG dispute went through three essential phases before its resolution in August 1962: 1949–1954, 1954–1957 and 1958–62. From 1949 to 1957 the WNG dispute was negotiated through bilateral discussions and appeals to the United Nations General Assembly. Four attempts were made by the Indonesians through the General Assembly of the United Nations to resolve the dispute.³ By late 1957, however, Indonesian strategy had changed. This was mainly due to the failure to gain sufficient support within the United Nations and a hard-line Dutch position that rejected Indonesian claims. A more forceful approach was subsequently adopted by Indonesia, involving a 'Contest of Power' with the Dutch. In 1960 Indonesia formerly severed diplomatic ties with the Netherlands and several small-scale clashes occurred in WNG. India's use

of military force to reclaim Goa from the Portuguese in December 1961 offered a precedent for the Indonesian Government to engage in direct military conflict. At this stage the Dutch Government, due to domestic pressure and the paucity of international support, became more willing to negotiate. On 15 August 1962, Dutch representatives reluctantly agreed to an international trusteeship for WNG.

The resolution to the dispute came after negotiations in early 1962. Ellsworth Bunker (a retired United States diplomat) acted as a mediator during these proceedings at the request of acting UN Secretary General U Thant. Known as the Bunker Plan, the resolution involved: the transfer of the administration of WNG to a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) established by and under the jurisdiction of the Secretary General; a United Nations appointed administrator who would have the discretion to transfer all or part of the administration to Indonesia at any time after 1 May 1963; and exercising their right of self determination by the inhabitants of WNG before the end of 1969.⁴

Early Australia-Japan dialogue on regional issues: differences on West New Guinea

Australia-Japan dialogue on regional issues in the early post war years was on an *ad hoc* and infrequent basis. The process towards more regular discussions began in 1957 as Australian officials applied considerable pressure on the Japanese Government to support the Dutch position on the WNG dispute. The Japanese had supported Indonesian claims until late 1957 and then pursued a policy of neutrality. It is not clear what impact, if any, Australian pressure had on the policy shift in Tokyo. The burgeoning trade relationship may have had some influence on the outcome. Nonetheless, Japanese negotiations with Indonesia on reparations and the United States position on neutrality were of far greater significance to overall Japanese foreign policy. The change in Japanese policy, however, allowed for smoother relations between Australian and Japanese officials. From this period the focus of discussions became broader due, in part, to shared interests as staunch US allies and regular consultation on regional matters.

In an assessment of Australian discussion with Japan on WNG and broader regional issues, three distinct periods are evident: 1952 to 1957, the year 1957 and 1958 to 1962.

1952–57: blundering through

The first few years after diplomatic relations were restored were awkward. From an Australian perspective there was a considerable amount of tension in public perceptions of Japan. Diplomatic activities were taken up with establishing embassies and receiving the credentials of diplomats in Canberra and Tokyo. It was not until August 1954 that the Menzies Cabinet made a serious effort to develop the bilateral relationship. The change in policy was also reflected in the decision to support Japan's involvement in international forums such as the United Nations.

The softening of Australian attitudes toward Japan was a pragmatic decision. It fitted into the regional objectives of the United States and the United Kingdom and suited Australian interests as a potentially lucrative bilateral trade relationship was starting to emerge. Normalising relations and the co-sponsorship of Japan into several international organisations also began the process of regional dialogue. Most pressing from an Australian perspective was the need to thwart attempts by Indonesia to gain United Nations support on the question of sovereignty of WNG. Consultation with Japan on WNG, which was part of the overall strategy to offset Indonesian plans, began in December 1954. Arthur Tange (the Secretary of the External Affairs Department) invited the Japanese Ambassador Haruhiko Nishi to discuss a number of issues of which WNG was the first on the agenda. Tange took a soft line in discussions with Ambassador Nishi but nonetheless made it clear that the Department had been concerned over WNG. As a means to influence the Japanese approach, Tange discussed the Indonesia election. The Secretary expressed the hope that as a result of the election, the Indonesians would not bring the WNG issue up again in the United Nations.⁵ The meeting ended on a cordial note and although no direct pressure was applied on Japan, Tange's intentions were made abundantly clear: Australia expected Japan to support the Dutch in international forums either now or in the near future. In many respects the Tange-Nishi discussion marked the beginning of a

campaign within the External Affairs Department to influence Japan on this issue through an ongoing process of consultation. Australia had provided considerable support for Japan at international forums and External Affairs officials intended to use this as leverage to pressure Japan to support the Dutch position.

In April 1955 Masayoshi Kakitsubo (Embassy Counsellor) called into the Department of External Affairs upon his return to Australia from a Japanese diplomatic representatives meeting in Karachi. In his discussion with James Plimsoll (a senior official and later Secretary of External Affairs), Kakitsubo discussed the forthcoming Bandung Conference and the issue of Japan's stance on WNG as a foreign policy dilemma. He noted that the final recommendation at the Japanese diplomatic meeting was that Japan would remain neutral and try to avoid any specific issue such as WNG ever coming on the Bandung agenda.⁶ Kakitsubo's information was corroborated by a cablegram sent by Ronald Walker (Australian Ambassador to Japan, June 1953–December 1955) in early April 1955. In a discussion with Mr Tani from the Japanese Foreign Office, Walker reported that based on procedure, which had already been submitted to the conference on the first day, the Japanese representatives felt it was unlikely that specific controversial issues such as Formosa or WNG would be raised.⁷

However Indonesia raised WNG at the Bandung Conference. According to Ambassador Saburo Ohta (then Japanese Ambassador to Burma and later to Australia) the Arab delegation raised the issue of Palestine and this gave the Indonesians the opportunity to discuss WNG. Ohta spoke disparagingly about Indonesia as hosts and said several countries including Japan had been rather embarrassed by the discussion of WNG.⁸

The decision by Japan to support Indonesian claims at Bandung caused some consternation in Canberra. There was concern about the reliability of information being received from the Japanese Government and the level of influence that Canberra could exert on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Annoyed that Japan chose Iran and Peru rather than Australia to sponsor her into the United Nations General Assembly, Australia's Ambassador to Japan Alan Watt expressed concern that Japan was 'fobbing off' Australia. In a memo to Arthur Tange in December 1956, Watt stated 'If however,

they [Japan] learn in some polite but firm way that their words are not deceiving us, it would help them to understand that international friendship depends upon acts rather than words'.⁹ Watt's concerns about Japanese foreign policy and approach to WNG were highlighted in a letter to External Affairs Minister Casey the following day. Watt commented on Japan's entry into the United Nations and how this was a turning point in Japanese foreign policy. He noted that Japanese policy was most likely to be cautious, restrained and opportunistic with care being taken not to antagonise the Afro-Asian bloc. In short, Australia could expect little or no support on colonial issues.¹⁰

Despite these concerns, consultation between Australian and Japanese officials continued to develop and was further refined in 1957. Frequent discussions on WNG took place throughout the year. Japan's support for Indonesia at the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the General Assembly in 1957 led to pro-active effort by Australia to change thinking in Tokyo. Voting at the General Assembly was very tight and Australian activities formed part of an overall strategy to thwart Indonesian efforts to gain a two-third majority support for a Good Offices Commission to examine the dispute. Given the signing of the Agreement of Commerce between Australia and Japan in July, the WNG offensive by External Affairs signalled the beginnings of the practice of frequent consultations on regional issues between the two countries.

1957: Australia intensifies pressure on Japan to support its WNG policy

1957 was a landmark year in bilateral relations. Events during the year included the signing of the Agreement on Commerce Treaty; the first exchange of prime ministerial visits by Robert Menzies and Nobusuke Kishi; ministerial meetings; and dialogue among senior bureaucrats. Notably, nine major consultations were held on WNG in Canberra and Tokyo. During the year substantial pressure was placed upon Japan by Australia to support the Dutch position or to abstain. Australian pressure was based on the strong support that had been given to Japan to enter international bodies and on the goodwill that now existed between the

two countries. Expressions of gratitude came from a wide range of Japanese diplomats and the new Foreign Minister and soon-to-be Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi.

The Australian lobbying on WNG took a number of forms, but central to all efforts was the request that Japan carefully reconsider its position. In January 1957 James Plimsoll began the year with renewed pressure on Japan to revise its WNG policy. In a meeting with Japanese Counsellor Uyama, Plimsoll restated the Australian position and emphasised that Australia had a defence interest in the security of WNG. He made it very clear to Uyama that Australia hoped Japan would not support Indonesian claims at the forthcoming session at the General Assembly.¹¹

The tempo of Australian pressure began to intensify in February 1957 as Indonesia planned to invite the Assembly President to exercise 'good offices' either personally or through a committee on WNG for the March session. Watt actively sought to ensure that Japan was aware that this was the first step to strengthening the legal claim that sovereignty already belonged to Indonesia. The Australian position, as Watt reminded Japanese officials, was that a political assembly should not settle legal issues.¹² As a follow-up, Watt also attempted to check Japan's policy for the upcoming session of the General Assembly. Domestic affairs (Prime Minister Ishibashi was about to resign due to ill health) had preoccupied Foreign Minister Kishi so that no firm or positive Japanese line on the issue had been taken in Tokyo.¹³ Four days later (27 February) Kishi became Prime Minister. Despite support for abstention at the Foreign Office level, Kishi personally intervened to ensure that Japan voted in support of Indonesia at the United Nations. Watt expressed his surprise at this decision, as this was contrary to informal advice he had received and the Department expressed its disappointment. The official reason given by Mr Ohno (Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs) was that 'Japan must give special consideration to political and economic cooperation with neighbouring Asian countries'.¹⁴ No doubt a contributing factor in Kishi's decision was his personal business interests. The new Prime Minister had close ties with Kinoshita Trading Company, which had the largest share of reparation contracts with Indonesia.¹⁵

Watt was annoyed by Japan's vote, which he saw as part of a growing pattern of empty UN resolutions urging members of the UN engaged in

disputes to resolve the problem. In this context Watt argued that Australia must be more forceful with Japan. In particular, Watt wrote

[i]t is unwise to let pass without registering polite disapproval Japanese actions which we feel are open to criticism.... So far as I am aware however, the only comment made to Mr Suzuki in Canberra on this issue was a statement that Australia had been glad to help in any way Japan desired. I fear that such an attitude will merely encourage Japan to ignore Australian interest or Japanese obligations to Australia whenever she finds this convenient.¹⁶

Watt's memo appeared to have triggered a major offensive by External Affairs in April. Plimsoll, in registering Australian displeasure at Japanese voting in the UN and countering the response that questions of sovereignty were best solved in the United Nations, made the point to Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Nara that

...surely he would not maintain that any country, by simply raising a claim to somebody else's territory, could have it considered by the General Assembly? What would Japan say if the representative of Korea suddenly laid claim to Tsushima?¹⁷

This was followed up by an attempt to develop a strong line within the department on this issue. Indicative of this was the departmental brief for Prime Minister Menzies' historic visit to Japan in April 1957. The brief stated that it was essential that Prime Minister Kishi be made aware of the value of the relationship with Australia and that Australian interests and reactions were of importance to Japan. In part, according to the brief, this lack of awareness by Kishi explained why Japan voted against Australia on WNG, which was contrary to the advice given on the likely Japanese policy.¹⁸ The paper argued that there were three reasons why Japan should support the Australian position on WNG: the first was the unjustified nature of the Indonesian claim; the second was the danger of submerging its identity in the Afro-Asian bloc regardless of the merits of the issue; and third that Japan had a more friendly reception from Australia than from most countries in South and Southeast Asia.¹⁹

Menzies, no doubt due to the importance of overall bilateral relations and the upcoming trade agreement in particular, did not pursue the

External Affairs recommendation while in Japan. He did, however, raise the issue with Kishi on the last day of the visit. In a rather oblique message Menzies said that 'Australia had played a big part in getting Japan into the UN and it was up to Japan to do something for Australia'.²⁰

After some lobbying by Australian officials in the first few months of 1957, WNG did not figure prominently in discussions until after the Agreement on Commerce was signed in July. From available evidence it is not clear whether this was a policy decision or was affected by the ebb and flow of the WNG debate in international forums. However the debate and Australian pressure re-emerged in July after the trade issues had been sorted out. Clearly this suggested that there was a co-ordinated policy orchestrated from Canberra to ensure a start to the new trade relationship that was as smooth as possible. Within the political sphere, however, the WNG issue remained a key area of disagreement. In July Arthur Tange invited Tadakatsu Suzuki (the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador) to the Department for discussion. Tange first raised the issue of strong Australian support for Japan's candidature at the Security Council of the United Nations. The next topic was WNG. Without directly linking the two issues, Tange made it clear that he hoped that the Japanese delegation to the next session of the General Assembly would take into account the Australian position when formulating its approach on WNG.²¹

In late July Watt reported on a discussion with Foreign Minister Fujiyama and Miyazaki (Director, International Cooperation Bureau) on WNG. Fujiyama made clear to Watt that Japan had its hands tied by the Bandung communiqué. Watt commented that it was

...unlikely Japanese will in the foreseeable future modify their attitude...
[the] Japanese Government is preoccupied with economic questions and a major effort will be made to secure agreement with Indonesia on reparations before Kishi's visit in November.²²

This did not deter further attempts at lobbying. In August Australian Foreign Minister Richard Casey began increasing pressure on the WNG issue. Casey put forward to Ambassador Suzuki that the WNG issue was causing difficulties in the relationship. To emphasise this point, Casey told Suzuki that Japanese support for Indonesia was seen as opposition to

Australia and that this could affect the bilateral relationship. In an uncompromising statement Casey warned that a vote for Indonesia

...could have a bad effect on Australian public opinion and the campaign amongst Australian manufacturers against the trade agreement might well be intensified if Japan should cast a vote unfavourable to Australia.²³

Interestingly, the lure of trade and investment in a Dutch-controlled WNG was also considered by some Australian officials as a means of influencing the Japanese Government. The notion was rejected within the Department however, on the basis that it would not guarantee a change in Japan's position.²⁴

In the following month (September), a departmental paper reviewing the bilateral relationship was the first indicator of a more sanguine approach. The report stated that by adopting its 1954 position Australia had developed a cooperative approach to Japan and as such had assisted in keeping Japan in the 'Free World' and had encouraged the forces of moderation within Japan. In doing so Australia accepted some disadvantages for a greater good. Japan's policy of voting in support of the Indonesian position on WNG was seen in the report as a source of embarrassment for Australia. In its conclusion the report stated that Japan would continue to make demands on Australia as the country would 'suffer the attraction of Asian policies promoted through the Afro-Asian bloc'.²⁵

In November, as part of the continuing campaign, Casey again presented Suzuki with the issue of voting on WNG in the UN. Casey pointed out that the resolution went further than last year and that Japan might find it easier to abstain. He also pointed out that a number of Asian and other countries had already indicated their intention to abstain on the Indonesian proposals. Moreover, Casey added that Kishi's visit to Australia scheduled for December would be spoiled by this issue.²⁶ However, by this stage it was clear to Watt (based on numerous discussions with Japanese officials and in swapping notes with Dutch officials in Tokyo) that pressure on Japan was not effective. According to Watt, the Japanese position was not based on the soundness of the Indonesian claim but rather on their recent membership of the Afro-Asian bloc and by reparation negotiations with Indonesia. Indeed, Watt wrote to the Secretary to inform him that too

much pressure and insistence could weaken rather than strengthen the Australian WNG cause.²⁷

Despite sustained Australian efforts Japan did vote for the Afro-Asian resolution in the UN. The change in Japan's position on the territorial claims to one of neutrality in November 1957, though, did have an impact on the process of consultation. In November, reparation agreements with Indonesia were completed and this offered the Japanese Government a greater degree of flexibility on regional matters. Indonesia, for strategic and economic reasons, was a critical factor in Japanese post-war planning. As well, the importance of resolving the reparation negotiation with Indonesia should not be underestimated. Negotiations had been bogged down for several years and in the end the Japanese Government made major concessions. As a result of the agreement Kishi was able to stabilise the Indonesian economy, enhance his own prestige and also Japan's image in Asia.²⁸

The extent to which Australian pressure affected Japanese policy towards WNG is difficult to gauge. Lobbying by Australians was influential, but the issue should also be seen in the context of American neutrality and the completion of reparations agreements with Indonesia. The sustained actions by Australian officials nonetheless allowed for regular contact through frequent and increasingly familiar discussions that offered opportunity for closer relations. Dr Ronald Walker (Australian representative at the United Nations and former Ambassador to Japan), for example, reported that the Japanese delegation to the United Nations attempted to take a moderate role and was possibly toning down the expression of anti-colonialist and related prejudices on WNG.²⁹ Another example was the decision by Ambassador Suzuki to inform Tange of the Japanese decision to support Indonesia prior to the commencement of the 12th Session of the General Assembly. Suzuki told Tange that the Japanese delegation had made a commitment and would find it difficult to abstain this time.³⁰ The information gave the Australian Government advance warning of Japan's voting on the proposed resolution in the General Assembly and an indicator of possible change in Japan's position. Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi's visit to Australia in December 1957 marked the end of an aggressive Australian campaign. During the visit a noticeable lowering of intensity

on WNG was evident in Australian policy and in discussions with senior Japanese representatives.³¹

Throughout 1957 Australian officials monitored the UN General Assembly votes on WNG. In this context Japan was viewed by the Australians as a nation that was supporting Indonesia, but susceptible to pressure to change its stance (to abstention or even a pro-Dutch position). The decision in Tokyo to abstain from voting removed an important barrier to the improvement of bilateral relations with Australia. During the year both External Affairs and Foreign Affairs officials used bilateral consultations to maintain dialogue on WNG. The information passed on by both sides served to highlight the importance of the relationship and the growing awareness of the usefulness of maintaining regular *ad hoc* discussions on regional issues. In many respects these developments represent an important turning point. Trade discussions were supplemented by political dialogue on regional matters and as such the bilateral relationship was becoming, albeit slowly, multidimensional. Clearly this marked the beginning of a new framework for consultations and established an environment in which External Affairs officials and Japanese counterparts would consult and share information on a wider range of political matters over the next few years.

Towards closer consultation 1958–1962

Indonesian policy of direct action on the WNG dispute from late 1957 to 1962 and the PRRI–Permesta rebellion (1958) was the next set of issues discussed. Officials from Australia and Japan, who were concerned by the security implication of these developments, conveyed interest in discussing Indonesia and regional issues on a more regular basis. Foreign Minister Casey met with Ambassador Suzuki on several occasions in early 1958 to discuss the Sumatran rebellion and domestic developments in Indonesia. Moreover the habit of consultations became more entrenched during this period. For example, while in Jakarta on a short visit in March 1958, Suzuki also liaised with Laurence McIntyre (Australian Ambassador to Indonesia 1956–59) about the domestic development in Indonesia.³²

Evidence of closer relations was the sending of parliamentary delegations by Australia and Japan in 1958. The general upgrading of political relations

and the importance of bilateral relations in general can also be seen in increased contact at the highest levels. Ambassador Watt, in a Ministerial dispatch to Casey, noted that Kishi made the point of attending the farewell dinner for the Australian delegation despite the budget session in the Diet, problems within his own faction and President Sukarno's recent arrival.³³

Within External Affairs a marked increase in the importance of Japan as a regional actor was also noticeable. One example was the debate generated by the exclusion of the Tokyo Mission from the 1958 Heads of Mission meeting. Gordon Jockel (Head of Pacific and Americas Branch) wrote to Plimsoll (now Assistant Secretary) and documented reasons why the Tokyo Mission should attend. His argument included the following

Japan represents a non-communist influence in competition with communist China in Southeast Asia in many fields

Japan has made Southeast Asia an area of major Japanese interest for vital political and economic reasons, and

Japanese reparations are an important element in the economy of certain Southeast Asian countries.³⁴

The importance of Japan within the Department was emphasised by the decision to broaden relations through enhanced political dialogue. By 1959 Japan was increasingly important to Australia as a trading partner and as an emerging regional power. Walter Crocker's comments on Japan and its growing importance were indicative of Australian thinking. He wrote: 'a regional conference which omits an expert assessment of a Japan perspective is seriously incomplete'.³⁵ There was, however, residual annoyance at Japan's tendency to support the Afro-Asian stance on WNG. It was clear that senior officials saw US neutrality as a decisive factor in Japan's relative freedom in policy. Alan Watt reported on domestic developments in Japan and made the following suggestion for discussion at the next ANZUS Council meeting (September 1958).

Since the last elections Japan has seemed to stress her position as an Asian nation disproportionately to her association with the free world countries and even her support for the United Nations. The strongest evidence of

this is her attitude towards the Middle East crisis. The United States is more likely to be sensitive when Japan acts as an Asian nation in the Middle East, than when she acts as an Asian nation in regard to the WNG question. Australia is entitled to relate the two problems and to claim that the United States indifference towards WNG question has an unintended effect of encouraging Japan to apply the Asian approach to other questions, including the Middle East.³⁶

Although the issue received limited attention at the ANZUS Council, the use of United States influence was still central to plans to change Japanese views. In February 1959 there was a flurry of press reports in Japan that the Prime Minister had expressed Japan's readiness to take up the question of WNG in the United Nations at some stage. These developments led Watt to discuss the matter with United States Ambassador MacArthur on the basis that MacArthur could, due to his regular contact with Kishi and Foreign Minister Fujiyama, influence their way of thinking.³⁷

Richard Casey's visit to Japan in March 1959 and discussion with Foreign Affairs Minister Fujiyama, was an important development in the exchange of political information. Notably, WNG and Indonesia's stance were key issues on the agenda. Both Foreign Ministers expressed concern about United States policy on Indonesia. Casey was of the opinion that United States policy was now more sensible after private pressure from Australia. On WNG Casey discussed Dr Subandrio's recent visit to Canberra that had relieved some tension in bilateral relations with Indonesia but had not resolved the problem of WNG. He noted that Japan, as a member of the Afro-Asian group, did not automatically support the Afro-Asian position and hoped that Japan would exercise a calming influence and continue to look at problems in the United Nations on their merits.³⁸

The exchange of information on WNG and on regional issues more generally was becoming a feature of bilateral relations. The original objective was part of a strategy between the United States and the allies to bring Japan closer to 'Free World' countries. However there was already a sharp distinction between Australian and British views of Japan. Australian officials noted with interest a British Foreign Office report on Kishi's visit to London in July 1959. Branch Head Herbert Marshall commented for

example, '[o]ne can't escape a sense of distance in the UK approach to Japan. I would think there is evidence that the UK does not see Japan-free world relations with the sharpness that we and the US do'.³⁹

The tempo of exchange of information increased after Casey's visit. The Australians were able to monitor President Sukarno's activities while in Tokyo through contacts in the Japanese Foreign Office. Watt was able to ascertain the extent, if any, of Indonesian pressure on Japan. Watt reported on the Sukarno visit to Tokyo (6–19 June) which included an entourage of 29, that there was no reference to WNG at all or the wider dispute with the Netherlands. Japanese contacts stated that from 11 June the purpose of Sukarno's visit was for unofficial relaxation and, interestingly, expressed concern about Sukarno embarrassing himself and hosts.⁴⁰

The *Karel Doorman* affair 1960

The *Karel Doorman* affair was the first real test of Japanese neutrality on WNG. The *Karel Doorman* was a Dutch aircraft carrier on a 'friendly visit' in the Pacific with planned visits to Australia, New Zealand and Japan before returning to the Netherlands. The proposed visit to WNG waters in August 1960 led to Indonesia severing diplomatic ties with the Dutch Government.⁴¹ The reaction in Jakarta was a reflection of the highly charged atmosphere by now openly evident between the Indonesia and the Dutch Governments over WNG. For Indonesians this was a particularly emotional period as sustained efforts in the United Nations General Assembly had not been successful. Another source of Indonesian concern was the Dutch Government decision to pursue a policy of granting independence to the people of WNG within ten years. Combined, the two issues ignited Indonesian passions.

The planned visit by the *Karel Doorman* to Yokohama Port between 8 and 12 September severely tested Japanese relations with Indonesia. Eventually, fierce pressure from Jakarta forced the Japanese Government into the embarrassing position of cancelling the visit. The diplomatic back-down by the Ikeda Cabinet came at a particularly sensitive time given the forced cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit to Japan in June.⁴² Moreover, the visit of the *Karel Doorman* to Japan was originally intended as part of commemoration of the 350th anniversary of Dutch-Japanese relations.

From an Australian perspective the *Karel Doorman* affair demonstrated an improved understanding of domestic constraints on Japanese foreign policy. Although there was a mixture of empathy and annoyance with the manner in which Japanese officials dealt with the problem, the final decision to cancel did not come as a surprise. External Affairs Departmental coverage of the *Karel Doorman* affair was extensive and was assisted by an improvement in understanding of domestic politics in Japan. In this sense, reporting from relevant posts such as The Hague, Washington and Jakarta clearly supplemented Tokyo reports on Japanese difficulties with appropriate policy. Indeed McIntyre's coverage of Japanese domestic constraints and departmental concerns over domestic issues such as the Security Treaty issue, led to considerable attention being placed on the *Karel Doorman* affair.

There were, from an External Affairs perspective, a number of positive outcomes from the incident. In particular, the lines of diplomatic contact and communication with Japan, enhanced since 1957, were used during this period. The familiarity between Australian and Japanese counterparts allowed for fairly extensive and frank discussions to take place and importantly this ensured that External Affairs was aware of the difficulties being faced in Japan and prepared for the reversal in policy. Nonetheless there was disappointment and annoyance within the department that Japan's decision was a blow to the success of the *Karel Doorman* as a Dutch public relations exercise.

Towards resolution 1961–62

The *Karel Doorman* affair raised concerns in Canberra about the seeming irrationality of Indonesian policy. The Indonesians appeared willing to risk important trade and investment with Japan over this issue and there was concern that such perceived 'erratic behaviour' might lead to a major conflict. Such fears began to escalate after 1961, as Indonesia pursued a policy of small-scale conflict with the Netherlands. India's use of military force to reclaim Goa from the Portuguese in December 1961, moreover, was an important landmark. The Indian decision to resort to military conflict after negotiations had failed created an international precedent. The Goa precedent also ensured that any solution on WNG would favour Indonesian claims. The Bunker Plan, which was agreed upon in August

1962, with ongoing small-scale Indonesian infiltration of WNG and preparations for a large-scale invasion of Biak, essentially recognised Indonesian claims to WNG.

During this period the level of contact between Australian and Japanese officials specifically on WNG diminished. WNG was raised in bilateral discussions but not with the intensity of earlier meetings. To a certain extent this was understandable as Japan consistently maintained a policy of neutrality on this issue in international forums. The *Karel Doorman* affair, moreover, had been an embarrassment to the Japanese Government and there was a sense of caution in policy making and a tendency to keep a low profile on regional issues.

From an Australian viewpoint, Japan was not central to resolving the WNG dispute, but became increasingly useful as a source of information on developments in Indonesia. Through the close connections Japanese officials and businessmen had established in Jakarta, Australians received a variety of information on Sukarno and domestic issues in Indonesia.

By 1962, with the end of Dutch control of WNG in sight, the issue of establishing trust with Japanese officials and tapping into their information on regional issues became an important objective for Canberra. By February 1962 there was considerable debate within the Department of External Affairs about developing a regular exchange of information with Japan. By the middle of the year broad agreement appears to have emerged about implementing this process within the Department, subject to security checks. Indicative of this view was the information provided for the preparation of Garfield Barwick's visit to Japan in June 1962. Barwick received two briefs from the department. The first, in late May, was a special brief written by W. D. Forsyth (Assistant Secretary Division 2) on developing closer political ties with Japan. Forsyth advocated the need to build an atmosphere of trust that included passing selected political information gathered by Australians in order to receive information from the Japanese on areas of special interest to Australia.⁴³ In the departmental brief written in June, Barwick was provided with the key issues affecting bilateral relations such as Article 35 of GATT. He was also advised to gather Japanese views on Chinese representation in the UN, developments in Korea and the situation in Laos and Vietnam.⁴⁴

Barwick met with Japanese Foreign Minister Zentaro Kosaka a few days later. The Tokyo leg of the Foreign Minister's visit (9–15 June, 1962) appears to have had a profound impact on Barwick. He cabled Canberra on his last day in Japan to urge the amendment of article 35 of GATT and to raise the idea of a regular Japan-Australia ministerial conference.⁴⁵ Neither issue was new but the Barwick's cable suggested that he was impressed with the level of interaction with Japanese officials and the overall importance of Japan to Australian national interests.

Events in Indonesia turned Australian and Japanese attention back to WNG. In July and August of 1962 as negotiations were being finalised, Indonesian troops were involved in infiltration of WNG and there still existed considerable tension due to the possibility of outright conflict. In late July this concern was sufficient for Japanese Ambassador Ohta to call in to the Department and suggest closer consultation and cooperation on Indonesia. Ohta was reported as saying

...in the long term there was likely to be need for particularly close consultation and cooperation between Australia and Japan, for both of whom relations with Indonesia were of a very great importance, in their policies towards that country.⁴⁶

The development of closer consultation on Indonesia took several forms and continued throughout 1962. In mid August, as an agreement on WNG was finally reached between Indonesia and the Netherlands, the Japanese were relieved and publicly expressed satisfaction with the result. Yet there were serious concerns within the Foreign Ministry. In discussions with Deputy Vice Minister Shigenobu Shima in late August, McIntyre reported on Japanese unease with the nature of the agreement and the way the settlement was reached.⁴⁷ It was a clear indication of Japanese unease with Indonesian policy. Undoubtedly this was welcomed in Canberra where such Japanese sentiment had been noticeable in discussions since the *Karel Doorman* incident two years previously. In order to encourage closer alignment in regional policies, officers were instructed that they could draw on, with discretion, material such as fortnightly summaries from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in discussing Indonesia with the Japanese Ministry.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The WNG dispute signified the beginning of regular close consultation between Australia and Japan on regional matters and the process of exchange of political information. Discussion moved from the narrow issue of voting in the UN to a broader set of concerns about regional security and a pooling of political information.

The dispute, moreover, was a catalyst for the development of Australia-Japan political relations. From an Australian perspective, the Japanese sympathetic position towards Indonesia would have been perplexing and frustrating. At this stage there was only limited first-hand knowledge of Japanese foreign policy objectives. Moreover there was limited appreciation in Canberra of the bonds forged between Japanese and Indonesians during the Japanese occupation of Java. Indeed the pro-active style adopted by External Affairs officers on the dispute would also suggest a degree of annoyance at Japan's unwillingness to comply with Australian pressure to support the Dutch position.

Despite this low-level tension, there were compelling reasons for political consultation; both countries were firmly anchored in the US strategic alliance, were beginning to enjoy a highly profitable trade relationship, and shared the view that Indonesia was of critical importance to regional stability. In essence these shared interests were the basis for regular consultations on other regional matters. Notably the frequency of dialogue and the gradual increase in the range of issues discussed continued despite the change in personnel on both sides. Clearly senior officials in Canberra and Tokyo supported the new engagement and were looking at new initiatives to further develop bilateral relations.

A notable feature of regular consultation on WNG was a sense of familiarity not readily evident in earlier meetings. A useful working relationship developed between key senior officials. Casey and his Departmental Head Arthur Tange encouraged this process and offered strong leadership. Watt and McIntyre in Tokyo and their Japanese counterparts in Canberra (Ambassadors Suzuki, Narita and Ohta) actively strove to pursue these goals and were entrepreneurial in their efforts. Within External Affairs, moreover, senior officers such as Plimsoll, Shaw, Forsyth

and McNichol had prior personal and professional experience of Japan: Shaw and McNicol had both been posted to the Tokyo Embassy in the 1940s; Plimsoll was at one time Australia's representative on the Far East Commission. As such, officers in the Department were searching for ways to expand regional dialogue. An example was Departmental support for the reciprocal exchange of political information in 1962. The regular exchange of information offered increasingly valuable information on developments in Indonesia.

Clearly the WNG dispute and political issues in Indonesia had a longer-term effect on bilateral relations. Regular dialogue on Indonesia offered the opportunity and the disposition for policymakers to exchange views and work towards a more collaborative environment on regional matters. This was a mutually beneficial process and led to a heightened understanding of foreign policy objectives in both countries. However Australia was not ultimately successful in influencing Japanese policy on WNG as this regular dialogue had only minimal impact on Japanese policy. What is significant was the increased appreciation and awareness within Canberra of Japanese policies and Japan's potential as an emerging regional economic power.

An examination of Australia-Japan dialogue on WNG also adds to an understanding of how Australia dealt with the WNG issue. Understandably research on WNG has concentrated on the major players: Indonesia, the Dutch, the United States and Australia. From an Australian perspective the impact of the dispute on regional diplomacy and overall Australian foreign policy has also been examined. However, the case study adds a new dimension to the existing literature. The dialogue between Australia and Japan highlights the proactive style of diplomacy pursued by Australians, particularly from 1950 to 1959, and offers insight into Australian efforts to monitor closely voting patterns in the United Nations General Assembly. Japan was not a key player in the dispute; nonetheless the Australian initiatives to influence Japanese policy reveals how determined the Australian Government was during the period. Although the chapter focuses on the development of dialogue on political issues between Australia and Japan, the case study underlines the importance of Indonesia in Australian policy and how this served to foster closer bilateral relations between Australia and Japan.

Notes

- 1 West New Guinea is also referred to as Netherlands New Guinea, Dutch New Guinea, West Irian and by its Indonesian names Irian Jaya and Papua Barat (West Papua) during this period.
- 2 See T.B. Millar, *Australia in War and Peace*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1991, 2nd edition, p.185 and Alan Watt, *Australian Foreign Policy, 1935–66*, OUP, Melbourne, 1968, p. 251.
- 3 The four failed attempts, between 1954 and 1957 were in the form of resolutions in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th sessions of the General Assembly.
- 4 *Yearbook of the United Nations*, Columbia University Press in Cooperation with the United Nations (New York, 1962: 124–25). The plebiscite was held in 1969 under dubious conditions and resulted in an overwhelming majority in favour of being part of the Republic of Indonesia.
- 5 National Archives of Australia (NAA): Department of External Affairs (DEA) files on Japan A1838/278 file 3103/10/1 pt 3, record of conversation between Japanese Ambassador Haruhiko Nishi and Secretary DEA, 12 October 1954.
- 6 NAA: A 1838/278, file 3103/10/1 pt 4, record of discussion between Japanese Consul Masayoshi Kakitsubo and James Plimsoll, 1 April 1955.
- 7 NAA: 956/2, 4 April 1955, file 221/4/4, record of discussion between Australian Ambassador Ronald Walker and Mr Tani in Tokyo, 4 April 1955.
- 8 NAA: A 9564/2, file 221/4/4 part 1, record of discussion between Australian Ambassador T. Moodie and Ambassador Ohta in Rangoon, 7 May 1955.
- 9 NAA: A 5105/3 file 223/1 pt 2, Alan Watt to Arthur Tange, memo 1006, 12 December 1956.
- 10 NAA: A 1838/278, letter, Alan Watt to Richard Casey, 13 December 1956.
- 11 NAA: A423, file 3103/10/1 pt 4, record of conversation between Atsushi Uyama, Counsellor, and James Plimsoll, 4 January 1957.
- 12 NAA: A5105/3, file 227/18/2 pt11, Alan Watt to DEA, Canberra, 16 February 1957.
- 13 NAA: A5105/3, file 227/18/2 pt11, Watt to DEA, Canberra, Cable no 62, 21 February 1957.
- 14 NAA: A5105/3, file 227/18/2 pt11, Watt to External Affairs, Canberra, Cable no 78, 8 March 1957.
- 15 For a detailed account of Kishi's involvement with the Kinoshita Trading Company and the associated ships scandal see Masashi Nishihara, *The Japanese and Sukarno's Indonesia: Tokyo-Jakarta Relations, 1951–1966* University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu 1975:102–12.
- 16 NAA: A5105/3, file 227/18/2 pt 11, Watt to External Affairs, memo no 239, 11 March 1957.
- 17 NAA: A 1838/278, file 3103/10/11/2/1 pt, record of discussion between Plimsoll and Nara, 15 April 1957.
- 18 NAA: A1838/278, file 3103/10/11/2/1, Prime Minister's brief on Japan for 1957 Visit, March 1957.
- 19 NAA: A1838/278, file no 3103/10/11/2/1, Prime Minister's brief on Japan for 1957 Visit, March 1957.

- 20 NAA: A1838/278, File 3103/10/11/2/1 pt 1, cablegram from Australian Trade Commission in Hong Kong, 18 April 1957.
- 21 NAA: A1838/278, file 3103/10/1 pt 5, record of conversation between Arthur Tange and Tadakatsu Suzuki (Japanese Ambassador), Canberra, 19 July 1957.
- 22 NAA: A5105/3, file no 227/18/2 pt1, Watt to External Affairs, 22 August 1957.
- 23 NAA: A1838/278, file 3103/10/1 pt 5, record of conversation between Tadakatsu Suzuki, Atsushi Uyama, Foreign Minister Richard Casey and Allan Loomes, 27 August 1957.
- 24 NAA: A1838/277, file 3036/11/89, report by officer Blakeney, 'Confidential view of Japanese interest in economic development of West New Guinea', 2 December 1959.
- 25 NAA: A1838/280, , file 3103/10/11/1 pt1, Australia-Japan Relations—A Balance Sheet, Departmental Report, 27 September 1957.
- 26 NAA: A1838/278, file 3103/10/1 pt 5, record of conversation between Suzuki, Casey and Loomes, 13 November 1957.
- 27 NAA: A5105/3, file no 227/18/2 pt1, Watt to Tange, Memo no. 1066, 8 November 1957.
- 28 Despite concessions, the final reparations agreement was more favourable to Japan than to Indonesia. For a detailed examination see Masashi Nishihara *The Japanese and Sukarno's Indonesia*, Chapters 2–5.
- 29 NAA: A1838/280, file no 3103/10/1 pt 6, Ronald Walker (Head of Australian Mission, UN) to External Affairs, Cable no 1867, 26 November 1957.
- 30 NAA: A1838/280, , file 3103/10/1, record of conversation between Japanese Ambassador Suzuki and Secretary DEA recorded by Officer Marshall, 19 November 1957.
- 31 NAA: A1838/280, file 3103/10/1 pt 6, Kishi's visit, Record of discussion, 4 December 1957. The WNG issue was deliberately set aside during Prime Ministerial and other formal discussions.
- 32 NAA: A 1838/280, file 3103/10/1 part 6, record of discussion between Minister of External Affairs and Ambassador Suzuki, 31 March 1958. The main point discussed was the possibility of rapprochement between Sukarno and Hatta.
- 33 NAA: A1838/283, file 3103/10/10/2/1 pt 1, letter from Ambassador Watt to Foreign Minister Casey, 30 January 1958.
- 34 NAA: A 1838/280, file 3103/10/6 pt 2, letter from Plimsoll to Jockel on Tokyo representation at Heads of Mission meeting, 10 February 1959.
- 35 NAA: A1838/280, file 3103/10/6 pt 2, Australian High Commissioner William Crocker to External Affairs cable no 51, 24 January 1959.
- 36 NAA: A9564/2, file 221/4/2 pt 4, Alan Watt to The Secretary, memo no 803, 31 July 1958.
- 37 NAA: A1838/283, file 3036/6/1 pt 35, record of conversation between Watt and Douglas MacArthur, 17 February 1957.
- 38 NAA: A 1838/1, file no 3103/10/11/1 pt, record of conversation between Foreign Ministers Richard Casey and Mr Fujiyama, 25 March 1959
- 39 NAA: A1838/283, file 3103/10/1/pt 8, file note from H. Marshall to Gordon Jockel, 25 June 1959.
- 40 NAA: A1505/3, file no 227/11/12/ pt 3, memo no 614, Alan Watt to the Secretary, 25 June 1959.

- 41 K.V. Kesavan, *Japan's Relations with Southeast Asia: 1952–60*, Somiya Publications 1972 Bombay:170.
- 42 The Eisenhower visit to Japan was cancelled due to unprecedented protests in Tokyo and other major cities over the signing of the 1960 Security Treaty.
- 43 NAA: A 1838/280, file no 3103/10/1 pt 9, 'Australian Policy towards Japan', Secret information brief for Minister, 21 May 1962 (McIntyre had replaced Watt as Ambassador in Tokyo in May 1960).
- 44 NAA: A1838, file no 3101/10/11/2 pt 5, 'Brief for Minister's visit to Japan', June 1962.
- 45 NAA: A1838, file no 3101/10/11/2 pt 5, Barwick to EA, 15 June 1962.
- 46 NAA: A1838/2, file 915/9 pt 49, record of conversation between Ohta and H. Anderson, 20 July 1962.
- 47 NAA: A1838/280, file 3103/7/1 pt 3, conversation with Deputy Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, 30 August 1962.
- 48 NAA: A 5105/3, file 227/1/2 pt 6, memo no 551, W. D. Forsyth (Assistant Secretary) to Tokyo Embassy, 2 October 1962.

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Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Professor Alan Rix, Professor Bill Tow, Dr Karim Najjarine and Trevor Wilson for comments on an early draft of this paper. The author alone is responsible for any errors or short-comings.