



AUSTRALIA WELCOMES AMERICA



Parliament House Melbourne, August 1, 1928



BANQUET GIVEN
by the
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
to the
ADMIRAL and OFFICERS
of the
AMERICAN FLEET

Previous page and above: The heraldry on many of the official publications for the visit show how Australia's sense of national identity was still evolving in the first decade after federation.

GREAT WHITE FLEET TO CORAL SEA

NAVAL STRATEGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AUSTRALIA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS, 1900-1945

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Foreword

On the 100th anniversary of the visit to Australia's shores of the United States Atlantic Fleet, known as the 'Great White Fleet', we are pleased to welcome the commemorative publication compiled by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: *Great White Fleet to Coral Sea: Naval Strategy and the Development of Australia–United States Relations, 1900–1945*.

The Commonwealth of Australia which the US Atlantic Fleet visited in 1908 was a new federal union formed from a group of six British colonies. The Australians of the new federation had not, however, yet embraced the full independence that their American cousins had asserted in the late eighteenth century. The action taken by Australia's Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin—inviting the Great White Fleet to Australia outside the normal channels of communication—was therefore a striking assertion of Australia's growing sense of self-assurance, especially as far as matters of the Pacific were concerned.

The effusive Australian welcome of the Great White Fleet led to closer contacts between our two Pacific nations, paving the way for the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations on the eve of World War II, and finally to a full-fledged military alliance in 1941–1942 that would be formalised a decade later in the ANZUS Treaty 1951.

The development of the Australia–United States relationship in the period 1908 to World War II was closely related to issues of naval affairs and security in the Pacific at a time when the pre-eminence of the British Royal Navy was gradually declining.

The book records that a number of young seamen involved in the visit of the Great White Fleet went on to have illustrious careers bridging this historical period. Midshipmen and ensigns such as William F. Halsey, Jr, Husband E. Kimmel, Raymond A. Spruance and John S. McCain would be significant naval commanders in the Pacific War; and another, Harold R. Stark, would be the Commander, US Forces in Europe.

As Australians and Americans look back in 2008 on the development of Australia–United States relations over the last hundred years, we can feel immensely proud of the state of our relationship. Our alliance has endured and prospered over almost 60 years of change and development. It has a firm basis in shared values, high levels of trust and a record of cooperation and shared sacrifice. Australian and US forces have served together in every major conflict of the last one hundred years including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq.

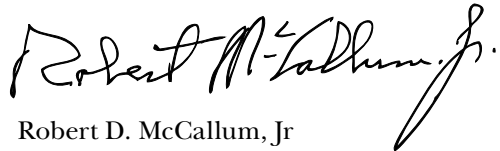
Our alliance is steeped in history. But it is also part of our framework for meeting challenges of the future. ANZUS, invoked for the first time following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, continues to be the foundation of a dynamic and broad-ranging security relationship. Australia and the United States work closely to address contemporary security challenges, including terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The two countries benefit mutually from strong working-level engagements between our defence forces, deepening intelligence cooperation and the very close working relationship of Australian and US foreign and defence ministers, including through annual Australia–United States Ministerial (AUSMIN) consultations. More broadly, the alliance is an important element of US engagement in the Asia–Pacific region—no less so today than in World War II or during the Cold War.

People-to-people links, another important aspect of the close ties between Australia and the United States, have come a long way since the visit of the Great White Fleet. Nearly half a million Australians visit the United States every year and about the same number of Americans visit Australia. Both Governments strongly support the further strengthening of people-to-people activities.

Australia and the United States are close allies and close friends. The 100th anniversary of the visit of the Great White Fleet is an opportunity to reaffirm the values we share and our enduring historical and cultural bonds.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Smith'.

Stephen Smith
Minister for Foreign Affairs

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert D. McCallum, Jr.'.

Robert D. McCallum, Jr
*Ambassador of the United States
of America to Australia*

Acknowledgments

In 1908, the visit of the United States Great White Fleet inaugurated what would become one of Australia's key strategic and political relationships. The centenary of that visit provided the Historical Publications and Information Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with the opportunity to publish a book that examines the genesis of the relationship during its first four decades. The research and writing took place during 2007 and 2008. Dr Moreen Dee of the Historical Publications and Information Section undertook most of the initial research and then graciously handed over her work to her colleagues Dr David Lee, the section's director, and Dr Russell Parkin. Dr Parkin wrote the first three chapters and Dr Lee wrote Chapters 4 and 5. Dr Dee and Victoria Edmonds researched and sourced the illustrations.

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Special thanks to Ambassador Robert D. McCallum Jr, the US ambassador to Australia, who kindly agreed to co-sign the foreword.

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Russell Parkin and David Lee

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2008

Abbreviations

AWM	Australian War Memorial
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
DAFP	Documents on Australian Foreign Policy
FRUS	USA, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States
NLA	National Library of Australia
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration (USA)
RG	Record Group
TNA	The National Archives (UK)

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Introduction

Appearing at the Protestant Hall in Sydney on 23 September 1885, Mark Twain began his performance by reciting just three lines of verse:

Land of the ornithorhynchus¹
Land of the kangaroo
Old ties of heredity link us ...

He then stopped, explaining to his audience that, although he had composed more stanzas, he had given them to a man he met on the way to the hall who had told him that he'd had nothing to eat for two weeks. The joke was received so well that it was incorporated into his show as he toured other Australian cities. Perhaps for a late-nineteenth-century audience the three lines somehow encapsulated a sense of 'the unequal and unresolved nature of the relationship between the two countries'.²

More than half a century after the signing of the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Treaty, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to imagine a time when the relationship between Australia and the United States was 'unresolved'. The problem with the application of hindsight to history is that 'too much of it ... obscure[s] the all-pervasive sense of contingency, [too little] and we are thrown without resources into the patternless swirl of events'.³ As this book demonstrates, during the first four decades of the twentieth century there was little in the relationship between Australia and the United States to indicate that it was predestined to develop along the path it has taken since 1952. In the evolution of the relationship from the visit of the Great White Fleet in 1908 until the end of World War II, viewed retrospectively, some themes do recur. Security, the nucleus of the current relationship, is the earliest and dominant issue shaping the affiliation. However, it would be wrong to assume that, then as now, the interests of both nations always ran parallel.

As an island continent Australia's security was framed in a maritime context even though, somewhat paradoxically, Australians are not a seafaring people. For almost half a century, beginning in 1898 with the Battle of Manila Bay, Australia's security was bound up with the contest for naval supremacy in the Pacific. The first chapter examines how Australia's leaders sought to provide security for the Commonwealth primarily through imperial defence arrangements, as part of the British Empire. However, when President Theodore Roosevelt announced that the United States' Atlantic Fleet would conduct an around-the-world cruise beginning in 1907, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin enthusiastically invited it to visit Australia. For Deakin, the visit of the Great White Fleet (so-called because of the colour scheme of the vessels) was an

important diplomatic opportunity. During the visit, Deakin made a great deal of the common heritage shared by Australia and the visitors. He also hinted that he would welcome their undertaking to guarantee Australia's future security. Traditionally wary of 'foreign entanglements', the United States offered expressions of friendship, but would go no further. At this stage, a significant barrier to the development of the relationship between the two nations was Australia's ambiguous diplomatic status as a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire.

World War I brought Australia and the United States into a temporary military alliance but in the years that followed, as Chapter 2 records, their relationship, though cordial, was marred by frequent misunderstandings. Prime Minister W.M. 'Billy' Hughes sparred publicly with President Wilson at the Versailles Peace Conference, despite their shared desire for peace in the Pacific. In 1922, the Washington Naval Treaty was negotiated under the auspices of the United States. Although the Four-Power Treaty signed in Washington promised to preserve the status quo in the Pacific, in reality its long-term benefit to Australia was as chimerical as that provided by the Royal Navy's Singapore base. In 1925, the visit of a second US fleet to Australian ports reprised the expressions of kinship and goodwill that had been so prominent during the 1908 visit. Nonetheless, with the onset of the Great Depression, tough economic realities prevailed over vague notions of Anglo-Saxon affinity. The third chapter recounts how Australia, hit hard by the international economic downturn, resorted to protectionist measures. The mid-1930s marked the nadir of the relationship. By instituting a system of licensing to regulate imports, Australia embroiled itself in a trade diversion dispute with the United States. Once again, the problem was exacerbated by the lack of formal Australian diplomatic representation in Washington.

After the setback of the trade diversion dispute, the Australian government sought to mend the bilateral relationship in part by proposing the revival of the Washington Treaty system. Chapter 4 examines the initiative taken by the Australian prime minister, Joseph Lyons, to preserve peace in the Pacific by promoting in 1937 a new treaty that would commit the signatories to preserve the status quo in the Pacific and to respect the open-door policy in China. Although the proposal attracted some sympathy in the US State Department, the British government's reaction was tepid and Japan's strongly critical. With a war in Europe looming, the British government—uncertain of being able to fight simultaneously on two fronts—sought to appease Germany in Europe and Japan in the Far East. In these perilous times Australia at last came to accept that it must send its own diplomatic representative to Washington. R.G. Menzies, Lyons' successor as prime minister, announced the government's decision on

26 April 1939. An essential part of the reasoning behind this decision, Menzies explained, was that Australia had to regard itself as a 'principal' in the Pacific and maintain its own diplomatic contacts with foreign powers. Australia's first minister to a foreign country, R.G. Casey, presented his credentials to the US president on 6 March 1940. With war having broken out in Europe, Casey worked to persuade the determinedly neutral United States to take part, or at least to provide the maximum possible assistance to the British Empire. In the following year the United States steadily strengthened an economic embargo designed to compel Japan to desist from aggression in China and South-East Asia. As war in the Pacific became increasingly likely, Australians worried that the imperial defence strategy centred on defending the Singapore naval base would fail, and in 1941 the government sought an assurance of military support from the United States in the Far East. Although the US administration would not give such a guarantee for political and constitutional reasons, it did arrange for a visit to Australia of part of the US Pacific fleet in March 1941. It attracted as enthusiastic a reception in Sydney and Brisbane as that of the Great White Fleet in 1908.

The Japanese attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, nine months after the US fleet's visit to Australia, had the effect of bringing Australia and the United States into a military alliance. Chapter 5 examines the development of this alliance in the context of the collapse of imperial defence arrangements in the Far East. In December 1941 the Japanese sank the British capital ships, the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, sent to reinforce Singapore. With Singapore's fall in prospect, Australia's prime minister, John Curtin, issued a call for assistance from the United States 'free of any pangs' as to its traditional ties with Britain.

While diplomatic and economic relations are subject to the vicissitudes of history, the Pacific Ocean provided an enduring physical connection and the source of shared geopolitical interests. The US Navy played a significant role in fostering rapport between the United States and Australia. The visits in 1908, 1925 and 1941 reveal the flexibility of naval power as a diplomatic device in peacetime. With its ships the United States was able to signal its arrival as a Pacific power in 1908, while the 1925 cruise established its ability to project force and protect its interests. The visit by a small cruiser squadron in early 1941 was intended to deter Japanese aggression and provide much-needed moral support for a potential ally. World War II confirmed the decisive nature of naval power in battles such as Midway, the Coral Sea and Leyte Gulf. The political and military bonds created during the Pacific campaign were the true foundations of the enduring post-war alliance.

Although Menzies is often remembered as a romantic imperialist, he considered the ANZUS Treaty to be the most significant foreign policy achievement of his sixteen-year prime ministership. Menzies liked to characterise the treaty, and the close partnership between America and Australia that it represented, as a contract—one ‘based on the utmost goodwill, the utmost good faith and unqualified friendship. Each of us will stand by it’.⁴ His confidence was founded on the knowledge that liberal, democratic nations that face shared fears tend to honour common values and work to protect the same interests.

In August 2003, in the wake of another war, Richard Armitage, the former US deputy secretary of state, observed in words that echo the sentiments of Australian leaders such as Deakin and Menzies:

Australia and my nation have many shared common characteristics—history and culture, politics and demography—but I think nowhere do we have better ties that bind than in the twin pillars of perspective and action ... There will be great continuity in our cause—this cause which was forged out of the bones of our fathers and grandfathers and now of the blood of our children.⁵

1 The Great White Fleet and World War I



1900–1918

Insecurity and imperial competition in the Pacific

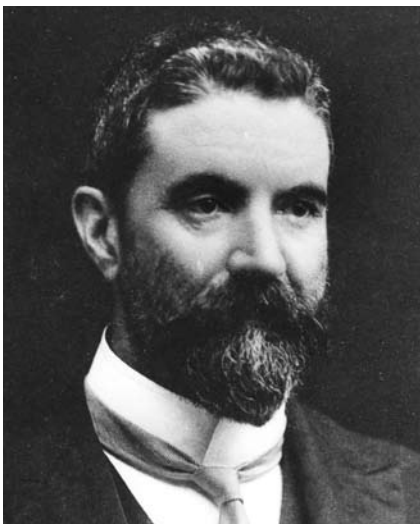
The formative stage in the development of Australian–US relations was from 1908 to the end of World War I, and the seminal event was the visit to Sydney, Melbourne and Albany by sixteen battleships and their escorts from the United States Navy’s Atlantic Fleet. History recalls these ships as the Great White Fleet because their hulls were painted white, while the funnels and superstructures were tan.

The cruise of the fleet was an emblematic event. It announced the arrival of the United States not only as a significant maritime power, but as a nation with aspirations in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. At the beginning of the twentieth century Australians looked to the United States as an exemplar of a federal system of government and a possible ally against external threats to the young Commonwealth.

Fear of invasion had been prominent in the Australian colonies during the nineteenth century. From the time of the Napoleonic Wars, invasion scares—French, Russian and even American—had panicked the colonies into taking steps to secure their own defence, forming militias and constructing coastal fortifications. The colonies had also attempted to ensure that Britain maintained naval and land forces in Australia for the purposes of local defence. After Britain withdrew its garrison in 1870, the colonies had redoubled their efforts to guarantee that the motherland remained committed to their defence. In 1885, for example, to show its loyalty to the Empire, New South Wales raised a volunteer force to fight in the Sudan. Imperial competition in Asia and the

Pacific during the final two decades of the nineteenth century added impetus to Australia's concern. Although Britain renounced Queensland's annexation of New Guinea in 1883, London was later forced into action by expanding German commercial interest in the area. In early November 1884, Britain declared a protectorate over the southern coast of New Guinea and the neighbouring islands. This move was followed in December by Germany's annexation of the northern half of the island and the adjacent Bismarck Archipelago. German activities in Samoa, albeit with British and US participation, were also troubling to the six Australian colonies, which tended to see the colonies of other European powers as potential threats to their security and commerce.

The dismemberment of China by European powers and Japan was also of concern to Australia. The rise of Japanese military and industrial capacity created considerable apprehension. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries imperial competition was fuelled by an ideology of nationalism in which national identity was tied to assumptions about the characteristics of racial groups. While science and technology were advancing material wealth across the globe, competition between nations and empires was also given a scientific basis. Drawing on the theories of Charles Darwin about the competition for survival in nature, social Darwinism applied his ideas to politics, economics and international relations. The development of large national armies and navies, which led to a general arms race in Europe and elsewhere, was a corollary. In post-federation Australia, the most important manifestation of these ideas was the White Australia policy. The attorney-general in the first federal government, Alfred Deakin, described the legislation as touching on 'the profoundest instinct of individual or nation—the instinct of self-preservation'.¹



*Prime Minister
Alfred Deakin*

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

While the purpose of the policy was the creation of a homogeneous Australian population, on the psychological level at least, it was also strongly linked to national defence. Indeed, in 1930, W.K. Hancock would call the White Australia policy 'the indispensable condition of every other Australian policy'.² For Australia during much of the early twentieth century, disparity between its extensive geography and its sparse population was a source of anxiety, especially the fear that the nation was easy prey to the expanding power of Germany and Japan in the Pacific.

In 1895, the Japanese invasion of Formosa prompted the authorities in New South Wales to stage a military exercise based on the scenario of an attempt to enter Sydney Harbour by a Japanese naval squadron. When war broke out between the United States and Spain in 1898, the Australian colonies showed a keen interest in the fate of the Philippines; the annexation of the Philippine Archipelago by the United States was a pleasing outcome. Australia's trade routes to Asian markets were now dominated by a nation whose political, economic and military power would, the colonies hoped, counterbalance further imperial expansion by other powers. Isolated from the realities of European great power politics, some Australians even dreamed of an alliance between the two great English-speaking nations of the United Kingdom and the United States. The *Sydney Morning Herald* saw the US annexation of the Philippines as consistent with UK interests 'at home and abroad'. In fact, neither Britain nor the United States had any enthusiasm or reason for a close alliance in this period.

In an era marked by intense imperial competition, naval forces were important symbols of power and prestige. Prior to the late 1880s, the Royal Navy was the largest fleet in the world and there was no serious competition to Britain's maritime supremacy. However, France, Russia and Italy began to build large, modern ships, forcing the United Kingdom in 1889 to implement the 'two-power standard', by which the Royal Navy would be at least as large as any other two navies combined (the standard was originally adopted with the fleets of France and Russia in mind). In 1890, naval competition between the great powers was spurred on by the publication of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*. Written by the US naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, the book analysed Britain's control of the seas to establish the Pax Britannica. Mahan's work inspired several nations to invest heavily in powerful new warships that took advantage of developments in metallurgy and advances in other key technologies such as naval gunnery and steam propulsion. During the 1890s, the United States, Japan, and Germany all embarked on significant naval construction. In 1898 Britain began a building program that sparked a naval arms race in Europe. In 1906, the British launched the revolutionary HMS *Dreadnought*, which displaced 18,420 tons and had a top speed of 21 knots. The ship was powered by steam turbines and armed with large-calibre guns (10 and 12 inches) that gave it significant advantages in firepower, range and also logistics.

The *Dreadnought* marked a new phase in the naval arms race. The industrial and technological capacity of the United States ensured that it did not lag behind the Europeans. In mid-1907, when President Theodore Roosevelt announced that the US Navy's Atlantic Fleet would conduct a cruise to the Pacific coast states, he was conveying to the world a message of the United States' national

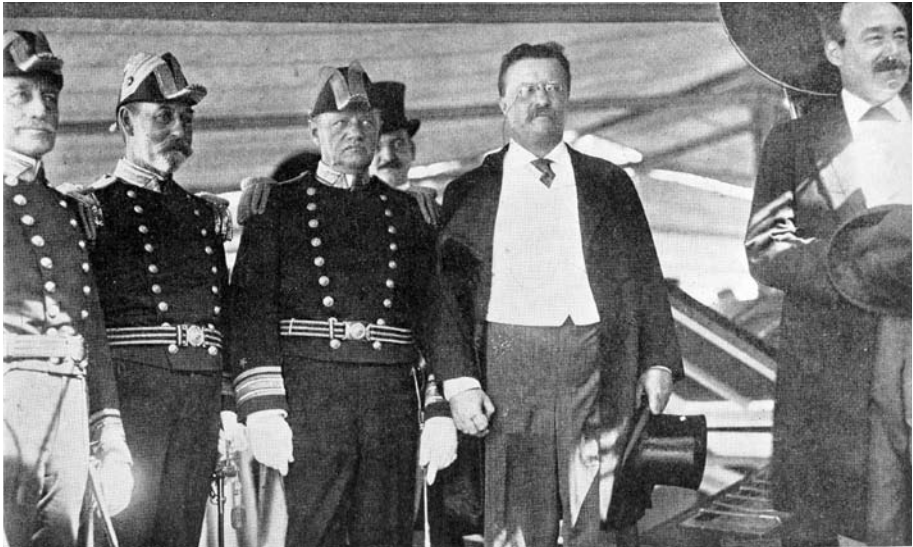
self-assurance and signalling its membership in the club of great naval powers. As the Washington *Evening Star* reported, ‘All of the ships of the fleet are of distinctly modern type, not one of them being in existence at the time of the Spanish War. The fleet, therefore, will display more than any other exhibit the great advance that has been made in American naval affairs in ten years’.³

‘Perfectly bully: Did you ever see such a fleet and such a day?’

The fleet that left Hampton Roads, Virginia, on the morning of 16 December 1907 was second in size only to that of Britain and equal to that of Germany. The sixteen ships were crewed by 123,793 officers and men and had cost the United States almost \$100 million to build. By any measure, the fleet was a fitting expression of the United States’ confidence in its place in a highly competitive world.

President
Theodore
Roosevelt with
Admirals
Brownson, Davis
and Evans and
Secretary of the
Navy Bonaparte,
reviewing the
Great White Fleet,
16 December
1907

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A few months before the fleet departed, Germany had used its veto to ensure that no limitations were placed on land and sea armaments at The Hague Peace Conference of October 1907. Following the conference, Roosevelt had warned Congress that one new battleship a year would not do: the United States must build four.⁴ In his foreword to *With the American Fleet from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, Robert Jones rehearsed the arguments in favour of the cruise in words that reflect the popular sentiments of the era: ‘if the trend of things is to be resolved into a condition of “survival of the fittest” let us accept this condition and do our utmost to put ourselves in the place of the most fit’.⁵ The primary mission of the fleet was diplomacy, albeit of the gunboat variety. The president had stressed that such a cruise was the best opportunity for the men of the fleet

to practise ‘the highest duties of their profession’.⁶ Surveying the ships from his yacht, the *Mayflower*, the assertive president asked his guests, ‘Did you ever see such a fleet and such a day? Isn’t it magnificent? Oughtn’t we all to feel proud?’ before declaring the scene ‘perfectly bully’.⁷

The US Navy had played a role in the United States’ first official contact with the newly created Australian Commonwealth with the visit of the USS *Brooklyn*, flagship of the Asiatic Squadron. *Brooklyn* put in to Sydney in April to join in celebrations marking federation, and Melbourne in May 1901 for the opening of the first Commonwealth parliament. Theodore Roosevelt, then vice-president, sent a suitably laudatory greeting:

All men who are awake to the great movements of our time must watch with keen interest the assembling of the first parliament of the giant young Commonwealth of the South Seas whose statesmen have given so many lessons to those elsewhere involved in governing democracies, and whose soldiers have shown such sterling valour and efficiency. For the interest is not only keen, but of the friendliest type and we wish God speed to Australia in the career now opening for her.⁸

President William McKinley was assassinated on 6 September 1901 and his vice-president assumed the office of president. Roosevelt’s exploits as the leader of the 1st US Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, the Rough Riders, during the Spanish–American War made him the type of leader Australians could identify with. His popularity in Australia was assisted by his undertaking to proceed with McKinley’s foreign policy, which from an Australian viewpoint included such potential benefits as the Panama Canal, a trans-Pacific telegraph cable and reciprocal commercial arrangements. In reality, American support for Australia was limited to a vague but amiable fellow-feeling based on a shared cultural, political and linguistic heritage. By the standard of the times, the United States was physically remote from Australia, while Germany and Japan represented threats that were more proximate and bellicose.

The Anglo–Japanese alliance highlighted a dilemma that would frustrate Australia’s attempts to provide for its own security during the next four decades.



USS Brooklyn, flagship of the US Navy’s Asiatic Squadron, on its visit to Sydney in 1901

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From an imperial perspective, the treaty with Japan made eminent sense. The pact established relations with a nation capable of containing Russian ambitions in East Asia and protected UK interests in China. For Australia, however, the treaty highlighted the contradictions inherent in entrusting its security to arrangements made for the defence of the whole Empire. During the treaty negotiations with Japan, Australia had not been consulted despite being the Dominion most likely to be affected. In 1904, due to concerns over Germany's increasing naval strength, the United Kingdom took advantage of the treaty with Japan to concentrate the bulk of the Royal Navy in home waters and reform many aspects of naval training and administration. The reform program was initiated by Admiral Sir John Fisher, the new First Sea Lord, and saw 154 vessels of all types withdrawn from stations around the world. To protect imperial trade, the majority of ships stationed outside European waters would now be cruisers and divided between three geographic groups. The Eastern Group comprised cruisers from the Australia, East Indies and China Stations, to be commanded by the Commander-in-Chief of the China Station.

Australia was uneasy about these new arrangements. Anxiety over defence arrangements for the Commonwealth was brought to a head in 1905 by Japan's defeat of Russia, which signalled the arrival of a new, ambitious maritime power in the Pacific. Of most concern to Deakin, now prime minister, was that the two major Japanese naval victories of the war (Port Arthur in early February 1904 and the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905) had altered his nation's strategic position. Australia, Deakin believed, 'could no longer depend on its isolation

*The Royal
Navy's Australia
Squadron
with a visiting
Japanese training
squadron, Sydney
Harbour, May
1906*

AUSTRALIAN
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for security’.⁹ Not surprisingly, 1906 was a year in which parliament and people debated the adequacy of their defence preparations, particularly the ability to ensure against Japanese aggression. From this period, the idea for an Australian navy, rather than a Royal Navy squadron assigned to Australian waters, was founded on concerns that, in the event of a European war, the Royal Navy would be unable to spare sufficient ships to provide for the defence of Australia.

In 1906, on the other side of the Pacific, anxiety over Japanese expansion was also a factor determining the direction of US naval policy. President Roosevelt was an enthusiastic advocate of US naval power. In 1882, his book *The Naval War of 1812* had earned him recognition as a serious historian, and it remained the standard history for the next two generations. In 1898, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he put the service on a war footing and actively supported its operations during the war with Spain. With territories in Hawaii, Samoa, the Philippines and Guam and growing commerce with China, the United States now had significant interests in the Pacific. To reinforce these interests, it was considering sending a flotilla to the Pacific, as ‘part of the ordinary routine of naval administration’.¹⁰

These plans were complicated in October 1906, when the San Francisco School Board passed an ordinance segregating Japanese children in the city’s schools. Roosevelt’s forceful intervention convinced the school authorities to rescind the regulation, but anti-Japanese feeling remained a problem in California. In these circumstances speculation over a fleet visit to the west coast states heightened the publication of bellicose nationalist sentiments in some American and Japanese newspapers.¹¹ Finally, for reasons of both domestic and international policy, the decision was made to send the Atlantic Fleet to San Francisco via the Straits of Magellan in December 1907. Due to tensions with Japan, Roosevelt believed that the fleet’s visit would send a useful diplomatic message. As he noted in his autobiography:

I had become convinced that for many reasons it was essential that we should have it clearly understood, by our own people especially, but also by other peoples, that the Pacific was as much our home waters as the Atlantic, and that our fleet could and would at will pass from one to the other of the two great oceans.¹²



*USS Kansas leads
the US Atlantic
Fleet steaming in
columns*

US NAVAL
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The initial statement that the fleet would sail to the west coast was soon superseded by the revelation that the voyage would be a round-the-world cruise, with visits to Pacific ports such as Hawaii and Manila.

This announcement captured the imagination of people in many countries. In Hobart, on the very day the US Fleet departed from Hampton Roads, a Mr R. Kennedy was moved to write to Prime Minister Deakin, suggesting that ‘the American fleet be asked to visit the principal ports of Australia’.¹³ Supporting this idea, the letter continued:

Leaving the commercial advantages out of the question, I feel sure that it will be a good thing for our people to see a large friendly foreign fleet in our ports, besides it would stimulate the good feelings the people of both countries have for each other.¹⁴

Whether Deakin had planned to extend such an invitation himself, or Kennedy’s letter merely indicated to him that such a visit would have support in the electorate, is unknown. Nevertheless, the prime minister acted quickly to invite the US ships to visit Australia. Although he was constrained by imperial protocol to issue the invitation via the governor-general through the Colonial Office in London, Deakin employed unofficial channels to determine how his invitation would be received. First, he informed the US consul-general in Melbourne, John P. Bray, that Australia would welcome a visit from the US fleet during its Pacific cruise. Deakin next wrote to the US ambassador in London, Whitelaw Reid, whom he had met on a recent visit. The letter told Reid that a formal invitation would proceed through the normal diplomatic channels and urged him to use his influence with President Roosevelt to ensure that the invitation was accepted. Deakin echoed many of the sentiments in Kennedy’s letter, but also emphasised the political and cultural similarities of the two nations:

No other Federation in the world possesses so many features of likeness to that of the United States as does the Commonwealth of Australia, and I doubt whether any two peoples can be found who are in nearer touch with each other, and are likely to benefit more by anything that tends to knit their relations more closely.¹⁵

Only after dispatching these letters did Deakin approach the governor-general, Lord Northcote, on 24 January 1908 to issue a formal invitation via the Colonial Office. The prime minister informed him that the government had the ‘fullest confidence that our people will give the American battleships an enthusiastic and wholehearted welcome’.¹⁶ He then returned to his well-established theme of the close bond between Australia and the United States, noting that the visit ‘would be a further token of the close alliance of interests



The Deakin Ministry, 1908. The governor-general, Lord Northcote, is seated centre, with the prime minister on his left

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and sympathies which already exist between the two countries and might in some degree operate to make it more complete' and that he felt certain that 'His Majesty's government will use its influence in the direction of securing a most favourable reception for the request'.¹⁷

American politicians were equally enthusiastic about the visit and for similar reasons. Secretary of State Elihu Root, who received the letter that Deakin had sent via John Bray, wrote to the president saying, 'Sending the fleet to Australia will be good business, no matter where they go from there. The time will surely come, although probably after our day, when it will be important for the United States to have all ports friendly and all causes of sympathy alive in the Pacific'.¹⁸ These prescient words alluded to America's mounting disquiet over Japanese expansionism. Japan had become a concern for the United States with the growth of its influence in China and Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War. The Americans were also troubled by the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Naval Treaty in 1905 and the racial tensions caused by Japanese immigration to the United States, which prompted fears of open conflict between the two nations in early 1907.¹⁹ According to one New York journal, 'what observant men perceive in this dangerous situation is a cataclysm trained and bridled for Theodore Roosevelt to bestride and run amuck'.²⁰ Mark Twain had declared that the president was 'clearly insane ... and insanest upon war and its supreme glories'.²¹

Roosevelt had already decided that the cruise to the Pacific would serve as a demonstration of US naval power and its legitimate strategic interests in the Pacific. He told the Joint Board of the Army and Navy in late June 1907 that the cruise should 'partake of the character of a practise march' that would also 'have a strong tendency to maintain peace'.²² Some naval authorities were sceptical. Captain Alfred Mahan wrote a private letter to the president reproving him over

the folly of permanently stationing battleships on the west coast.²³ However, in an essay published in 1908, Mahan had come to see the cruise as an exercise that allowed the fleet to gain the 'necessary experience' in strategic movement that the navy of a country with two coastlines needed.²⁴ In his autobiography the president reaffirmed his Secretary of State's belief that threats might be the source of security cooperation between the United States and Australia at some future date:

It was not originally my intention that the fleet should visit Australia, but the Australian Government sent a most cordial invitation, which I gladly accepted; for I have, as every American ought to have, a hearty admiration for, and fellow feeling with, Australia, and I believe that America should be ready to stand back of Australia in any serious emergency.²⁵

The war scares of 1907 revealed the potential for a serious emergency in the Pacific. Due to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, in any potential clash with the Japanese, the United States might also have to fight the Royal Navy. Against the risk that Australia could become a hostile base, the fleet's intelligence staff would make field sketches of fortifications and collect information on terrain in order to draw up plans during the visit for the capture of Sydney, Melbourne and Albany.²⁶ With the benefit of hindsight such actions may look absurd, but intelligence-gathering has long been a regular activity for navies on port visits. In the development of the relationship between the United States and Australia between 1908 and 1945, the covert gathering of information on port infrastructure and defences is a minor theme, but one which highlights the constantly changing context of international affairs.

On 14 March, Deakin was in Sydney making a major speech on national defence. He told his audience that, 'If Australia were to enjoy the full measure of self-government, she must undertake the necessary accompanying task of self defence'.²⁷ To achieve this goal Deakin advocated universal military service to form an army and the creation of an Australian navy to defend the nation's

*The arrival of the
Great White Fleet
in Sydney*

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ports and coasts. In a happy coincidence for the prime minister, Roosevelt's cable accepting the invitation for the fleet's visit arrived just as he completed his presentation. Rising again, he addressed the audience: 'I little thought that I would have this honour and pleasure this evening. I have waited a long time. I have hoped more than I can say, but you will realise after what I said here this evening what this cable may mean'.²⁸ The news of the visit was greeted with three cheers for the United States and 'deafening hurrahs'.²⁹ The announcement was a significant coup for the prime minister and one that was sure to further popular support for his schemes to ensure Australia's security. Preparations were set in motion to ensure the boast, reported in *The Times* of London, that if the fleet came to Australia, its reception would eclipse the welcome it had received in South America.³⁰

'The crimson thread of kinship': The Great White Fleet in Australia, 1908

On 10 August, as they anticipated the arrival of the US fleet, most Australians would have agreed with editorial writer in the *Sydney Morning Herald*

When the fleet entered the Pacific we remarked that the centre of gravity of sea power had changed. What the future of the Pacific is to be only the future can disclose. It may not be an American lake. It may not be a Japanese sea. But whatever its fate, the coming of the fleet is another noteworthy stride towards it ... It is likely enough that America may become our first line of defence against Asia. But whether so or no, the ties now formed will remain, and we hope that time will only serve to strengthen them on both sides.³¹

Preparations for the visit had been underway for months and Australia's welcome was lavish. The official program for Sydney, dubbed Fleet Week, amounted to twenty pages and included events such as a daylight pyrotechnics display, an official reception, sporting contests, a gymkhana, parades and reviews, a vice-regal ball and garden party and massed displays by schoolchildren. Sydney also spent £50,000 on decorations for its streets and public buildings. This extravagant outlay included a papier-mâché replica of the *Mayflower* to adorn the Customs House at Circular Quay, while a model of the Statue of Liberty five storeys high was erected in front of the offices of the *Daily Telegraph*.



A papier-mâché replica of the Statue of Liberty in front of the Daily Telegraph offices, King Street, Sydney

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The *New York Times* reported that 500,000 people lined the harbour foreshores and quays or stood on buildings to view the arrival of the fleet. Greetings were exchanged by wireless telegraph between Lord Northcote and the fleet's commander, Admiral Charles Sperry, and Prime Minister Deakin and the admiral while the fleet was well out to sea. The rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon kinship was once again pressed into service, with Sperry referring to the fleet's 'mission of Anglo-Saxon peace' and Deakin, borrowing the phrase coined by Sir Henry Parkes, to 'the crimson thread of kinship, our chief bond of union within the empire, [which] extends throughout the great Republic whose sailors we are about to welcome'.³²

Once the fleet was at anchor and its men on shore leave, the speechmaking began in earnest, with Deakin and other Australian dignitaries enlarging on the now familiar themes of shared ideals and political traditions drawn from a common racial and linguistic ancestry. Franklin Matthews, accompanying the fleet as the correspondent of the *New York Sun*, records that Admiral Sperry gave the same speech thirteen times in a single day.³³ As Sperry informed his colleague General Horace Porter, the message behind these hackneyed phrases was that Australia (and New Zealand) 'had a severe case of nerves over the possibility of being swallowed up by Japan ... you can imagine how careful I had to be in view of the Japanese visit' (the fleet's itinerary included a visit to Yokohama in October).³⁴ Following these events with a journalist's eye, Matthews arrived at a similar conclusion: 'Blended with their song of joyous welcome was

*Admiral Sperry
(2nd on right)
arrives at a civic
engagement in
Melbourne. On
one day during the
fleet's visit he gave
the same speech
thirteen times!*

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a cry of pathos and desperation'.³⁵ He also felt that 'The Australians are telling something extremely important to Great Britain, and its echoes cannot be ignored in Downing Street'.³⁶

Downing Street, however, was in no mood to listen. Deakin's invitation had already raised the ire of London. The Australian prime minister's initiative and use of unofficial channels presented the British with an unpalatable *fait accompli*. The foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, believed that Deakin should be rebuked and reminded that 'invitations to foreign governments should not be given except through us as circumstances are conceivable in which grave inconveniences might result'.³⁷

Once again the diplomatic manoeuvring highlights the paternal mindset of the imperial authorities towards Australia. From Deakin's perspective, his management of the invitation demonstrated the difficulties confronting the leader of an isolated Dominion attempting to come to grips with locally important security issues. The attempt was all the more difficult since it had to take place within the limitations imposed by London's concept of imperial unity. In London, the Colonial Office viewed the invitation as a clumsy attempt to play the United States off against Britain. The colonial secretary, Lord Crewe, considered Deakin's action foolish. As he wrote to Lord Dudley, who would soon succeed Northcote as governor-general, 'the US will not fight Japan for Australia', nor would the US naval visit induce Britain to break its alliance with Japan.³⁸

Meanwhile, in Sydney, Lord Northcote took action to control the situation. Admiral Sperry was invited to stay at Government House, thus disappointing the Deakins who had hoped to accommodate him. In the vice-regal residence the admiral was welcomed into an exclusive circle. As he reported to correspondents in the United States, the Northcotes went 'far beyond the range of official courtesy into that of personal friendship'.³⁹ The vice-regal couple praised his speeches and sympathised with him as hospitality of the Australians became something of a trial. Flatteringly, they laughed at his jokes about Deakin, responded with stories of



Admiral Sperry
(seated 2nd on
left) with some of
his senior officers
and their aides,
Government
House, Sydney

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*Lieutenant
Commander
Robert E. Coontz*

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their own, and sought the Admiral's opinion on matters of international relations.⁴⁰ Sperry seems well aware that he was the cat's paw in a dispute over imperial defence policy. He understood the significance of Deakin's agenda, reporting to President Roosevelt, 'while there has not been a trace of an attempt to construe it as promising armed alliance, [the visit] has awakened a very strong feeling of a community of material interests in the Pacific which is the necessary basis for any friendship'.⁴¹

After hearing his commander-in-chief deliver an address in Albany, Lieutenant Commander Robert E. Coontz, the executive officer of the

USS *Nebraska*, was unimpressed by Sperry's abilities as an orator. In his memoir of the voyage, Coontz says that Sperry's speeches were 'an awful fizzle' and recommended that 'elocution and speech-making [should be] taught to all midshipmen at the Naval Academy'.⁴² Coontz would have an opportunity to improve on Sperry's performances when he returned to Australia seventeen years

later as the Commander of Divisions 4 and 5 of the US Navy's Battle Fleet. Admiral Coontz by then may well have realised the political pressures that such diplomatic visits entailed. One historian describes his speeches as having 'a deliberately folksy casualness that gave the State Department nothing to worry about'.⁴³

Perhaps such caution was well advised. Sections of the Australian population harboured unusual agendas, and even the local clergy sought to use the fleet's visit for their own their purposes. As it happened, the Anglican Bishop of Bathurst in New South Wales, the Right Reverend

*Cardinal Moran,
Catholic Archbishop
of Sydney, 1908*

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Charles Camidge, was the first cousin of President Roosevelt's wife. Camidge was naturally heavily involved in the preparations for the visit. His archrival was His Eminence, Cardinal Patrick Moran, Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. Caustic exchanges between the two prelates had been a feature of the Sydney press since 1890. Moran, a passionate supporter of Irish Home Rule, wanted to use the fleet's visit to show his appreciation for US support for the Irish cause and sought to prevent the visit from becoming a purely Protestant occasion.

To achieve this ambition, Moran took the unusual step of sending a telegram directly to the US president: 'Please approve of Admiral, officers and men being entertained by the Catholic body in Sydney, on Sunday, 23 August'.⁴⁴ Roosevelt thanked him for his 'kind invitation' and told him that it had been transmitted to Sperry, who was 'directed to make suitable arrangements'.⁴⁵ The cardinal's plan was to have a thousand officers and men from the fleet attend High Mass in St Mary's Cathedral, followed by a gala luncheon in the Town Hall, hosted by the lord mayor, John Francis Hughes, with Mr Justice O'Connor of the High Court of Australia in attendance. At the last minute Sperry sent a note to the fleet's Catholic chaplain, Father Mathew Gleeson, informing him: 'It is a great disappointment that I am obliged to revert to my original decision and to tell you that the official arrangements by which I must abide are such that I can not possibly attend the luncheon at one tomorrow'.⁴⁶ Sperry's sudden retirement was less a snub than a strategic withdrawal. Gleeson, who passed on the news to Moran's auxiliary, Monsignor Denis O'Haran, said that he was 'utterly at a loss to explain the underlying motive'.⁴⁷ However, on 22 August Sperry had received a pre-printed copy of the speech the cardinal intended to deliver at the lunch. It was a politically charged oration that recounted the many wrongs the English had inflicted upon Ireland. While his officers and men could attend the luncheon, Sperry, who was representing the president and a guest at the vice-regal residence, clearly could not. In a final inelegant touch, the menus printed for the event featured the likenesses of Sperry and Moran.

While officials struggled to manage such diplomatic nuances, at the popular level, in newspaper articles, songs and speeches, the sentiments and concerns of Australia were more freely expressed. Newspaper articles indicate that the US visit provided stimulus to the long-running debate over Australia's defence. In February, *The Age* was clear about the threat:

Ever since the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance the naval supremacy of the Pacific has been in the hands of Japan ... the effect ... has been to place our rich, sparsely settled and as yet undefended country more or less at the mercy of a ... race whom our 'white Australian' ideal has bitterly offended ... Japan is at present our Imperial ally ... Nevertheless, we are unfeignedly glad that America has invaded the Pacific.⁴⁸

However, as an editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20 August illustrates, the presence of the US fleet highlighted a degree of ambivalence about the means by which this threat might be countered:

We know that no people can preserve its self-respect unless it is prepared to stand alone, and we appreciate our debt to the British Navy ... Our welcome to-day [to the US Fleet] can in no way be interpreted as a sign of anxiety for new alliances, or a forgetfulness of our place in the British Empire. It is rather proof that whatever place will ultimately be given to us ... we shall continue to recognise the fundamental unity of the English-speaking nations, and the duty that is cast upon their representatives when their traditions are most likely to be exposed to danger.⁴⁹

The themes touched on by these editorials illustrate the intricacy of the issues and emotions raised by the American visit.

*Sailors of the
US fleet march
through Martin
Place, Sydney*

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A popular song entitled 'Big Brother' was penned by a Western Australian newspaperman with the unlikely name of 'Dryblower' Murphy. Published during the final week of the fleet's visit, the song expressed many of the sentiments and themes previously noted, but in jingoistic language. The song told of Big Brother Jonathan's visit to 'the lonely kangaroos' and how with his help the Pacific Ocean would be kept 'clean and free'. The chorus drew heavily on the themes of race, language and kinship, while showing none of the same 'anxiety' as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* editorial writer about 'new alliances'.

We've got a big brother in America
Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam!
The same old blood, the same old speech,
The same old songs are good enough for each,
We'll all stand together boys,
If the foes want a flutter or a fuss,
And we're hanging out the sign
From the Leeuwin to the Line
This bit o' the world belongs to us! ⁵⁰

When it came to speeches, Deakin was again to the fore, using the visit to draw parallels between the United States and Australia, while pushing his own political agenda on defence. The welcoming address he delivered in Melbourne on 1 September was typical. He told his audience at the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria that the fleet's visit was an awakening for the nation:

We must improve our harbour and coast defences, and we may in time create a defence force which will rank in the defence of the empire ... In the meantime, realising riches of natural, national relationships, we look instinctively to you Americans, nearest to us in blood, in character and in purpose. It is in this spirit and in this hope that Australia welcomes with open hand and heart the coming of your sailors and of the flag which, like our own, shelters a new world under the symbol of its vital union.⁵¹

The references to blood, race and common political and cultural heritage became the standard symbolism of the visit. However, while the officials and the press raised or skirted such issues, for the sailors and the people of Sydney, Melbourne and Albany, the visit took on the character of a continuous party.



A tug-o-war taking place at the Royal Agricultural Show Grounds in Sydney

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In Sydney, for example, the hospitality on offer to the men of the fleet soon became an ordeal, so open-handed that it overwhelmed some of the visitors. Roosevelt's autobiography records an incident on the second day of the fleet's week-long stay in Sydney:

one of our captains noticed a member of his crew trying to go to sleep on a bench in the park. He had fixed above his head a large paper with some lines evidently designed to forestall any questions from friendly would-be hosts: 'I am delighted with the Australian people. I think your harbour the finest in the world. I am very tired and would like to go to sleep'.⁵²

The competitive nature of relations between Sydney and Melbourne ensured little rest for the visitors at their next port of call. As early as May, the *New York Times* had reported that the Commonwealth treasurer, Sir William Lyne, who was also a member of Melbourne's Reception Fund, was 'determined' that the American sailors would leave the city 'with a good impression'.⁵³ So keen were the city authorities for the event to be a success that they even cancelled funerals on the first day of the fleet's visit in order not to blight the happiness of the occasion.⁵⁴

In Melbourne, 'American Week' was marked by parades, reviews, soirées and fireworks, but the reception committee, learning from Sydney, also attempted to leave the crews some free time to 'partake of private hospitality, or to follow unhindered their own particular bent'.⁵⁵ On Sunday 30 August, 2,500 men from the fleet were granted liberty and the opportunity to pursue 'private hospitality or follow their own bent'. Frank Leshner, an electrician in USS *Virginia*, reported to his parents that he had taken in the 'Museum of History and Art and Geological Gardens which are very good exhibits [and] Went ice skating in the evening at a skating rink. It was the first time for four years that I have been on skates [but] still I got along in good shape'.⁵⁶ Leshner later assured his parents in a letter from Albany, 'You need have no fear for me while in foreign ports. As I have never frequented the low resorts and always travel in company with someone else'.⁵⁷ However, for many sailors, liberty meant pursuing the hospitality of the local women and indulging their bent for alcohol. Matthews reported that the girls in Melbourne 'threw their arms around the bluejackets and permitted themselves to be kissed'.⁵⁸ With such enthusiastic assistance, the sailors and marines rapidly gained a good impression of the city. As Midshipman Kent Hewitt wrote on the following day, 'We have at last escaped from the hospitalities of Sydney only be swallowed up in those of Melbourne'.⁵⁹ His comrade, Midshipman Louis Maxfield, had already lamented the short duration of the passage between the two cities which left him little time to study for his promotion examination to ensign, due during the fleet's visit to Albany.⁶⁰



*Sailors of the US
fleet on parade in
Melbourne*

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The program for Monday, 31 August, began with a parade through Melbourne to mark the formal entry of the fleet into the city. The march would be marred by spectators falling from buildings, while others were trampled in the crowded streets. Later two sailors were killed by a tram whose driver ‘seemed infected by the general madness’ engendered by the visit.⁶¹ Perhaps as a result of the excesses of the city’s initial welcome, the march also had dire consequences for one midshipman from USS *Louisiana*. Marching at the head of his ship’s detachment, he was experiencing difficulties even before he tripped over the tram tracks. Having lost his footing he described an S-manoeuve that took him from one side of the road to the other. Among the companies of sailors following behind, some repeated the movement or collided with each other. Regrettably for the young officer, the incident was witnessed by Captain Walter C. Cowles, who commanded USS *Kentucky*. Cowles ‘heard many remarks [no doubt disparaging] from people along the line of march’.⁶² A month later, the problems during the march were reported in the New York *Evening Mail* of 2 October 1908. Perhaps what sealed the fate of the midshipman and three other junior officers was that Captain Cowles was the brother of Admiral William Sheffield Cowles, the husband of Anna Roosevelt, the president’s eldest sister.⁶³ Roosevelt was infuriated and took a personal interest in the disciplinary proceedings, strengthening the punishments already imposed, and the hapless midshipman was dismissed from the service.⁶⁴ Fortunately for the future of the US Navy, other young officers attached to the fleet during the cruise avoided

*Lieutenant
Harold Stark
was an ensign in
USS Minnesota
when his ship
visited Australia
in 1908*

*Inset: Admiral
Stark, Commander
US Naval Forces
in Europe, 1945*

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such immoderate behaviour in Australia and went on to achieve high rank. These included Ensigns William ‘Bull’ Halsey, Husband E. Kimmel, Harold Stark and Midshipman Raymond Spruance, all of whose careers would reach their climax over three decades later in the Pacific campaign during World War II.⁶⁵ Another midshipman who became an admiral during the Pacific War was John S. McCain. McCain had graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1906 and was serving in USS *Connecticut*.⁶⁶

Three days after the parade, the liberality of Melbourne’s unofficial welcome contributed to another formal function going awry. A dinner in the Exhibition Building for 3,000 sailors was hosted by Deakin. At seven o’clock, when the dinner was due to commence, only one sailor had arrived. Deakin departed at nine o’clock, by which time the number of diners had not greatly increased. The matter was explained by the *Sydney Morning Herald*: ‘When every tar ... has a girl on his arm it is easily understood that he does not want to leave the lights and the crowd to pass the time in the company of men with whom he has to live on board ship’.⁶⁷ In fact, so popular were the recreational delights of Melbourne that, at the roll call on Saturday morning before the fleet’s departure, 221 sailors decided to stay in the city. Although many later returned to the fleet, the *New York Times* reported that up to 115 sailors remained unaccounted for.⁶⁸ An editorial in *The Age* began by calling the visit a ‘delightful carnival’ and continued its farewell to the fleet by saying, presumably without irony,

The fraternizations are at an end, but the memories that remain will be an enduring heritage of true affection. America and Australia are travelling parallel routes to the same goal, the betterment of the race, and they have no conflicting ambitions. The Australians have grappled their American cousins to their hearts ... and they hope at no distant time to renew their greetings with augmented regard.⁶⁹

The final Australian port of call was Albany on the south-western tip of the continent. The reason for the visit was not primarily to show the flag, but rather a logistic necessity. The sheltered waters of Princess Royal Harbour in King George Sound and the strategic location on the Indian Ocean route to Australia's east coast made Albany an important coaling station.

By this stage of the voyage coal had become a serious problem for the fleet. As Frank Leshar explained to his father:

We are short of coal on account of all the colliers not showing up, but we hope to make Manila on the coal we have, 1400 tons. We on the *Virginia* are economising in every way possible only allowed to burn certain lights, officer's and men only allowed a small amount of water etc. If we strike no storms, we will make Manila all OK.⁷⁰

The inability to obtain suitable quantities of steaming coal need by the battleships highlighted the principal strategic risk incurred by sending the fleet on a cruise of such duration and distance. Coal had first become an issue in New Zealand in early August. Although the Navy Department had contracted for 30,000 tons of US coal to be delivered to Auckland, only three of the six colliers had arrived. In Sydney and Melbourne it had only been possible to obtain small quantities of inferior coal, due to the lead times necessary to fill such large orders.

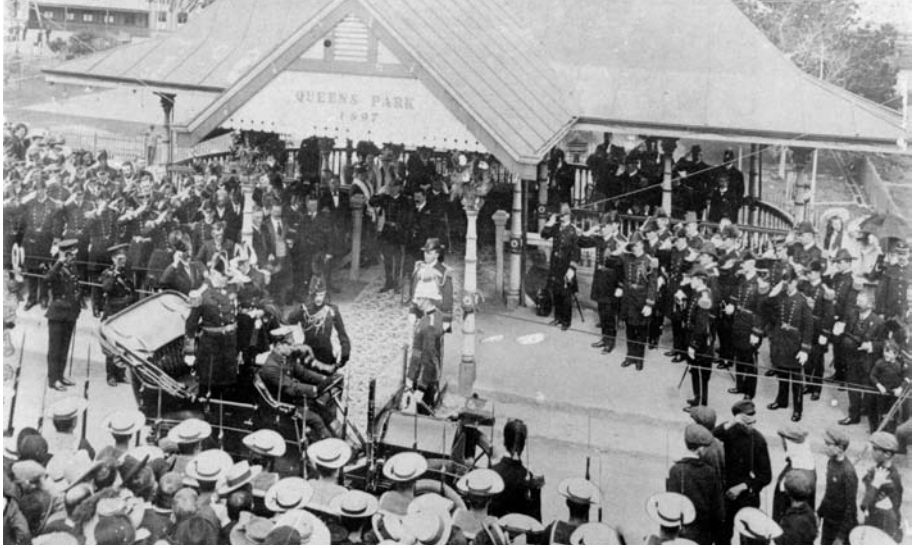


The 'Black Gang' stoking the furnace in one of the Great White Fleet's battleships. Obtaining adequate supplies of coal made the world cruise a risky proposition

US NAVAL HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

*The Great White
Fleet's reception
in Albany,
11 September 1908*

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The seven days in Albany were a busy time for the crews, all the more so as the laborious task of transferring coal to the ship's bunkers could proceed only one ship at a time. Although Princess Royal Harbour was large, it was too exposed to the weather and colliers could not safely come alongside the warships to discharge their cargoes. This problem was overcome by having each battleship in turn enter the small, sheltered inner harbour in order to take on coal. The difficulty and duration of this procedure for sixteen battleships was demonstrated by the fact that both USS *Missouri* and *Connecticut* were left in Albany to complete their refuelling when the rest of the fleet departed for Manila. Refuelling was the responsibility of the Navy's Bureau of Equipment, headed by the president's brother-in-law, Admiral William Cowles. Cowles 'had worked under serious restraints: late announcement of the cruise—a political consideration—and the need to accept competitive bids before granting contracts—a statutory limitation ... resulted in unacceptably short periods for successful bidders' to load and despatch their cargoes.⁷¹ Without dedicated navy colliers, the fleet's ability to move independently was constantly under threat. In the event of hostilities, interdiction of the merchant ships that carried its fuel supplies would have imposed a grave limitation on the ability of the warships to operate offensively.

For the men, the visit to Albany was not, however, all toil. Despite its small population of around 3600, Albany did its best to entertain the visitors. The Premier of Western Australia, Sir Newton James Moore, met the fleet in the government launch *Penguin*, when they arrived at 7 am on 11 September.⁷² However, rain and uncertainty over the arrival time meant that only a few hardy locals were on hand to greet the ships. The customary compliments were

exchanged between the fleet and the battery at Princess Royal Fortress, with both USS *Connecticut* and the fort's guns firing twenty-one-gun salutes. Also in port were HMS *Gibraltar* and the Chilean navy's training ship *General Baquedano*, which both fired thirteen-gun salutes to Admiral Sperry's flag. Coincidentally, it was a local election day, so the town's population was swollen with people from outlying districts who had come to vote and see the battleships. Over the next few days several social events had been planned but a brass band from Perth was delayed and the streets were undecorated because Melbourne failed to send on its used bunting.⁷³ Undaunted, Sir Newton took to the piano in the Town Hall and led the crowd in renditions of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and all twelve verses of 'Dryblower' Murphy's newly published 'Big Brother'.⁷⁴

With the arduous task of refuelling ahead and the exhausting hospitality of Sydney and Melbourne still fresh in their memories, the crews no doubt welcomed the slower pace of Albany. Postcards of the town show local sites such as the tea rooms on the King River, a row of neat commercial buildings on Stirling Terrace and a granite boulder named Dog Rock.⁷⁵ Frank Leshner described Albany as a 'quiet, modest little village with fine roads and substantially built houses with the average number of saloons, with their bar-maids'.⁷⁶ He also reported on the town's celebrated rock formation: 'Just east of the town there is a rock about 20 feet high which resembles a bull dogs face very much'.⁷⁷ Finally, on 18 September, despite a plea from Sir Newton to stay beyond the planned seven days, the Australian leg of the voyage came to an end. Sperry led fourteen of his battleships out of King George Sound and set a course for Manila.

Just as the Americans were leaving, Deakin compounded London's agitation by suggesting that a similar cruise by a British fleet would be 'very desirable'. Deakin also proposed that 'the fleet should be as impressive as possible in size and quality' since a striking demonstration of British naval force 'would exercise a most beneficial influence on public opinion'.⁷⁸ A voyage by a sizable fleet would have presented the Royal Navy with similar logistical problems to those faced by the Americans. Deakin's proposal could not have come at a worse time. The Moroccan Crisis of 1905 and the 1906 Algeiras Conference had thwarted Germany's ambitions to expand its influence in Africa and contributed to the animosities that would eventually result in the Great War. In these circumstances, it was highly unlikely that the Admiralty would reverse its 1904 decision to concentrate the fleet in home waters. However, the Colonial Office reply merely stated that such a visit would be 'liable to misunderstanding and might create the impression, which it is most desirable to avoid, of being intended as a set-off against the recent American visit implying that some counter demonstration is thought necessary'.⁷⁹

'A warmer corner in Australian hearts': Pacific politics, 1908–1914

Socially, the Great White Fleet's visit to Australia had been a particular success, but what had it achieved politically? Deakin's invitation was certainly an indication that nationalism was developing in a distinctive and complicated fashion. Opinion in the major Australian newspapers was divided over the long-term meaning of the visit, especially as it might influence the areas of defence and future relations with both Britain and the United States. An editorial in *The Age* suggested that two immediate consequences would be 'a warmer corner in Australian hearts for Americans' and recognition by that in the immediate future Australia would be a land 'to be reckoned with'.⁸⁰ The *Sydney Morning Herald* begged to differ: 'We owe the Americans nothing and I doubt if any American will ever die in our defence'.⁸¹

This division of opinion reflects the intricacies of Australia's emerging national identity; looking forward to a still emerging concept of its unique national interests, while casting a loyal glance back to its roots in Britain and the Empire.⁸² The English journalist Richard Jebb, in his *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (London, 1905) believed that the imperial connection was stronger than the frequently brash statements of colonial nationalism in journals such as *The Bulletin*. Jebb also believed that eventually the political relations between Britain and its colonies would be determined by questions such as defence and trade, because the colonists would develop a primary loyalty to their national territory.

For all that Deakin's rhetoric reflected the euphoria of the visit and lavishly employed the theme of Anglo-Saxon kinship, he could also take a realist perspective on the visit. As he wrote to Jebb, 'The visit of the United States fleet is universally popular here, not so much because of our blood affection for the Americans ... but because of our distrust of the yellow race in the North Pacific'.⁸³ Behind the often naïve diplomatic manoeuvring and the oratory was Deakin's desire to provide for his country's defence.

A future prime minister, William Morris Hughes, was at best ambivalent about the US visit. On seeing the fleet at anchor in Sydney he remarked, 'We live in an uncertain world, and it is good to have friends. This is greatness—such greatness as Australia must aim at!'⁸⁴ Later, during a major speech on the defence program, Hughes characterised the Commonwealth's contributions to the naval defence of the Empire (£200,000) as 'niggardly'.⁸⁵ Citing Lord Esher in the May 1908 edition of *National Review*, he reminded the parliament that the US decision to enter the Pacific was little cause for rejoicing, signalling as it did that 'in the Pacific the Naval Power of England has yielded to the United States on the Western littoral and to Japan in the Far East'.⁸⁶ Hughes, who spoke of Britain as 'the Mother country', also believed that the Great Republic was

essentially hostile to the idea of the British Empire and it would be unwise for Australia to place too much reliance on US support. His subsequent experiences at the Versailles Peace Conference reinforce this opinion.

At this stage, despite several attempts, Deakin's scheme for an Australian naval force was still stalled by the indifference of the British. However, this setback did not stop him using the US visit as a platform to continue pushing his ideas. The enthusiasm and debate prompted by the visit certainly kept the idea in the public consciousness. Then, at the Imperial Conference in 1909, Sir John Fisher decided that the offer by the Commonwealth to pay for a capital ship should be accepted, with the vessel, HMAS *Australia*, being constructed as a battlecruiser that would form the nucleus of an independent Australian naval force.⁸⁷ His change of heart resulted in the birth of an Australian navy with the passage of the Naval Defence Act through the Commonwealth parliament in 1910.

While the issue of an Australian naval force remained unresolved, Australia also attempted to seize on the diplomatic value of the Great White Fleet's visit. In his report on the visit, Sperry had made reference to the existence of 'a community of material interests in the Pacific which was the necessary base for any friendship'.⁸⁸ However, any move towards a formal alliance faced obstacles, not the least of which was Australia's ambiguous diplomatic status as a self-governing Dominion. In addition, as the *New York Times* observed, 'such an alliance scarcely appears to be called for ... while we can understand and sympathise with the sentiment of the white Australasian, it would be folly to begin thinking ... about quarrelling with loyal and valuable friends [sc. Japan] for no better reason than that blood is thicker than water'.⁸⁹

Indeed, Roosevelt's second term in office was marked by further tensions between the United States and Japan. Both nations now had considerable influence in Asia: the Americans in the Philippines and China and the Japanese in China, Korea, Formosa and Manchuria. Under Roosevelt, US policy towards Japan was a judicious amalgam of his trademark 'big stick' approach to diplomacy and a realistic policy of accommodation that recognised Japan's interests. The world cruise by the Great White Fleet is an example of the 'big stick'.⁹⁰ Like much diplomacy of the period, the cruise was an expression of nationalism charged with strong elements of racial ideology. As the 1906 Californian school legislation and the accompanying violence demonstrated, many Americans, especially on the west coast, shared Australia's feelings regarding Japanese immigration. Roosevelt had responded decisively, publicly criticising the School Board's actions and informing the Japanese government that the legislation did not represent the attitudes of the US government.

However, this conciliatory action was followed in July of the next year by the announcement that the Atlantic Fleet would enter the Pacific, prompting at least one major Japanese paper, the *Hochi Shimbun*, to question the timeliness of decision.⁹¹ When the fleet called at Yokohama in October 1908, Sperry had been under strict instructions to ensure that the crews were well behaved so that the visit was a success.⁹² Nevertheless, tensions remained.

The importance of these periodic frictions can be glimpsed in a letter sent by Roosevelt in early 1908 to King Edward VII on the subject of Japanese migration:

I feel very strongly that the real interests of the Anglo-Saxon people are one, alike in the Atlantic and the Pacific, and that while scrupulously careful neither to insult nor injure others, we should yet make it evident that we are ready and able to hold our own. In no country where the population is of our stock, and where wage workers, the labourers, are of the same blood as the employing classes, will it be possible to introduce a large number of workmen of an utterly alien race without certainty of dangerous friction.⁹³

While the language of the letter is deliberately vague, its reference to the same pan-Anglo-Saxon sentiments that were such a feature of the oratory during the Great White Fleet's visit to Australia reflects a similar ideology to the one behind the White Australia policy. However, any attempt to form a united front with the British was doomed. Under the provisions of the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty, the subjects of both nations had 'full liberty to enter, travel, or reside in any part of the dominions and possessions of the other Contracting Party, and shall enjoy full and perfect protection for their persons and properties'.⁹⁴ As the two British Dominions most concerned by the treaty, Australia and Canada had taken steps to exclude Japanese immigration. When British Columbia passed anti-Asian statutes similar to the White Australia policy, Ottawa had overruled the provincial legislature, on the grounds that the statutes would be an embarrassment for Canada, Britain and Japan.⁹⁵

In an attempt to defuse such issues and soothe relations with the United States, the Japanese ambassador to Washington, Viscount Aoki, had taken a personal initiative to open discussions directly with Roosevelt. In late October 1907, Aoki had raised with the president three points that might form the basis of an agreement:

- control of the Pacific as an international highway of commerce (to avoid the prospect of either Japan or the United States attempting to gain exclusive control of the ocean)
- respect for the territorial rights of each nation and maintenance of the existing order in the Pacific

- support for the open-door policy in China and maintenance of Chinese territorial integrity.⁹⁶

In February 1908, an informal agreement was reached by the two nations to limit Japanese immigration to the United States. This was a similar arrangement to the Lemieux or Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 by which Japan consented to a quota on the migration of its subjects to Canada. In March serious discussions on Viscount Aoki's proposals began between the Secretary of State, Elihu Root, and Aoki's replacement as ambassador, Baron Kogoro Takahira. An understanding that came to be known as the Root–Takahira Agreement was signed on 30 November 1908. The agreement, which aimed to 'materially contribute to the preservation of the general peace', was essentially an arrangement to maintain the status quo in Asia and the Pacific.⁹⁷

Despite the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon kinship, the Root–Takahira Agreement was a pragmatic assessment of the circumstances in the Pacific and offered the United States much more than an alliance with Australia could. Until the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, it would take three months for the Atlantic Fleet to arrive in the Pacific (as the world cruise in 1907–1909 had shown).⁹⁸ By recognising Japan's interests on the Asian mainland, the agreement also sought to encourage any further Japanese imperial ambitions in that region, rather than in the Pacific. To that extent, the agreement was also of benefit to British and Australian interests in the Pacific. However, it also meant that another Australian desire, the extension by the United States of the Monroe Doctrine into the Pacific, would not be achieved.⁹⁹ This idea had first been proposed in 1883 when New Zealand and the Australian colonies asserted the need for a British Monroe Doctrine for the Pacific. The delegates at the Inter-colonial Convention had stated their belief 'that further acquisition of dominion in the Pacific, south of the Equator, by any Foreign Power, would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia, and injurious to the interests of the Empire'.¹⁰⁰ At that time the proposal had been derided by the UK prime minister, William Gladstone, but the general concept proved to have resilience, being revived by several Australian politicians in the first half of the twentieth century, including Deakin, Hughes, Lyons and Evatt.

Deakin took the opportunity to press such a proposal in 1909, after *The Age* reported that the Japanese might be preparing to repudiate the Root–Takahira Agreement 'in order to formulate new demands on America'.¹⁰¹ Seizing the moment, Deakin wrote to Lord Crewe proposing 'an Agreement for an extension of the Monroe Doctrine to all countries around the Pacific Ocean supported by the guarantees of the British Empire, Holland, France and China added to that of the United States'.¹⁰² Notable exceptions from Deakin's list were

Japan and Germany, while China was an interesting inclusion. Lord Crewe's unenthusiastic response reminded Deakin

that the so-called principle [the Monroe Doctrine] is really only an assertion, which those who advance it are presumably prepared to back by force. We [Britain] acquiesce in it generally because it suits us to do so, but I don't know that we should agree to every application which the United States might conceivably choose to make of it.¹⁰³

Crewe's reply contained a realistic appraisal of the value of any such agreement. In the fragile international environment before World War I, the United States was not prepared to risk a war with Japan over a principle it could not support with military and naval power.¹⁰⁴

The visit of the Great White Fleet had momentarily heightened Australian and US recognition of certain shared concerns and ideals. Although the visit emphasised cultural and political legacies, geopolitics and national interests would take precedence. In his classic study of international relations, *Discord and Collaboration*, Arnold Wolfers noted that self-interest would 'usually hold allied countries in alliance'.¹⁰⁵ The broad affinities between Australia and the United States did not provide a sufficient set of common interests to warrant an accord for the Pacific along the lines of the Monroe Doctrine, let alone a full-blown alliance. Instability and frictions in Europe were the United Kingdom's major foreign policy concerns, and in 1909 the United States had no desire to provoke a conflict with Japan. In these circumstances, Australia was forced to accept that the UK naval alliance with Japan would be the only available guarantee of the status quo in the Pacific for the foreseeable future.

When the Anglo-Japanese Naval Treaty was renewed in 1911, it appeared that the treaty would jeopardise Britain's relations with the United States. At issue was the slight but worrying potential that the treaty could bring Britain into conflict with the United States, which was once again experiencing friction with Japan over migration. Eventually, a compromise was reached to revise the treaty's third article to ensure:

Should either High Contracting party conclude a treaty of general arbitration with a third Power, it is agreed that nothing in this Agreement shall entail upon such Contracting Party an obligation to go to war with the Power with whom such a treaty of arbitration is in force.¹⁰⁶

The revised agreement also finally relieved Australia of the anxiety of finding itself allied with Britain and Japan against the United States. Nevertheless, Britain's dependence on Japan in the Pacific severely limited its ability to cooperate with US policy. Ironically, just months before World War I, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, told the UK parliament, 'If the power

of Great Britain were shattered on the sea, the only course for the five millions of white men in the Pacific would be to seek the protection of the United States'.¹⁰⁷ This scenario would not occur until 1941.

Meanwhile, during President Howard Taft's administration, the United States pursued a more aggressive policy in China, dubbed Dollar Diplomacy. The policy was a bid to secure a larger share of the Chinese market by ignoring the long-standing system of political and commercial spheres of influence established by Japan and several European powers. Although the Root–Takahira Agreement had supported an open-door policy in China, Dollar Diplomacy went against the spirit of the agreement by attempting to infringe on Japan's sphere of influence. As Roosevelt had advised his successor, any US policy that seriously challenged Japanese interests in East Asia would ultimately require the sanction of armed force:

I do not believe in our taking any position anywhere unless we can make good: and as regards Manchuria, if the Japanese choose to follow a course of conduct to which we are adverse, we cannot stop it unless we are prepared to go to war, and a successful war about Manchuria would require a fleet as good as that of England, plus an army as good as that of Germany.¹⁰⁸

Like much else in Taft's presidency, Dollar Diplomacy proved maladroit. The policy was resisted by Japan and the other powers and only served to further sour relations between Japan and the United States.¹⁰⁹

World War I and Australia–US relations

Very soon after the outbreak of World War I, it became apparent that one of the outcomes of the war would be a considerable strengthening of Japan's position in the Pacific. Its occupation of the German territories in Micronesia gave it the potential to threaten Australian and US territories and interests. When the war began, at the behest of Britain, New Zealand and Australia had quickly taken control of the German colonies south of the equator in Samoa and New Guinea.¹¹⁰ When the Australians were slow to mount further expeditions to seize the German territories north of the equator (the Marshall, Caroline, Northern Mariana Islands and Nauru, which is only 42 kilometres south of the equator), Britain requested the Japanese to undertake these operations. The result was that Japanese naval forces were now in control of excellent harbours within 2000 kilometres of Port Moresby and similar distances from the Philippines and Hawaii. Guam, an American possession since the 1898 war with Spain, was now encircled by Japanese islands.

Although Japanese naval vessels would provide convoy escorts for Australian troopships travelling across the Indian Ocean to the Dardanelles, the Middle

East and Europe, Japanese control over much of Micronesia made many Australians apprehensive. The annexations of the German possessions in the northern Pacific would be a diplomatic and strategic issue for Australia. Britain, having requested the Japanese to seize the islands, was now under pressure from Japan to support its claims for permanent annexation. Failure to support the Japanese would have threatened the Anglo-Japanese alliance, while Britain was heavily dependent on its ally for the security of its interests in the Pacific and India.

In 1916, when the Admiralty requested greater levels of naval assistance from Japan, the Japanese made it clear that this assistance was conditional upon Britain's support for permanent Japanese occupation of the island groups in the north Pacific.¹¹¹ The Allies had already made a number of similar 'secret' pacts. Russia had been granted the right to occupy Constantinople and the French and British had already divided the Middle East between them. In this context there was nothing out of the ordinary in the Japanese request. Australia, though alarmed, grudgingly acquiesced in Japanese control of the islands for the duration of the war, and further agreed to 'carefully abstain from doing or saying anything likely to strain or make difficult the relations between His Majesty's Government and Japan either in regard to the future partition of the Pacific or in regard to trade or any other matter'.¹¹²

The war led to increased contact between Australia and the United States, especially after the Americans entered the war in April 1917. On the battlefields of France in 1918 US and Australian troops fought a common enemy. A small force of Americans served under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John

Monash at the Battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918. After the action Monash sent letters to the leaders of the US troops praising the fighting qualities of their men.¹¹³ In his memoir *Australian Victories in France 1918*, Monash wrote:

Among other aspects of this battle [Hamel] which was worthy of mention is the fact that it was the first occasion in the war that American troops fought in an offensive battle. The contingent ... [that] joined us acquitted themselves most gallantly and were ever after received by the Australians as blood brothers—a fraternity which operated to great mutual advantage.¹¹⁴



Commander of the Australian Corps, General Sir John Monash, praised the fighting qualities of the US forces under his command

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US and Australian soldiers inspecting captured German artillery, Tincourt, France, 1918

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

The frontline soldiers of both nations shared an appreciation for each other's fighting abilities. The Australians called the Americans 'Yanks' or 'Sammy' (an epithet derived from Uncle Sam). Before Hamel an Australian private, Ronald Simpson, appraised the qualities of the Americans, saying: 'by the way the Yanks shape up they are going to be good fighters, they think the world of the Aussies we mostly have a few of their N.C.O. in the line with us learning the ropes'.¹¹⁵ For their part, the Americans respected the hard-won experience of the Australians. Towards the end of the war the US Army newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, told its readers,

Most Australians have been out since 1914, going through the hell of the Dardanelles and later being transported to France, where they earned the right, if ever soldiers did, to wear that natty bonnet of theirs at such a cocky angle. Without exception, the Aussies all hope to be sent home 'by the other way so that we can see America'. We hope they will be sent home that way if they want to. Besides wishing to have them see America—which we are pardonably proud of—we should like to have America see them.¹¹⁶

The war also saw the first changes in the status of the Dominions. In 1917 the Imperial War Conference gave the self-governing Dominions the autonomy to make laws without reference to the UK parliament. While their diplomatic status remained ambiguous, their legislatures were no longer subordinate to Westminster. However, from a diplomatic perspective, the definition of a Dominion remained vague. At best it could be said that it was more than just a colony, but something less than an independent state.¹¹⁷

Soon after the 1917 decision, Australia took its first small step to establish an independent relationship with the United States, at least in regard to matters of trade. At the initiative of the then prime minister, 'Billy' Hughes, businessman Henry Braddon from the pastoral company Dalgety & Co. was appointed Australian commissioner in New York in October 1918. Braddon's appointment was short-term. At issue was the need to negotiate a deal with American shipbuilders for the supply of fourteen ships for the Commonwealth Shipping Line. Initially, the UK ambassador to Washington showed some sensitivity over this initiative. However, Braddon was scrupulous in referring political matters to the UK embassy in Washington and dealing only with commercial matters. The title of commissioner was ambiguous and, although the position was not diplomatic in the traditional sense, it did have a broad representational role. Braddon held a six-month appointment to deal with the shipbuilding contract, but when this business was completed, he was persuaded to extend his stay, finally leaving the United States in June 1919. Braddon was succeeded by a range of high-profile businessmen who held the position for a few years before returning to Australia. The status and even the duties of the position remained ambiguous, but most commissioners travelled widely in the United States, promoting Australia's commercial interests and strengthening business links between the two nations.

The decade from the visit of the Great White Fleet to the end of World War I did not see any great convergence of interests between Australia and the United States. The interests of the two nations continued to run parallel, especially where their security in the Pacific was concerned. Still, significant obstacles remained before there could be effective collaboration. Not the least of these was the ambiguous diplomatic status of Australia as a self-governing Dominion within the British Empire. Deakin's invitation to the Great White Fleet had demonstrated how this status complicated Australia's ability to conduct foreign relations. His courting of the United States also highlights the close connection between foreign and defence policies that has remained a distinguishing feature of Australia's efforts to provide for its security.



*Admiral Sperry
is greeted by the
governor of New
South Wales,
Admiral Sir
Harry Holdsworth
Rawson, Farm
Cove, Sydney*

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*US battleships at
anchor off North
Sydney*

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SOUTH WALES

*Sydney Town Hall
illuminated for
'Fleet Week'*

CITY OF SYDNEY
ARCHIVES





*US sailors
coming ashore for
liberty in Sydney*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



*Visitors coming
aboard USS
Connecticut
in Sydney*

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SOUTH WALES

*Captains of the
Great White Fleet*

US NAVAL
HISTORICAL
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Seated (L–R): Captain Hugo Osterhaus, USS Connecticut; Captain Kossuth Niles, USS Louisiana; Captain William P. Potter, USS Vermont; Captain John Hubbard, USS Minnesota; Captain Joseph B. Murdock, USS Rhode Island; Captain Charles E. Vreeland, USS Kansas.

Standing (L–R): Captain Hamilton Hutchins, USS Kearsarge; Captain Frank E. Beatty, USS Wisconsin; Captain Reginald F. Nicholson, USS Nebraska; Captain Thomas B. Howard, USS Ohio; Captain William H.H. Southerland, USS New Jersey; Captain Walter C. Cowles, USS Kentucky; Captain John M. Bowyer, USS Illinois; Captain Alexander Sharp, USS Virginia; Lieutenant Commander Charles B. McVay, USS Yankton.



US sailors out on the town, Sydney

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SOUTH WALES



Shipboard entertainment, Sydney

US NAVAL INSTITUTE
PHOTO ARCHIVE

*Lieutenant John
Lewis with a
mascot presented to
USS Connecticut
by the people of
Sydney*

US NAVAL
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION



*The US fleet in
Princess Royal
Harbour, Albany*

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*'Fleet Week'
banquet, Albany*

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA



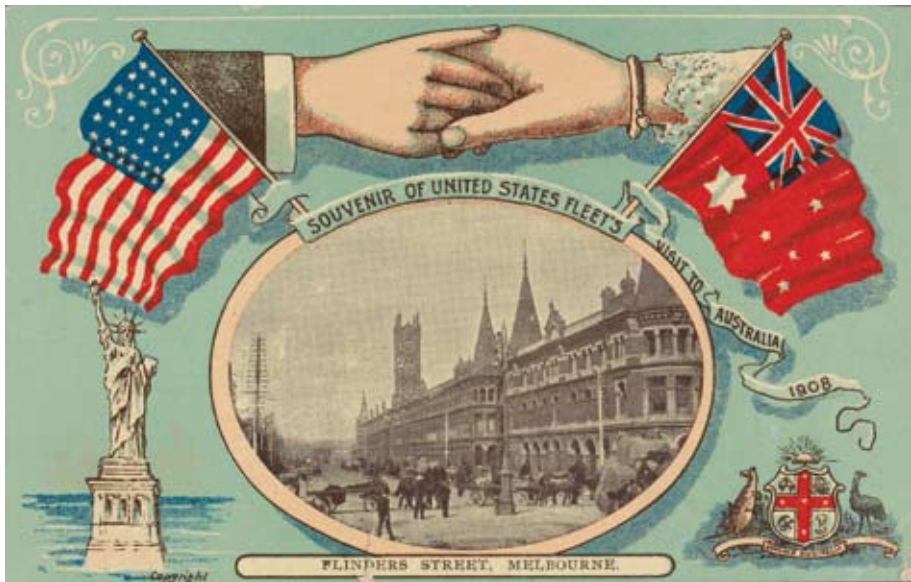
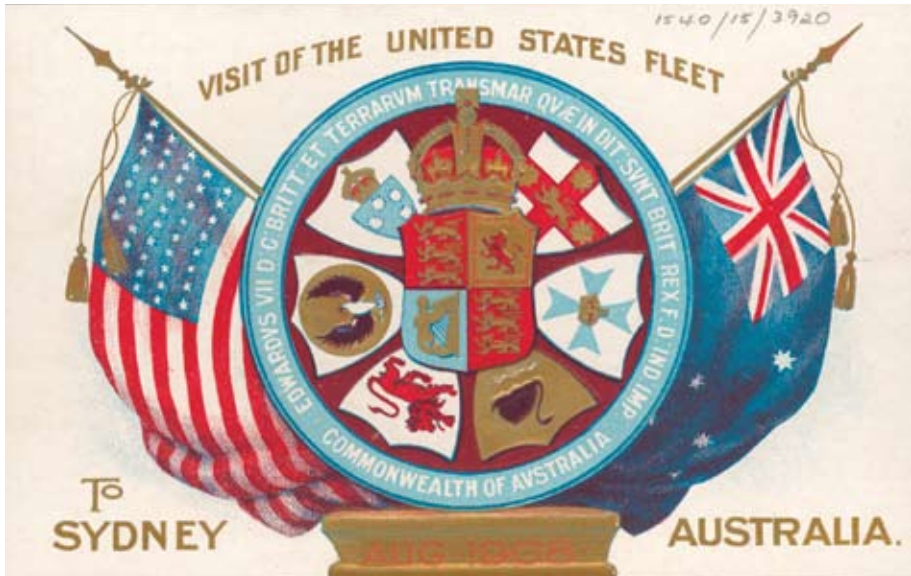
*Sailors on parade
through Albany*

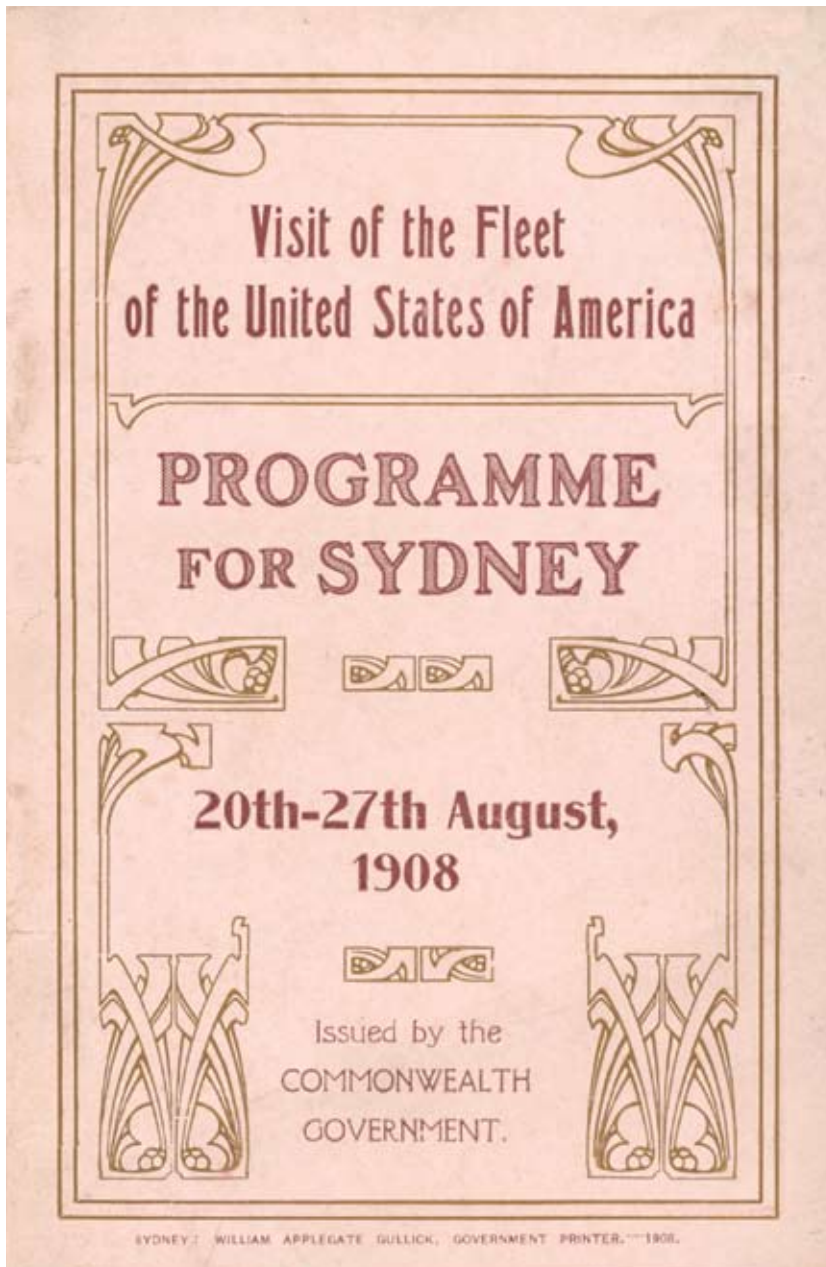
BATTYE LIBRARY,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Both Sydney and Melbourne went to great lengths to produce artwork that expressed the depth of feeling in their welcome

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OF AUSTRALIA
(SYDNEY)

STATE LIBRARY
OF VICTORIA
(MELBOURNE)



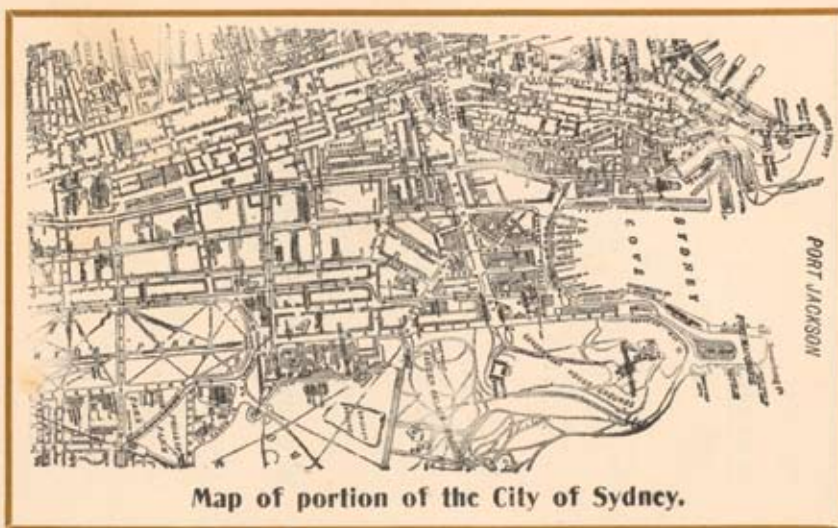


The cover of the official program of events for the Fleet's visit to Sydney. The program was over twenty pages in length

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*The program
included a
city map and
a guide for
recognising the
US Naval ranks*

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How to distinguish Officers of the U.S. of America Navy.



NOTE.—Lieutenants, junior grade, have $1\frac{1}{2}$ stripes. Midshipmen serving at sea, $\frac{1}{2}$ stripe. Warrant officers, star without any stripe.

Engineers, same as line officers (interchangeable).

All other branches have corresponding executive rank and titles without the star on sleeve.

Colour of significance (between the sleeve stripes): *Medical*, dark maroon; *Pay*, white; *Constructors*, purple; *Civil Engineers*, light blue; *Professors of Mathematics*, olive green.

PROGRAMME FOR SYDNEY—*contd.*

SATURDAY.

AUGUST 22ND.

MORNING.

The Government of New South Wales will entertain Officers and Men of the U.S. Navy at railway excursions to Blue Mountains and to Newcastle; and special motor trip for Officers to Medlow Bath and Jenolan Caves.

Detachment of Officers and Men of the U.S. Navy will be entertained at Manly by the Residents.

Fire Brigades Parade.

AFTERNOON.

Complimentary Regatta, on Sydney Harbour, to the U.S. Fleet, by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Football Match, England v. New South Wales, at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Baseball Match, Australia v. the Fleet of the U.S. of America, at the University Oval.

The Rosehill Race Club will hold a Race Meeting. Theatre Managers will give Matinee performances.

Organ Recital at the Town Hall, Sydney.

[12]

PROGRAMME FOR SYDNEY—*contd.*

SATURDAY.

AUGUST 22ND—*contd.*

EVENING.

His Excellency the Naval Commander-in-Chief will give a dinner to the Senior Officers of the U.S. Fleet, and an At Home on H.M.S. "Powerful."

Fireworks Display from various points in the Harbour, arranged by the Government of New South Wales.

Venetian Carnival on Harbour.

Illumination of Public Buildings.

The Citizens of Sydney will entertain the American Fleet at a Concert at the Town Hall.

The Ladies of the British Empire League will entertain 400 men from the British and U.S. Fleets at the Royal Naval House at a Smoke Concert and Social Evening.

[13]

The official program of entertainment for Saturday, 22 August 1908 gives some idea of the hectic schedule of social and sporting events for just one of the seven days that the fleet was in Sydney

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2 Peace for the Pacific



1919–1924

The aftermath of World War I in the Pacific

The war had given Australia a greater sense of national identity, but the impetus towards autonomy had to be balanced against the benefits of membership of the British Empire. In a time of significant diplomatic activity, the policies of Australia and the United States were often at odds as they both attempted to come to terms with the conditions of the new international environment. World War I precipitated a significant geopolitical and strategic shift, leaving the old imperial nations economically exhausted and physically crippled. In contrast, the United States emerged as the world's leading power. Despite the fact that US policy would oscillate between activism and isolationism throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the United States' pre-eminence in finance and manufacturing gave it influence with which to shape world affairs. Nor was the United States the sole beneficiary of Europe's decline. In Asia, Japan emerged as the region's most significant power.

The increase in Japan's influence was partially the result of the war transforming its economy. From a debtor nation with an unfavourable trade balance in 1914, by the war's end Japan's foreign debt was much reduced and its trade balance greatly improved. Japan's new position also derived from the destruction of the pre-war status quo. Before the war, the spheres of influence of the imperial powers in the Pacific and North-East Asia had reached equilibrium. However, Germany's removal, together with the relative decline of the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands, made Japan the most substantial power in the region. This situation was helpful to Japan in light of the economic and population pressures it was experiencing. China, Korea and Manchuria all became the focus of Japan's surplus industrial production, as well as its excess population. By the end of the war Japan had increased its fleet, extended its

control over the former German possessions and expanded its influence in China and Manchuria. In short, the strategic imbalance in Asia created by World War I provided the scope for Japanese expansion.

Following the war, Japanese imperialism was recast in a pan-Asian, anti-Western context. Many nationalists believed that, despite its support for the Allies, rapid industrialisation and other modern symbols of power (colonies and a large navy) the European powers did not consider Japan as an equal. Internationally, the Japanese continued to encounter prejudice and discrimination. These attitudes were evident at the Versailles Peace Conference, in the constitution of the League of Nations and the provisions of the Conference on Naval Limitation (commonly known as the Washington Naval Conference) of 1921–1922.

Japan's dissatisfaction was heightened by the continued existence and even strengthening of policies that restricted or prohibited immigration by Japanese citizens, such as the White Australia policy and the Exclusion Laws enacted by the United States in 1924. These laws were galling to Japanese nationalists whose self-assurance had grown as a result of their nation's new prosperity.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the most significant factor increasing tension in the Pacific was the failure of the international community to recognise both Japan's economic needs and its growing military power. For much of the immediate post-war period, despite having similar policies and interests, Australia and the United States were also in conflict. As the 1920s began, regional and international tensions did not promise peace in the Pacific.

'The fate of Australia': Security in the post-war Pacific, 1918

Writing of his experiences as a member of the Australian delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference, John Latham remarked, 'It is often said that the war has given Australia a new status', but he also felt that 'the nature and significance of the change have not yet been worked out'. In his opinion, along with its enhanced international standing, the Commonwealth had acquired 'new responsibilities ... new duties and new risks, as well as benefits and advantages'.¹ For Latham, a Melbourne lawyer, politician and sometime naval intelligence officer,



*John Latham
was a perceptive
observer at
the Versailles
Conference*

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these benefits resulted from the opportunities now open to Australia to shape its own destiny, especially in the form of a 'self-conscious foreign policy'.²

Australia's national interests found expression in the policies and forceful character of the prime minister, William Morris (Billy) Hughes. Once described as 'a frail, deaf, dyspeptic little man', Hughes was vocal in putting his nation's point of view at the Versailles Peace Conference, emerging as a revisionist voice seeking to curb the impact of President Wilson's vision for world peace on Australia's position in the Pacific.³

Wilson had formulated Fourteen Points as the basis for a peace settlement between Germany and the Allies.⁴ His ideas drew heavily on the ideals of liberal internationalism. Their central features were: peace without victory; the end of imperialism and annexations; the enlargement of the area of self-government;

*President
Woodrow Wilson
on USS George
Washington,
1919*

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guaranteed freedom of the seas; the control and limitation of arms; and the foundation of an international body (the League of Nations) with power to enforce good conduct in international relations. As Wilson had told the US Senate in his address of January 1917, the peace he sought was 'not a balance of power, but a community of power;

not organised rivalries, but an organised common peace'.⁵

Hughes was a pragmatist. He brought to the negotiations political skills honed as a union organiser and a state and federal parliamentarian. In many ways he was the antithesis of the patrician and scholarly Wilson. For Hughes the durability of the peace depended not on covenants and leagues but on stable power relationships. Consequently, his policy goals included the punishment of Germany, reparations to cover the cost of the war, acquisition of Germany's colonies in the South-West Pacific to improve Australian's security, a UK Monroe Doctrine for the Pacific and retention of the White Australia policy. He pursued his agenda with aggression, wit and guile. Although Australian policy at the Versailles Conference was antithetical to the spirit of Wilson's ideals, Hughes was largely successful in defending his country's vital interests.

It was inevitable that Hughes and Wilson would be at odds in Paris, and their first meeting in Washington in mid-1918 did not bode well. Hughes had gone to

the United States on his way to an Imperial War Cabinet meeting in London. He met Wilson in an effort to secure US support for protecting Australia's interests in the Pacific. He was especially interested in the fate of the former German colonies. The governor-general, Munro Ferguson, wrote to Viscount Long, the secretary of state for colonies, alerting him to the possibility that Hughes would meet the president:

because he wishes to obtain, through his persuasive influence, the support of America to the 'White Australia' Policy and to a restriction of Japanese activity south of the equator. I believe Mr. Hughes to be animated by a real Imperial patriotism, but I am not without fear lest in his zeal for Australia's safety he be inclined to turn to America and seek a very close and direct understanding with her.⁶

The governor-general need not have worried: the meeting was far from successful. Rather than follow the usual diplomatic niceties, Hughes put forward Australia's case for retaining the former German colonies. Lord Reading, the UK ambassador to the United States, said that Hughes was emphatic that if Germany or any other aggressive power held them, 'Australia's security would be prejudiced'.⁷ Wilson remained 'as unresponsive as the Sphinx in the desert'.⁸ Hughes was so flummoxed by this behaviour that, as he records in his memoir of the event, 'my own powers of speech withered and died'.⁹

Wilson was known for the stiffness of his public persona. His aloofness during this meeting may also have been deliberate because of his desire to play the role of an even-handed conciliator on such issues once the war was won. Wilson had told the Senate, 'American principles and policies [were] also the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere'.¹⁰ Hughes too was looking forward, but his vision was of a secure Australia, with a maritime barrier capable of keeping enemies at arm's length. He would pursue this vision with tenacity and aggression. Following his failure to reach a private accord with Wilson, Hughes began a public campaign. He started by lobbying the president's special advisers in the new foreign policy think tank, known as 'The Inquiry', in the New York premises of the American Geographical Society. Professor James T. Shotwell, a



Australian Prime Minister W.M. 'Billy' Hughes was described as 'a frail, deaf, dyspeptic little man'

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

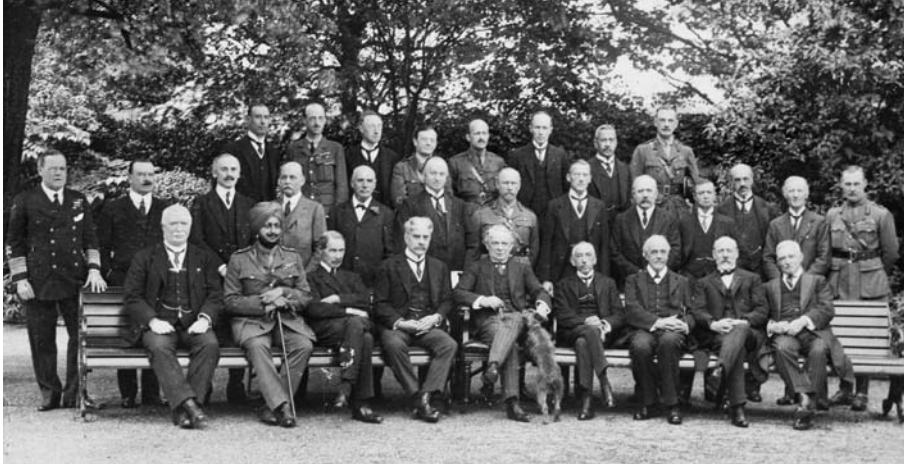
senior member of the group, recalled how 'Premier Hughes of Australia ... gave us a foretaste of his diplomatic technique at the Peace Conference by laying his electric ear trumpet on the table when he didn't want to hear any objections to his point of view'.¹¹

On 29 May 1918, soon after the interview, Hughes gave a major speech outlining Australia's post-war aims and policies for the South Pacific at a dinner of the influential Pilgrim Society's New York chapter. The society was an Anglo-American association founded in 1902 to foster transatlantic relations. The gathering gave Hughes the opportunity to lobby such opinion shapers as Chauncey Mitchell Depew, a railroad millionaire who had also served as a diplomat and senator, and Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University. Butler, whose career would include advising seven presidents, was so prominent that each year he delivered a Christmas greeting to the nation in the *New York Times*. Both Depew and Butler were stalwarts of the Republican Party and thus political opponents of the Democrat Wilson. Indeed, the choice of this audience suggests that Hughes had a sound grasp of US domestic politics and Wilson's vulnerability. Wilson had been elected in 1912 with a mandate to introduce the reform program he had outlined in his book, *The New Freedom*. The reforms were essentially anti-big business and included lowering tariffs, revising the banking system, acting against monopolies and fraudulent advertising, and prohibition of unfair business practices. In 1916 he had been re-elected with the narrowest of margins—only twenty-three electoral college votes and under 700,000 popular votes. The Senate election of November 1918 would further weaken him by shifting the balance of power in Congress to the Republicans. By contrast, in the 1917 Australian elections Hughes had won a sweeping victory in both houses of parliament.¹²

Hughes' speech received extensive coverage in the *New York Times* under the headline 'Australia to have a Monroe Doctrine'. He had begun by outlining the part that Australia had played in the Allied war effort, with an emphasis on the seizure of the German Pacific colonies. When this account was greeted with 'great applause', he went on to proclaim, 'We shall never let them go as long as there is a single Australian soldier left'.¹³ Like Deakin, Hughes drew parallels between the two nations:

What you were when the Declaration of Independence was signed, we are now.
The same spirit animates us, the same ideals permeate our national life. The
love of liberty saturates all our being. We believe we shall become a great nation.
But in any case we are resolved at all hazards to remain a free one.¹⁴

Warming to his theme, he asked his audience, 'What would your attitude be toward any predatory power that claimed territory so near to your shores?'



The Imperial War Cabinet, 1918. Both Australia and Canada sought a greater voice in imperial decision-making because of their contributions during World War I

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

before informing them that ‘the fate of Australia rests upon the disposition of these islands’.¹⁵ He closed his address by stressing once again the importance of the islands to the security of Australia:

So we come to you, our great ally, seeking your steadfast and wholehearted co-operation and aid. Hands off the Australian Pacific is the doctrine to which by inexorable circumstances we are committed. And against all predatory nations we will strive to give this doctrine effect to the last ounce of effort at our disposal. And in this we do not desire empire, but only security.¹⁶

The next stop was London and the Imperial War Cabinet. Hughes quickly discovered that the Colonial Office had kept him poorly informed about the conduct of the war, and set about lobbying for the Dominion prime ministers to stay in direct contact with the UK prime minister. By July 1918 there were three bodies developing the Empire’s war policies: the Imperial War Conference, the Imperial War Cabinet and an inner committee of prime ministers (comprising UK Prime Minister Lloyd George, the Dominion leaders, and Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence). This new arrangement gave the Dominion prime ministers a place at the centre of decision-making just as the German army was collapsing and preparations were being made for the peace settlement. This development also signalled how the war had altered relations between the United Kingdom and the Dominions, which now assumed a more assertive, but not entirely autonomous, role in the making of imperial policy.¹⁷

The status of the Dominions at Versailles demonstrates the intricacy of the changed imperial relationship. At the insistence of Hughes and the Canadian prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, Lloyd George negotiated separate representation for them. As Latham explained, ‘the logical result was, as is often

the case with our race [*sc.* the British], not the actual result ... The Dominions received the benefits of separate representation and at the same time the benefits of union between themselves and the rest of the Empire'.¹⁸ Instead of acting as independent nations, except where they had special interests, the Dominions had in effect a dual status. Hughes exploited this status with great success, pursuing Australia's interests while drawing on the resources of the UK Foreign Office. Nevertheless, when the British Empire's prime ministers ratified the Versailles Treaty, they signed on behalf of the king, preserving the concept of imperial diplomatic unity. Another advantage enjoyed by the Empire delegation was that they were able to work out a united position on most aspects of the peace settlement in the various imperial committees before taking them to the peace conference.

Although the war altered the relationship between the imperial authorities and the Dominions, the situation did not change immediately. In late October 1918, the Dominions were informed that Wilson's Fourteen Points would be the basis of the peace. This *fait accompli* came about after the United States threatened to make a separate peace with Germany if the terms of the peace were not those 'laid down in the president's address to Congress of 8 January 1918 [the Fourteen Points] and the principles enunciated in his subsequent addresses'.¹⁹ While Lloyd George assured the Imperial War Cabinet that the terms of the peace settlement would not be limited by the Fourteen Points, Hughes 'declined to be bound to the chariot-wheel of the Fourteen Points'.²⁰ Nevertheless, the UK prime minister took the view that it would be possible for the Empire to achieve what it wanted on aspects of the treaty such as freedom of the seas and war indemnities. Hughes remained sceptical.

Souvenirs of the war: The issue of former German Pacific colonies at Versailles

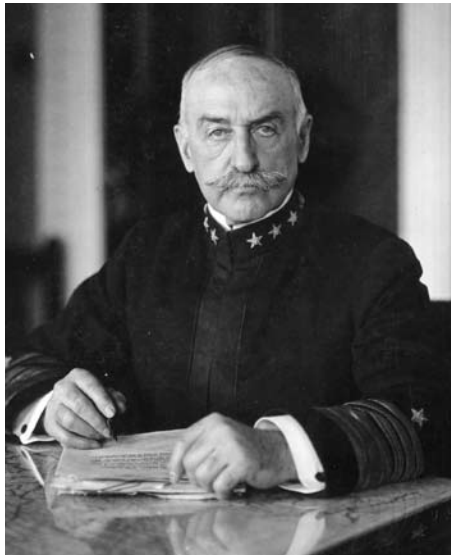
Accounts of the Versailles Peace Conference often make a great deal of the clashes between Hughes and Wilson. Their differences of opinion were certainly public and colourful, with Hughes' relentless aggression pitted against Wilson's Olympian detachment. Viewed at the policy level, their lack of cooperation was a missed opportunity, particularly given that they shared interests in the security of the Pacific. Hughes' attempt to sound out Wilson in June 1918 made sense. His rebuff certainly made him more critical of the Wilson administration's attempts to complicate the already Byzantine conduct of international relations by applying rather abstract moral principles to the peace settlement. Nor was Hughes the only Allied leader to find Wilson's style objectionable. In their memoirs, both Lloyd George and President Clemenceau of France criticised the president's displays of temper, his lack of skill as a negotiator, his intractability

and his cool manner. Two issues highlight the failure of the United States and Australia to cooperate: the fractious debate over the German colonies in the Pacific and the slipshod negotiations over the declaration of racial equality in the covenant of the League of Nations.

The United States, like Australia, had every reason to care which nation controlled the islands north and south of the equator. George Louis Beer was the US expert on colonial questions at the peace conference. Beer, a historian of the British colonial period in the United States, was an Anglophile and Germanophobe. He had been part of Wilson's 'Inquiry' and was later head of the Mandate Department of the League of Nations. His opinion on the Caroline, Mariana, Palau and Marshall Islands was that

*These islands have been occupied by Japan since the autumn of 1914. They have but slight importance, except possibly from a strategic standpoint ... The United States has absolutely no legitimate right to these islands and to advance such a claim would not only be considered a gratuitous affront to Japan, but would undermine the moral influence of the United States in the settlement of other questions.*²¹

Not all Americans took such a moral stand. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William Benson, received a report that Japanese control over the islands was 'opposed to the interests of the United States'.²² The report recognised the unfairness of giving the islands to another nation without provoking the enmity of Japan. Yet, with the islands positioned across US lines of communication to the Philippines and Asia, the authors of the report suggested a deal in which Japan received a free hand in eastern Siberia in compensation for the loss of the islands; alternatively, all the German islands—the Carolines, the Marianas, the Palaus, the Marshall Islands, New Guinea, Nauru, Ocean Island and German Samoa—should be put under international control.²³ Unfortunately, any such deals had already been excluded by President Wilson. In a speech outlining his Fourteen Points he had insisted that there be no annexations of captured territories. He also told Congress,



*Admiral
William
Benson, US
Chief of Naval
Operations,
1919*

US NAVAL
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

The processes of peace [must] be absolutely open and ... permit no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone ... so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world.²⁴

Wilson's insistence on openness was a reaction to the Bolshevik revelations of secret treaties between the Allies. In the event of an Allied victory the Russians had been promised Constantinople; the Sykes–Picot Agreement had divided the Middle East between UK and French interests; and the United Kingdom had promised the German islands in the North Pacific to Japan. By stating his position before the war ended, Wilson had not only reduced his ability to negotiate, but he had also made it easier for his position of 'no annexations' to be outflanked by Japan and Australia. His vision for a new world order was handicapped by his unbending idealism and insistence on what he believed to be universal moral principles. There was no precedent for an international system that did not rely on alliances and a balance of power. These were grave vulnerabilities when dealing with pragmatists such as Hughes or imperial powers such as the United Kingdom and Japan.

By the middle of 1918 the Imperial War Cabinet had adopted its position on the German colonies at the peace conference. The foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, had set out the views of the Foreign Office in June. He suggested that, beyond abstract concepts of justice, there were 'the strongest practical reasons why Germany should not be permitted to regain any of her colonies in Africa, China or the Pacific'.²⁵ Balfour argued that the United Kingdom had no wish to increase its colonial possessions, especially in Africa. He also felt that it would be mad to restore colonies to the Germans, who might use them as naval bases or recruiting grounds for native troops. Indeed, he believed that a re-established German Empire would have a more serious impact on the security of Britain's European and US allies than it would on the British Empire itself. However, if Britain had no direct interest in retaining these colonies, 'some must be retained in the interests of the Dominions; the others should be ... placed under some form of condominium'.²⁶ He concluded that 'the territories acquired by Australia, New Zealand and South Africa must not be torn from their new owners'.²⁷ With regard to the Japanese, Balfour suggested that they be seen as 'the heir of Germany in China' and, in terms of their previous agreement with the British, supported in any claims on the former German Pacific islands north of the equator.

As soon as he arrived in Britain, Hughes made his position clear. However, while the Imperial War Cabinet agreed that none of the colonies should be returned to Germany, it recognised that the United States, 'as long as President

Wilson [was] at the head of affairs', would not stand for any annexations.²⁸

Hughes insisted that the South Pacific islands and financial reparations were due to Australia. His response to the possibility of US opposition was: 'If you want to shift us, come and do it: here we are—*J'y suis, j'y reste* [I am there, I stay there]'.²⁹ The Canadian, Sir Robert Borden, recognised that the disposition of these islands was not just a matter of Australia's security, but concerned the whole Empire. Lord Curzon noted 'The small area of certainty was that occupied by Mr Hughes yesterday when he said that whatever anyone else might do, he was in possession of certain territories which he did not mean to let go'.³⁰ To which Hughes replied, 'It is better to be certain in a small sphere than floundering about in a big one'.³¹



Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden with the British Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, 1919

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL
TRADE: CANADA

The Japanese proved equally adept at negotiating to maintain their control of the German islands in the North Pacific. In September 1917, Viscount Ishii had led a mission to the United States aimed at easing tensions between the two nations over their interests in China. In discussions with Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Ishii revealed that he had met Sir Edward Grey, the UK foreign secretary, in 1915. At the time Ishii had been Japanese ambassador to France. Ishii told Grey that 'no Government in Japan could stand if they did not retain some of the South Sea Islands as "souvenirs" of the war'.³² In Ishii's account, Grey had 'practically consented' to the idea of Japan retaining control of the German colonies north of the equator, while those south of the equator should go to Britain. Lansing 'could make no comment on such an agreement at the present time'.³³ At the end of two months of talks they signed an agreement that also contained a secret protocol in which both parties agreed not to take advantage of the war to seek any rights or privileges in China at the expense of other Allied nations. Meanwhile, like Hughes, the Japanese went about declaring their position on the islands in order to prepare their case before the peace conference. When their delegation arrived at Versailles, they had already struck deals with the UK, French and Italian governments over the islands in return for Japan's support on a range of topics.

There were four options for dealing with the German colonies: restoring them to German control; turning them over to an international commission; annexation by the Allied powers whose forces occupied them; or a system of mandates under the League of Nations. The Admiralty believed that no colonies should be returned to Germany because of the ease with which they could be used as bases for aircraft and submarines.³⁴ Internationalising their administration was not popular with any of the nations concerned, especially Australia, New Zealand and Japan. It was unclear how an international commission might work and it would certainly not meet the security interests of these nations. Borden spoke of the possibility of the United States taking on the Pacific islands as a protectorate or even under direct control. Borden's view was that 'the more it was possible to get the United States to undertake responsibility in world affairs, the better for the world as a whole and for the British Empire'.³⁵ However, he also understood the 'reluctance of the Americans to depart from their historic policy [i.e. isolationism]'.³⁶ The British finally arrived at a diplomatic compromise that Lord Curzon summed up as attempting to secure the interests of the Empire 'by methods which fell short of direct territorial acquisition'.³⁷ The Japanese were also willing to negotiate. Their main interests were not the German possessions in the North Pacific, but those in China. Japan was especially interested in the railways in Kiaochow (Jiaozhou) and the excellent harbour of Tsingtao (Qingdao), together with the other leasing rights the Germans had exercised in Shantung Province.³⁸

When the peace conference began discussing the German colonies in January 1919, the scene was set for confrontation. Wilson's plan called for those areas that had been controlled by the Central Powers, but were not ready for self-determination, to be administered under a form of trusteeship or mandate controlled by the League of Nations. Hughes thought he had the measure of his adversary. Writing to Governor-General Munro Ferguson, he noted Wilson's continuing opposition to Australia's demands for New Guinea, but went on to say that the president might still be persuaded: 'for he is a man firm on nothing that really matters. He regards the League of Nations as the Great Charter of the World that is to be ... Give *him* a League of Nations and he will give *us* all the rest. Good. He shall have his toy!'³⁹

In the case of the Pacific islands and some other German colonies, Wilson wanted them to be administered under international control through the League. By championing this option, he was attempting deal with complex international issues, which he also hoped might solve some domestic political issues in the United States. As *The Age* reported,

President Wilson's firm stand was due to the fear that the Japanese occupation of the Pacific Islands would cause a great outcry in America. [His] predilection

for the internationalisation of the German colonies is based rather on Japan's progress across the Pacific than from a desire to thwart British acquisition of the islands.⁴⁰

When Hughes and William Massey of New Zealand presented their case for outright annexation, they discovered how intent Wilson was on imposing the mandate system. For his part, Wilson was increasingly frustrated by the reluctance of the two Dominions to accept the mandate concept, which might establish a precedent that would allow the Japanese to annex strategic island groups in the north Pacific.⁴¹ A compromise based on the definition for a third type of mandate, the C-class, was proposed by the British Empire delegation as a formula that would satisfy the Australian and New Zealand demands.⁴² Wilson, however, was uncomfortable with C-class mandates, as much for his dislike of Hughes as for his anxiety about the intentions of the Japanese. As he told his confidant Colonel Edward House, his difficulty was 'with the demands of men like Hughes and certain difficulties with Japan. The latter loomed large. A line of islands in her possession would be very dangerous to the US'.⁴³

Hughes, meanwhile, after consulting with his government was under instructions to insist on three points: no international control; the islands should pass to UK control; and that control should be vested in Australia.⁴⁴ The main issues were the strategic position of the islands which, he pointed out, 'lie like ramparts to the north and east' of Australia, and the precise nature of the control that the trustee power would exercise. In particular, he wanted to know whether Australian law, and specifically the legislation that supported the White Australia policy, would apply in New Guinea and the other territories sought by Australia. As initially proposed, the mandated territories would have an open-door policy, to ensure that commercial opportunities were equally available to all nations. This provision was unacceptable to Australia because it would allow Japan access to territories that impinged on its national security. Like Wilson, Lloyd George's main concern with Australia's hardline position was that, in establishing its own right to annexation, it was also making a case that could be used to support Japanese claims.

On 30 January, Hughes and Wilson clashed. Although there is nothing in the official record, several eyewitnesses provide versions. Hughes' biographer Laurence Fitzhardinge says that Wilson asked Hughes whether his refusal to accept the mandate meant that Australia was presenting an ultimatum to 'the whole civilised world'.⁴⁵ Hughes, after fiddling with his hearing aid, replied with a smile, 'That's about the size of it, Mr President. That puts it very well'.⁴⁶ Fitzhardinge reconstructed this exchange from a number of sources and concluded that this reply, which naturally offended Wilson, was the result of Hughes not hearing the question properly. In response to the same question,

*Prime Minister
Hughes with
Lloyd George*

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Massey assured the president that New Zealand was not being provocative. Perhaps seeking clarification, Wilson asked Hughes whether he would set his five million countrymen against the twelve hundred million peoples represented at the conference. Hughes replied, 'I represent sixty thousand dead', words that are now part of Australian folklore.⁴⁷ Lloyd George, trying to defuse the situation, asked Hughes whether missionaries would be allowed unfettered access to an Australian-controlled New Guinea. 'Of course,' Hughes responded. 'I understand

that these poor people are very short of food, and for some time past they have not had enough missionaries'.⁴⁸ While Clemenceau and Lloyd George were amused, Wilson was enraged.

The situation was saved by the South African prime minister, Louis Botha, who appealed to the delegates to keep their focus on the larger purpose of the conference. Lloyd George proposed that the meeting provisionally adopt the resolution on the C-class mandates. This compromise provided Hughes with the security and legal guarantees he wanted without directly acquiring the territories, while Wilson achieved his aim of no annexations and formal recognition of the authority of the League to administer all captured territories. The irony is that both men shared similar goals for the post-war Pacific. It is difficult to deny that the outcomes might have been better had Wilson and Hughes been able to work together. Latham was disapproving of the compromise. Explaining the mandate system for Australian readers, he remarked that, 'In accepting limitations for ourselves, therefore, we were imposing limitations upon others [Japan]. If we had obtained complete freedom for ourselves, others would also have had complete freedom'.⁴⁹ His justification was technically correct, but the restrictions (mainly regarding the rights of the inhabitants, and fortifications) proved difficult to enforce. Nonetheless, it is difficult not to conclude that control of the islands in the North Pacific came easily to Japan as a direct consequence of the campaign by Hughes and Massey for the South Pacific.

'Enmeshed in a web': Diplomatic manoeuvring over the racial equality clause

On 18 January 1919, the Japanese delegation introduced a resolution for the covenant of the League of Nations to include guarantees of racial equality:

The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all alien nationals of States members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality.⁵⁰

The Japanese government probably did not understand the consequences of their proposal, but its wording and the universal pretensions of the League meant that the proposal presented a serious challenge to the international system.⁵¹ In conjunction with national self-determination, the resolution on racial equality would have challenged all colonial powers, including Japan itself: it would infringe on the exercise of Japanese power in China and Korea. It is more likely that the Japanese intended this equality to apply only to its own nationals. For many years before their victory against Russia in 1905, the Japanese had experienced discrimination at the hands of the European powers. Since then they had sustained many lesser snubs, which contributed to a sense of insecurity. The issue of equality resonated strongly with Japanese public opinion, and one Tokyo newspaper pointed out that 'If the discrimination wall is to remain standing, President Wilson will have spoken of peace, justice, and humanity in vain, and he would have proved after all only a hypocrite'.⁵²



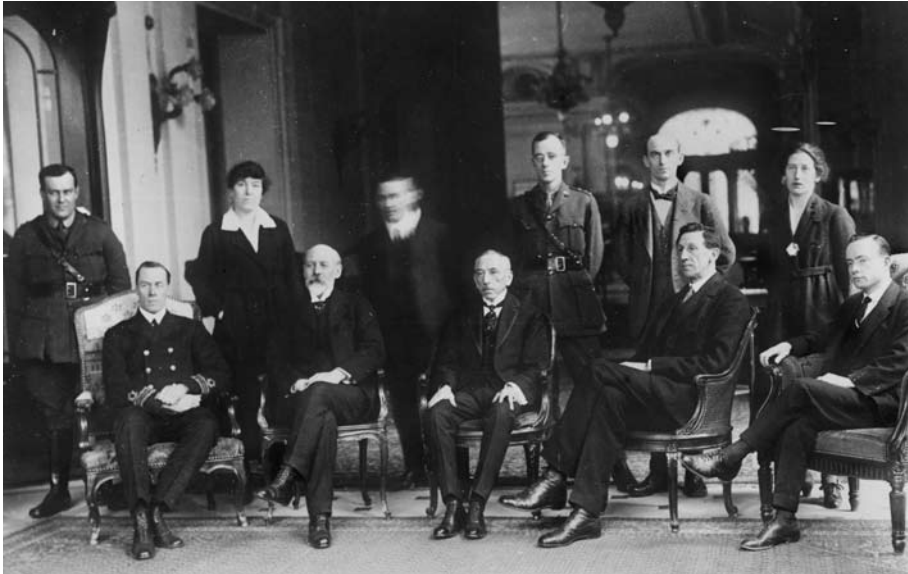
*A meeting of the
British Empire
delegation at Lloyd
George's house in
Paris, 1919*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

For Hughes such a provision would undermine everything he had gained by agreeing to C-class mandates, in particular the ability to apply Australia's Immigration Restriction Act in the islands. The idea of racial equality had both political and strategic implications. The principle of White Australia was to Hughes, as for much of the Australian electorate, a guarantee of national prosperity, social cohesion and security. The general belief was that allowing large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxons to enter Australia would undermine the wages and working conditions of ordinary Australians. Beyond these arguments were fears that a more pluralistic society would be less cohesive. Finally, there were sound political considerations, as Latham reminded his wife: 'No Govt. would live for a day if it tampered with White Australia—Mr Hughes is very fully aware of this'.⁵³

Hughes' opposition aside, support for the resolution was tepid among the US and British Empire delegates. The politically weakened Wilson had to consider the reaction of the west coast states in addition to the hostility with which the southern states would greet such a resolution. Sensitivities over Japanese migration remained strong on Canada's western seaboard, and the South Africans could scarcely countenance such a move.

Japan's behaviour during the war had also engendered suspicions. While its allies were engaged in bitter hostilities with the Central Powers, Japan made no contribution to the conflict in Europe or the Middle East. Japan's treatment of China, an Allied power, also gave cause for alarm. In early 1915, the Japanese government had presented Twenty-one Demands to the weak Chinese government. These demands, later reduced to thirteen, amounted to the virtual negation of Chinese sovereignty. In 1917, attempts by Germany to entice them into an anti-US alliance, together with their expansion into Siberia, had further heightened Allied distrust of the Japanese. Against such views, from a Japanese perspective, the war was essentially a European struggle. There may also have been an element of *Realpolitik* behind the proposal of a resolution that the delegates knew would never be adopted in a forum dominated by European powers. The *New York Times* reported on 25 March 1919 that some politicians believed that the Japanese resolution might empower the League to intervene in domestic matters such as US immigration laws. The same article suggested that the resolution represented an element of 'jockeying' by Japan to preserve its concessions in China. Later, the Japanese would achieve their objectives in China by simply linking participation in the peace conference and, ultimately, membership of the League of Nations to possession of Shantung. In order to resolve 'a crisis that threatened the success of the plan to secure permanent peace', Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George were forced to concede to the Japanese demands for Shantung.⁵⁴



The Australian delegation and staff in Paris, 1919

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Seated L–R:
Lieutenant
Commander John
Latham, Sir Joseph
Cook, W.M. Hughes,
Robert Garran,
Lieutenant P.E.
Deane

Standing L–R:
Frederick Eggleston,
Miss E. Carter,
Mr R. Mungovan,
Captain H.S. Gullett,
Mr W.E. Corrigan,
Miss Wood

Japan's motives were complex, as were the negotiations. Debate dragged on through February, March and April, with Hughes staunchly opposed. In an effort to reach agreement the Japanese redrafted their proposal several times and held meetings with key opponents and supporters. Hughes cabled the acting prime minister, Watt, 'We are being enmeshed in a web from which I find no way of freeing ourselves'.⁵⁵ Hughes would face an election in late 1919 and, as Latham noted, his government could not hope to survive if the principle of White Australia had been diminished. Although the Monroe Doctrine was far less controversial than the White Australia policy, Wilson had sought and received exemption for it under Article XXI of the covenant of the League of Nations.⁵⁶

Although France and some other European powers were disposed to support the Japanese resolution, it was not possible to satisfy all parties, in particular the Dominions. The United States, though less vocal, was not happy either. Colonel House recorded that Hughes was the main stumbling block, but added, 'It has taken considerable finesse to lift the load from our shoulders and place it upon the British, but happily it has been done. This ought to make for better relations between Japan and the United States'.⁵⁷ In the end it was President Wilson who had to stymie the Japanese resolution. After a vote on the Japanese proposal (eleven of sixteen delegates were in favour), Wilson as chairman declared that the motion could not be adopted as the vote was not unanimous. The UK diplomat Harold Nicolson observed, 'the President had, by the skin of his teeth, been rescued by Mr. Hughes of Australia'.⁵⁸

Soon after the vote Hughes gave an interview to a Japanese journalist denying that the proposal had failed solely as a result of his efforts and explaining the White Australia policy in economic and social terms.⁵⁹ As he cabled Watt, 'Japanese say that Wilson said rejection was entirely owing to Australia's opposition and that he was personally quite in favour of it. He is Mr. Facing-both-ways'.⁶⁰

The peace of the world, 1919

Hughes left Versailles with a reputation for obduracy. Wilson could not abide him; Secretary of State Lansing considered him 'a great bore'; and he had argued forcefully with Lloyd George over issues that touched on Australia's interests. Clemenceau placed Hughes in the first rank as 'the noble delegate from Australia, with whom we had to talk through an electrophone, getting in return symphonies of good sense'.⁶¹ His style of negotiation may have lacked subtlety but, when forced to compromise, he achieved outcomes that advanced Australia's long-term interests. By championing individual representation for the Dominions, Hughes gained the flexibility to act independently, while retaining the benefits of imperial connections. He used that independence to achieve mandatory control over New Guinea and the principle of White Australia. Wilson too had had to compromise his ideals, especially his policy of no annexations, to get support for the League of Nations. Lloyd George got a substantial reparations settlement, Clemenceau was given control of the Saar region as part of a security guarantee for France, and Shantung was ceded to Japan. As Wilson left France, he told his wife: 'no one is satisfied, it makes me hope that we have made a just peace; but it is all in the lap of the gods'.⁶²

The president's address at the dedication of the Suresnes American War Cemetery in late May 1919 indicates the strength of his attachment to the Fourteen Points. Regardless of—indeed, perhaps because of—the public squabbling during the conference, Wilson believed that

[the] private counsels of statesmen cannot now and cannot hereafter determine the destinies of nations ... This is an age which looks forward, not backward; which rejects the standards of national selfishness that once governed the counsels of nations and demands that they shall give way to a new order of things ...⁶³

Hughes had little faith in that new order. He had wanted a Monroe Doctrine for the Pacific, or some other great power guarantee for the regional status quo. He was suspicious of internationalism and particularly the ability of the League of Nations to arbitrate world affairs. For similar reasons, the United States Congress did not ratify the treaty and the United States never joined

the League. Yet Wilson's vision for the League and his hope that it could bring about the limitation of arms and enforce good conduct and open diplomacy had a powerful influence in world affairs in the post-war years.

'The peaceful waters of the Pacific have been turned into a boiling cauldron'

When Hughes returned to Australia he had to defend his actions because, as he told the parliament, his 'attitude as well as [his] utterances have been much misrepresented'.⁶⁴ He gave an extended explanation of all that had been achieved in terms of reparations, the New Guinea mandate and the principle of White Australia. He concluded:

If the fruits of victory are to be measured by national safety and liberty, and the high ideals for which these boys died, the sacrifice has not been in vain. They died for the safety of Australia. Australia is safe. They died for liberty, and liberty is now assured to us and all men. They have made for themselves and their country a name that will not die.⁶⁵

The fine rhetoric did not satisfy everyone. The Labor member for Cook, James Catts, spearheaded criticism of Hughes. Catts was at pains to condemn the prime minister for his general conduct and for creating a situation in which Australia was 'in an infinitely worse position strategically than it was at the outbreak of war'.⁶⁶ Labor still bitterly resented Hughes' championing of conscription and the damage which that divisive campaign had done to the party. Personal animus aside, Catts believed that as a result of the war, 'the peaceful waters of the Pacific have been turned into a boiling cauldron'.⁶⁷ In particular, he blamed Hughes because 'the effect of the settlement made in the Peace Treaty is that Australia has taken its frontiers northward to Rabaul, but the frontier of Japan has been brought southward 3,000 miles to the equator, until their front door and our back door almost adjoin'—something that he felt endangered, rather than secured, the White Australia policy.⁶⁸

Catts also drew the attention of the minister for the navy, Joseph Cook, to developments that seemed to give credence to Admiral Mahan's prophecy: 'the Pacific is the theatre of the next world's war'.⁶⁹ The United Kingdom was transferring battleships to the Pacific; Japan was building eight new 40,000-ton capital ships and had plans to spend £35 million on fortifications in the Pacific; the Americans had a fleet of 175 vessels visiting Pacific ports. He reminded the members that, as a result of a recent visit by Lord Jellicoe, Australia would soon have to find three times its pre-war expenditure for naval defence, a sum of around £5 million.

Jellicoe's report confirmed that 'sea power had saved the Empire' and that control of sea communications during any conflict was a problem for 'the Empire as a whole'.⁷⁰ His visit had been part of a year-long mission to the Dominions to create a more coordinated and financially sustainable approach to the naval defence of the Empire. Jellicoe told the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

The Pacific ... was growing in importance everyday, and it contained great possibilities of trouble. There were elements which might give rise to future international complications ... We would be ill-advised if we listen to any suggestion that there is no occasion to be in a hurry to get our defences into proper order.⁷¹

From Labor's perspective, Australia would gain nothing economically or strategically from New Guinea. Catts went so far as to suggest that Australia was 'in a worse position ... than when the war broke out'.⁷² He said that the United States and the United Kingdom did not trust 'this League of Nations' business' and later berated Hughes for not acceding to Wilson's suggestion that all the German islands be turned into a buffer state under the control of the League.⁷³ As government members pointed out, international control was useless if the US president 'did not take up his responsibility in it'.⁷⁴ The US commitment was, at that moment, undecided. Wilson was touring the mid-West to garner support for the Treaty of Versailles after the Senate had postponed a vote on its ratification. By the time Congress rejected the treaty and United States' membership of the League in March 1920, Wilson was bedridden from a stroke and politically ineffective.

Despite much goodwill and hard work, the League of Nations was unable to deliver on its promise of peace. It became increasingly clear that Australia's security was still tied to that of the Empire. However, two factors would shape imperial defence policy after the war: the financial burden of the war (later compounded by the Great Depression), and the problem of coordinating security arrangements. In the immediate post-war years it was difficult to discern anything beyond vague threats. During the debate for funding the Royal Navy in 1919, the chancellor of the exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, gave the parliament this appreciation of the situation in the Far East:

Japan may be suspected by some to have ambitious designs in the Pacific which in the long run will bring her into collision with this country. But apart from the difficulties of her relations with the United States of America, the improbability that she could go to war with Great Britain without also bringing in the United States of America, and the fact that she has remained loyal to the alliance [the Anglo-Japanese alliance had been renewed in 1911] despite all temptations during the war ... *A coupe de main* by Japan, if such were contemplated, could

not be anticipated by any Fleet action even under the intended Admiralty disposition of the Fleet, and an interval would have to intervene during which we should collect our ships for an Eastern expedition.⁷⁵

The appreciation was accepted by the government for reasons that had more to do with finance than strategic planning. By 1920, financial problems were a pressing concern. In June, the *New York Times* reported that Australia's per capita debt was \$387, the United Kingdom's \$850 and Canada's \$159.⁷⁶ In response to the debt crisis the UK government created a Committee on National Expenditure chaired by Admiral Sir Eric Geddes. After a review of public spending, drastic economies were recommended. The armed forces budget would be cut from £190 million to £111 million in 1922–1923.⁷⁷

Financial constraints were biting deep in Australia too, but Hughes had another problem. In July he wrote to Lord Milner, the colonial secretary, complaining that his government had not been informed 'whether Britain approves the whole or any part of Lord Jellicoe's scheme, nor has it any information as to the intentions of New Zealand, South Africa, Canada in regard to this or any naval policy'.⁷⁸ The coordination of national defence policies of the Dominions with imperial defence had become increasingly important, especially since Jellicoe's report advocated a new fleet base at Singapore, not Sydney. What would this decision mean for Australia?

In a speech in September, Hughes expressed his doubts of the ability of the embryonic League of Nations to preserve the territorial integrity of its members. In an unstable international situation, he believed that to rely on isolation was meaningless. Indeed, Australia had an obligation to provide for its own security and, echoing Deakin, he told the parliament that 'to live as a free people, we must be prepared to defend ourselves'.⁷⁹ The individual Dominions were responsible for their own land and air defences. However, as a trading nation with a small population, Australia was dependent on the sea for its commerce and on the Royal Navy for the defence of its trade and territory. Although the government's planned outlay for the navy in 1920–1921 was a very modest £3,959,991, he hoped that an Imperial Defence Conference would devise a scheme 'in which we shall be able to co-operate and do our share. Under that scheme we anticipate that there will be expected from us a given quota, and that there will be allotted to us and the other Dominions a given sphere of operations'.⁸⁰

'Practical and urgent problems': The 1921 Imperial Conference

In October 1920 Hughes cabled London suggesting that it was 'absolutely essential that Dominion prime ministers should meet in London next year', citing the need not to continue to 'drift along' and '... the necessity for a

clear understanding ... on certain matters vitally affecting the Empire'.⁸¹ Lord Milner was receptive and sent the cable on to Lloyd George, noting that such a meeting would enable the governments to continue the communications 'so profitably established during the war'. While not seeking to alter the machinery of that process, Milner believed that an Imperial Conference would enable the Empire 'to discuss and settle on the basis of our existing institutions the various practical and urgent problems which affect the Dominions and the Mother Country, and to ensure harmony and co-operation between them'.⁸²

Milner's point about 'existing institutions' was important. Imperial Conferences had started to develop into the main forum for altering the constitutional arrangements between Britain and the Dominions. In 1917, the Imperial War Conference had proposed a special Imperial Conference of the Dominion governments to review the constitutional arrangements of the Empire. In particular there was a need to consider how the autonomy of the Dominions could be recognised and how they might be given adequate representation in imperial foreign policy. The 1921 conference was not convened for this purpose, but rather, as the colonial secretary noted, because at such meetings, 'More business can be done ... in a week than in months and years of telegrams back and forwards'.⁸³

When the Dominion prime ministers gathered in mid-1921, there were many serious issues to consider. The problem of coordination was a key issue, particularly in foreign policy and defence. The war had altered the relationship between London and the Dominions, making it impossible for decisions made by the UK government to be binding on the self-governing nations. Although all the governments had recognised this fact, they had not settled on any means of dealing with it. Discussions during the Imperial Conference of 1921 were the first steps towards the constitutional arrangements set out in the Balfour Declaration in 1926, which formalised the autonomous status of the Dominions.⁸⁴ In 1921, the prime ministers formulated a declaration of principle that recognised the need to give India and the Dominions a voice in the Empire's policies via an Imperial Cabinet. The prime ministers' declaration specifically referred to 'a single foreign policy for the whole British Empire, combined with a co-operative system of organisation for defence'.⁸⁵

Despite this move towards cooperation, when discussions turned to defence, serious differences became apparent. Among the many aspects of foreign policy discussed were three that touched on Australia's interests in the Pacific: a naval construction program for imperial defence; the Empire's relationships with the United States and Japan; and the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty.

The imperial naval construction program was discussed on 19 July, when it was agreed that the Royal Navy needed to maintain a fighting strength the



The prime minister of New Zealand, William Massey (left), supported Hughes' claims for the former German colonies in the South Pacific

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equal of 'any other naval power'.⁸⁶ This new policy became known as 'the one-power standard' and was another indication of the serious decline in imperial finances.⁸⁷ The individual prime ministers stated their support for the concept, but it soon became apparent that their support was qualified. Massey said that New Zealand was happy to pay its share. Hughes agreed, but wanted the meeting to adopt a formula using a per capita contribution based on the white population of each Dominion. Arthur Meighen of Canada was loath to agree, since the bulk of Canada's trade was not seaborne and there was no need for naval escorts in time of war. Jan Smuts of South Africa pointed out that there were elements in the South African population who would use such a policy as an excuse to press for secession from the Empire. On this basis he could only agree to expenditure for the defence of his Dominion, but not a broad scheme of imperial defence. India had similar reservations.

The following day, during a discussion on funding the naval construction program, Meighen explained his position. It would not be possible to get a scheme, such as the one proposed by Hughes, through Canada's parliament 'under the present world conditions', especially as it would be seen as a compulsory contribution to imperial defence. Disturbed by such special pleading, Hughes asked 'by what right the Dominions sat in this conference and discussed questions of foreign policy if they did not contribute towards sea power, which was the basis of Empire?'⁸⁸ He reminded his colleagues that, while land defence was the responsibility of the individual Dominions, 'the empire

as a whole depended on sea power, which was the basis of our whole foreign policy'.⁸⁹ Australia would be able to contribute to the Royal Navy if India and the other Dominions did so, but if they did not, 'Australia would not be able to do anything'.⁹⁰

Smuts broke this impasse by proposing that the funds for naval construction be charged against the reparations paid by Germany to the Empire before it was divided between the Dominions. This idea circumvented domestic political problems; it would allow for the £60 million required to build eight new capital ships between 1922 and 1926, and include £500,000 per year for the construction and maintenance of other equipment such as submarines, floating docks and aircraft carriers.

Projected imperial naval expenditure, 1921–26⁹¹

Nation	Annual expenditure (£)
United Kingdom	14,200,000
Canada	740,000
Australia	740,000
New Zealand	295,000
South Africa	102,000
India	204,000
Total	16,000,000

Meighen was the only dissenter, again on the basis of domestic politics. He noted that British Columbia had a need for naval defence that could be compared to that of Australia, but the other Canadian provinces did not. On 22 July, Hughes informed his colleagues that funding the Royal Navy's requirements for imperial defence could only proceed on the basis of all, or none, participating.

At this point, just as a serious rift was appearing, it was decided to postpone any resolution on naval expenditure until after the Conference on Naval Limitation in Washington, DC, proposed by the president of the United States, Warren Harding, on 8 July. Harding's invitation was timely. Before the Washington conference was mooted, the prime ministers had been discussing the Empire's relationship with the United States and how that connection might be affected by the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Naval Treaty. The security of the Pacific was at stake in all three issues. They were vital to Australia, and Hughes naturally played a significant role in the subsequent debates.

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty and imperial relations with the United States

In his opening statement to the conference on 20 June 1921, Lloyd George explained that the principal question confronting imperial foreign policy was ‘the relations of the Empire with the United States and Japan’.⁹² Addressing the prime ministers at a later meeting, the foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, recounted recent problems in relations between the United States and the United Kingdom. Following the Senate’s refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and President Wilson’s prolonged illness, ‘official relations with the American Government almost ceased to exist, and for ten months we practically did no business with America at all’.⁹³ While there were no disputes, the withdrawal of the United States from the affairs of Europe and the League of Nations had left the Empire with little support. In March 1921, the Harding administration had announced its intention to stand aloof from the League, make a separate peace with Germany and plan an International Association to promote peace. Rather than joining a permanent organisation such as the League, Harding believed that it was possible to settle international problems at special conferences. As Curzon noted, it was the policy of the British Empire to encourage US participation in world affairs. However, as a Foreign Office memorandum on the Anglo-Japanese alliance noted, while the Empire’s relationship with the United States was paramount, in spite of their similarity of interests it was not possible ‘to count with certainty upon the active cooperation of the United States’.⁹⁴

In reaction to the policies of President Wilson and US participation in the world war, the Republican Party was pursuing a traditional policy of isolationism, while supporting the ideal of world peace and a limited internationalism. To this paradoxical end, the International Conference on Naval Limitation was strongly supported by Republican Senator William E. Borah, a prominent isolationist. During Wilson’s presidency Borah had led a group of senators known as the ‘Irreconcilables’ for their opposition to the Versailles Treaty and the League. He felt that the Washington Disarmament Conference might act as an alternative to the League by limiting naval armaments and maintaining the status quo in the Pacific. The Senate’s support for discussing disarmament with the United Kingdom and Japan did not mean that the United States would curb its construction program, which aimed at creating the most powerful fleet in the world.

The UK consul-general in New York advised the Foreign Office that the Harding administration had embarked on a policy of stationing the bulk of US naval forces in the Pacific. The policy recognised that the United States’ primary interests were now in Asia and the Pacific, but in order not to alarm Japan, the build-up of forces would be slow and incremental. Each new ship would be

ordered into the Pacific, while the older types and reserve vessels would be left in the Atlantic. The report pointed out the impact of this policy for imperial defence planning: 'Britain must acknowledge ... the naval superiority of the United States in the Pacific. Australia, New Zealand and Canada must recognise the ground of common interest with the United States and look to this country for protection rather than Great Britain'.⁹⁵

Meanwhile, the Americans were determined to use every advantage to ensure that the Washington Conference resolved matters to their satisfaction. As *The Times* of London reported, the secretary of the United States Navy, Edwin Denby, stated that there would be no suspension in the navy's construction program 'pending the assembly of the Washington Disarmament Conference'.⁹⁶ On the same day his cabinet colleague Andrew Mellon, secretary of the Treasury, announced the suspension of all negotiations with foreign governments seeking to refinance their debts until the disarmament conference commenced. Mellon had also told journalists 'that a reduction in expenditure on armaments by foreign governments would enable them to pay their debts to the United States and put the world back on its feet'.⁹⁷ These pronouncements seemed to confirm the worst fears of Sir Auckland Geddes, the UK ambassador, who warned that the Harding administration intended 'to prevent us from paying our debts by sending goods to America and they look for an opportunity to treat us as a vassal State so long as the debt remains unpaid'.⁹⁸

Following the announcement of the Washington Disarmament Conference, the focus of the imperial prime ministers in London switched from naval finances to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It was known that the Americans viewed

the treaty as a menace to their interests in the Far East and the Pacific. From the US perspective, the Washington Conference opened the possibility of striking some new arrangement with Japan and the United Kingdom that would limit naval forces in the Pacific. An agreement of this type would also relieve the United States of the burden of fortifying its island possessions. The prime ministers, although divided on the benefits of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, reckoned that it would require some alteration to dispel US concerns if it was to continue beyond 1921. Meighen believed that the treaty



*Edmund Piesse,
Director of the
Pacific Branch*

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should be abandoned to avoid any remote possibility of conflict between the United Kingdom and the United States. Canada's proximity gave it a heightened sensitivity to US opinion, as well as a tendency to define its security in terms of an Atlantic, rather than a Pacific perspective. For Hughes and Massey the treaty was an insurance policy, albeit flimsy, for the interests of their own Dominions and those of the Empire. In early 1921, the director of the Pacific Branch in the Prime Minister's Department, Edmund Piesse, had advised Hughes that renewal of the treaty did provide some security against Japanese aggression. Piesse, who took a far more optimistic view of Japan than the prime minister, nevertheless concluded,

It seems probable that Australia's safety (assuming that Japan is ever likely to menace it) is no better secured if the Alliance be renewed than if it be terminated; but that we might use the negotiations for a renewal as an opportunity of settling pending questions, and that with a renewed Alliance the settlement of minor questions would probably be much easier.⁹⁹

The Australian and New Zealand leaders favoured negotiations to modify the treaty in order to make it acceptable to the United States, as had happened in 1911. As Hughes asked the Imperial Conference,

What is the substantial alternative to the renewal of the Treaty? The answer is that there is none. If Australia was asked whether she would prefer America or Japan as an Ally, her choice would be America. But that choice is not offered her ... to the call of our young democracy in its remote isolation, there is no answer. Now let me speak plainly to Mr Meighen on behalf of Australia. I, for one, will vote against any renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance upon one condition and one only, and that is that America gives us that assurance of safety which our circumstances demand.¹⁰⁰

In a closely argued memorandum, the Foreign Office had outlined the main points for and against renewal. The memorandum noted that as a defensive alliance, the treaty was not inconsistent with Article XXI of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The major problem for the Empire was that the interests of the United States and Japan 'clash at every point and the future of the Far East, and the future of the Pacific is likely to become more and more the theatre of rivalry between these two countries'.¹⁰¹ For the Empire,

Our future course lies between our ally with whom our interests conflict, and our friend who is united to us by race, tradition, community of interests and ideals. It will be difficult for us to steer a straight course, both parties will no doubt reproach us, as they have done in the past, for not giving them more whole-hearted support against the other, but this course ... must be steered, our interests demand it.¹⁰²

The US position was clear. The secretary of state, Charles Evans Hughes, had told Geddes that 'he viewed the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in any form with disquietude'.¹⁰³ The British still felt that the US attitude to renewal did not outweigh the benefits of standing by their established relationship with Japan. Nevertheless, as the British recognised, Japan's main incentive was to secure the United Kingdom's support in the event of war with the United States. There could be no question of such an obligation, but making that clear to Japan 'remove[d] the greatest inducement which she might have to renewal'.¹⁰⁴ To Japan the importance of the treaty was largely symbolic, recognising its status as a great power.

One reason why the Foreign Office favoured renewal was that a formal diplomatic relationship might act as a restraint by exercising 'a certain amount of pressure on Japan'.¹⁰⁵ Reinforcing the case for renewal was the Empire's need for economy in defence expenditure and the consequences for UK interests in China, India and the Far East if the alliance lapsed. In this scenario the United Kingdom saw its best chance as steering a course between the United States and Japan in the Pacific. London also felt that a settlement with the United States would serve its interests better.

In late June, Geddes received from the Americans a detailed statement of their objections to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Essentially, the United States believed that the alliance encouraged Japan to pursue an aggressive policy of exclusive control in China and Manchuria. With this in mind, Geddes and Secretary of State Hughes agreed on a formula for cooperation in the Far East based on the abrogation of the UK alliance with Japan and its replacement by a tripartite pact—the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan—aimed at stabilising the political situation in line with UK and US aims, in particular the open-door policy in China.¹⁰⁶

Reflecting on the position of Australia and New Zealand, the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill, noted their preference for an alliance with the United States, which would be 'overwhelmingly effective' especially since there was 'no danger of the United States attacking Australia or New Zealand'.¹⁰⁷ Yet he recognised that

An alliance between the British Empire and Japan for the purpose of protecting Australia and New Zealand against Japan is meaningless except as far as it may subsequently produce other combinations in the world. If there is a political enemy of whom I am afraid I might go to a stronger friend for help against this enemy; but it would not be much use going to the enemy himself and saying, Help me to protect myself from you. That is very naïve ... Getting Japan to protect you against Japan is like drinking salt water to slake thirst.¹⁰⁸

Churchill's analysis highlights the vulnerability of the British Empire in Asia and the Pacific, without admitting that there was no practical alternative open to Australia and New Zealand. The Empire was hard pressed to protect its interests in the Pacific, let alone provide for the security of the Dominions. For all the hours of deliberation and debate, it was not possible for the Imperial Conference to reach a decision, either on the treaty's future or on financing the Royal Navy's construction. Both issues had to be postponed because of the US invitation to participate in the Washington Conference. The Empire's relationship with the United States, the security of the Pacific Dominions and the size of the Royal Navy would all depend on the outcome of that conference.

'Pending questions': The problem of the Pacific

With the prime ministers still in London, Lloyd George proposed to the Americans a preliminary conference to discuss Pacific and Far Eastern affairs before naval disarmament was addressed in Washington. When Hughes saw that the discussions at the Imperial Conference would be inconclusive on the issues of Australia's naval defence and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, his instincts led him to seek a public arena in order to address what he called the problem of the Pacific.

Unable to settle such issues in London, he appealed to a US audience. At a meeting of the American Luncheon Club, he urged a preliminary conference in which the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan could come to an agreement in regard to the Pacific. The *New York Times* reported that Hughes urged all three powers to reach a settlement in the Pacific before coming to Washington; otherwise he believed that there was no hope for successful discussions on disarmament. As a nation with vital interests in the outcome of such a meeting, Hughes explained Australia's circumstances:

up to the present she had lived under the protection of the British navy and under the shelter of the alliance with another great Pacific power, Japan. He objected strongly to placing these considerations in the background and he urged the necessity of America remembering that Japan had special interests in the Pacific and considering her point of view.¹⁰⁹

Hughes' response was consistent with his policy at Versailles. His first priority was the defence of Australia and its Pacific interests. He recognised that his aims might be achieved by acknowledging Japan's aspirations and even assisting it to satisfy them through mediation in an international forum.

The Americans, however, rejected any proposal for a preliminary conference. In the first instance, they pointed out that there would be little time to prepare an agenda that would be agreeable to Japan, China, France or Italy. Their

strongest objections were based on how such a meeting might be viewed by a domestic audience. It was felt that the American people would likely see such a conference as side-tracking the disarmament question and that London was not a suitable venue 'in the light of relations between Japan and Great Britain'.¹¹⁰ The United States did not oppose any consultations prior to the arms limitation conference, but the Americans were suspicious that the United Kingdom and Japan might arrive at some agreement prior to the Washington meeting that would jeopardise its successful outcome. The British Empire delegates dropped the proposal in early August.¹¹¹

The Washington Conference, 1921–1922

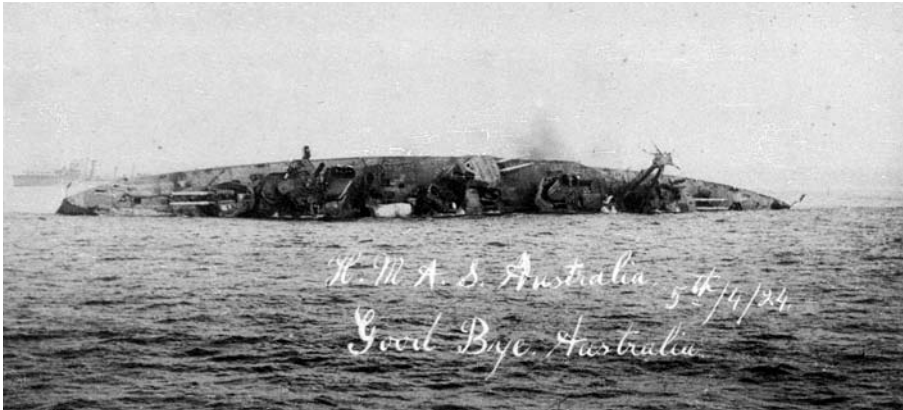
When the International Conference on Naval Limitation convened in Washington in November 1921, public expectations in several countries were focused on disarmament, rather than a diplomatic settlement of the issues confronting the Pacific and the Far East. Such expectations created difficulties. The Americans wanted to formalise the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, if only so that their navy would not have to maintain a fleet equal to the combined forces of the British and Japanese. The Chinese were also keen to see the end of the treaty and to secure guarantees for their sovereignty against Japanese encroachment. The Japanese were suffering recession and welcomed arms reduction. Their strategists had concluded that any war would present Japan with a dilemma. The lesson of World War I was that it would be a drawn-out conflict; the only chance of success was a rapid victory. This logic had led the Japanese to begin the naval construction program that had sparked the arms race which the Washington Conference was intended to stop.

*The arrival of
the imperial
delegation for the
International
Conference on
Naval Limitation,
Union Station,
Washington, DC,
November 1921*

DEPARTMENT OF
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TRADE

*L– R: Sir
Auckland
Geddes (British
Ambassador to
the US), Lord
Lee Fareham, Sir
Maurice Hankey,
Lord Cavan, Rt
Hon. Arthur J.
Balfour (leader of
the delegation),
Charles Evans
Hughes (US
Secretary of State),
Senator Rt Hon.
George F. Pearce
(delegate for the
Dominion of
Australia)*





The scuttling of HMAS Australia off Sydney in 1924 was one of the outcomes of the Washington Naval Treaty

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For Australia, the failure of the Imperial Conference meant that the negotiations in Washington were shrouded in uncertainty. In addition to disarmament, the conference needed to resolve a number of problems bearing on its national security. The first obstacle for the Australians was that Harding's invitation did not include separate representation for the Pacific Dominions. While this problem was solved by forming a British Empire delegation, it meant that Australia would be bound by any agreements made by the United Kingdom. Concerns that the Empire's needs would take precedence over those of Australia saw Hughes being asked in parliament 'whether he would be prepared to fight the world over White Australia' if the Japanese raised the prospect of renouncing the policy as a condition of naval limitation.¹¹² Hughes' response was to nominate Senator George Pearce as the leader of the Australian delegation. Pearce had been minister for defence and was known for his strong anti-Japanese views. He was assisted by Piesse of the Prime Minister's department, and George Knowles was his legal adviser.¹¹³

The Americans began the negotiations with a major initiative on naval disarmament. At the plenary session on 12 November, Secretary of State Hughes stunned the delegates by proposing a detailed plan for naval arms reduction. His scheme for a capital ship ratio of 10:10:6 for the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan called for the scrapping of nearly two million tons of warships and a ten-year moratorium on construction.

Despite the suspicions of the foreign delegates, the negotiations in the following months resulted in the signing of the Five-Power Naval Limitation Treaty. Even though such ships as the cruisers *Australia* and *New Zealand* were scrapped under this treaty, the general reduction in naval armaments and the resulting savings made it satisfactory to all the contracting parties. The moratorium benefited the Empire, which could not have kept up with the United States. The Japanese government was pleased, since avoiding naval competition

with the United States decreased the likelihood of war between them. The more militant naval officers were not pleased by the 60 per cent reduction in capital ships. One reason why the US negotiators were so successful was that the Japanese diplomatic codes had been decrypted by MI-8, an organisation funded by the army and the State Department. Secretary Hughes was able to obtain agreement on the reduction of Japanese capital ships because he was reading their negotiating position before he went into each day's session.¹¹⁴

For Australia, the most important accord was the Four-Power or Quadruple Treaty. The signatories—Britain, France, Japan and the United States—agreed to submit any disputes among themselves over Pacific issues to resolution at a conference. The Quadruple Treaty replaced the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and as such it had to satisfy the requirements of all parties. The treaty zone was narrow—it excluded Australia, New Zealand and the mandated islands north and south of the equator; Japan's home islands, Korea, China; and the west coasts of the United States and Canada. The absence of reference to any domestic issues (such as migration) and alliance obligations would aid the passage of the treaty through the US Senate.

In reality the Four-Power Treaty was simply a compact to respect each other's rights and convene a conference to settle disputes. Piesse embraced it wholeheartedly, reassured by the fact that Japan had in effect recognised the White Australia policy and signalled that it had 'no aggressive intentions towards us'.¹¹⁵ He felt that the treaty promised peace in the Pacific at least for the ten years it would be in force. Once again he optimistically believed that the settlement 'might well justify us in abandoning much of our preparation for defence'.¹¹⁶ One reason for this sanguinity was the cooperative attitude of the Japanese delegates. Significantly, the issue of racial equality had not been raised. Moreover, if the nine treaties signed in Washington were an indication of future intent, Japan had freely entered into agreements that included naval disarmament, respect for China's borders and an undertaking to withdraw from Shantung and Siberia.¹¹⁷

Peace in the Pacific

In his report on the conference, Senator George Pearce, leader of the Australian delegation, concluded:

The less obvious, but nevertheless very real, results, include the greatly improved understanding among nations which the Conference produced. At the outset there was apparent a feeling of distrust and suspicion, but as the Conference proceeded, and particularly after the conclusion of the Quadruple Treaty relating to the Pacific, a much better feeling prevailed ...¹¹⁸



The Washington Conference in session, 1922

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Pearce told the parliament that the conference marked a new era of peaceful development in Australia's relations with Asia. In the past he had 'suspected Japan and her intentions in the Pacific', but after observing the Japanese in Washington, he was convinced that they were determined to avoid the 'isolation from the rest of the world' that had befallen Germany. He now believed that Japan should be considered a 'peaceful' power that did not harbour designs on Australia.¹¹⁹

Prime Minister Hughes was more sceptical. When he presented the treaties to parliament for ratification, he said that although the agreements had some merit they lacked provisions for enforcement. As with the League of Nations, Hughes did not feel able to put his faith in agreements that relied upon moral force alone. He concluded that Australia was still dependent on the Royal Navy and its own resources for security.¹²⁰

An important, but overlooked, consequence of the Washington Conference was that it accepted the one-power standard for the Royal Navy. Parity with the United States meant that it was not possible for the United Kingdom to maintain a strong fleet in the Far East and the Pacific in peacetime. The British insisted that if there was a need, a fleet would be sent to Singapore. This concept, which became known as 'the main fleet to Singapore', was the justification for the unhurried development of the Singapore naval base between 1921 and 1938.¹²¹

In the decade following the Washington Conference the focus of much of Australia's limited defence spending was on the type of coordinated imperial defence policy that the Admiralty had sought at the 1921 Imperial Conference.

The burdens of this program would be shared between Britain and the Dominions, although Canada decided to abolish its sea-going squadron. In 1922–1923 Australia committed only £2,563,025 for the needs of the Royal Australian Navy, a reduction of over £500 million on the previous year's budget.¹²² This was the beginning of a broader trend of retrenchment in defence spending foreshadowed in the governor-general's speech at the opening of parliament in June 1922: 'In view of the results attained at the Washington Conference which, my advisers believe, guarantee peace in the Pacific for some time to come, it is proposed to reduce the establishment of the Navy and Army, and postpone the expansion of the Air Force'.¹²³

The Washington Conference was an outstanding success for US diplomacy. The treaties were largely successful in halting a naval arms race for the ten years that they were in force. By establishing a basis for cooperation among the great powers in the Pacific, the Washington Conference also provided Australia with the security guarantees it had long sought. Japan too, despite the reservations of its admirals, gained important security benefits. In particular, the agreement by the United Kingdom and the United States not to fortify bases in the western Pacific enhanced Japan's strategic position in Asia. In the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia the signing of the treaties reassured populations traumatised by the world war. The prevailing mood and the significance of the treaties is reflected in an article in the March 1922 issue of the *Political Science Quarterly*. Alden Abbott of the College of the Pacific in San Jose, California, concluded:

All agitation for disarmament, when accompanied by a determination and an effort to bring about the more fundamental 'moral disarmament', will help to bring about the outlawing of war ... The splendid enthusiasm to get rid of the intolerable burden and menacing danger of vast armaments has risen higher and spread farther ... than ever before. This enthusiasm must be harnessed, capitalised—regardless of means or agency—to help save civilisation from the impending peril of a fatal war.¹²⁴

In a similar vein, on 17 November 1921 the Commonwealth Senate sent 'deepest congratulations' to President Harding and the attending nations as they embarked upon their negotiations. In grandiose terms, the Senators applauded

[the] mighty work ... in bringing to an end the reign of destructive strife amongst men and leading them to believe that peace and goodwill have still a meaning for them; and trusts most earnestly that the good work so auspiciously begun will be steadfastly pursued until the Temple of Janus is permanently closed for troubled mankind.¹²⁵

The voice of Cassandra

Not everyone was as sanguine. Frederick Eggleston, a Victorian state parliamentarian with a keen interest in international affairs, pointed out that the carefully negotiated quotas for capital ships re-established a balance of power in international relations.¹²⁶ Moreover, he feared that a future grouping of powers would make the UK allocation inadequate for imperial defence. In such a scenario, he believed that the United Kingdom could not rely upon 'the temper of national feeling in America', which was 'firmly convinced of the decadence of Europe'. Many Americans thought that 'European policy should be dominated by the fact that Europe owes America money'.¹²⁷ This same idea held true for the United Kingdom, whose policy of friendship towards the United States was seen as motivated by war debts, rather than shared interests. He also believed that such attitudes showed how ill-informed the average American was on European affairs. For Eggleston the greatest threat to international stability was the way in which such attitudes shaped US foreign policy: 'It is inefficient because mass opinion in America dominates the conduct of policy, and mass opinion is easily mobilised by the Press, is influenced by an inflamed national feeling, and is ill informed'.¹²⁸ Turning to Asia, he saw no reason for an end to Japan's ambitions in China and few material restraints to curb them. Without US support, the whole Washington system could easily be circumvented. He concluded that, despite the many positive outcomes of the Washington Conference, the world was still dangerous and unstable, especially for a small, exposed nation such as Australia, 'the weakest link in the chain of Empire [that could] only watch the play of the forces upon which her fate depended'.¹²⁹

Another voice expressing caution was Hughes'. The federal election of December 1922 gave the Country Party the balance of power; its leader Earle Page refused to work with Hughes, who had to yield to a coalition led by Stanley Bruce with Page as his deputy and treasurer. Hughes had hopes of returning to the leadership, but for the moment he was out of power and his views were out of favour with the electorate. His biographer considered that his obsession with Australia's security was out of step with a nation turning in on itself to forget the war.¹³⁰ In a series of newspaper articles in 1923,



*Prime Minister
Stanley
Melbourne Bruce*

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

Hughes wrote on many topics. These pieces, republished in Britain, included a moving homage to Australia's war dead, a critique of imperial relations, and a warning about the dangers posed to civilisation by the rapid growth in the world's population. Australia in particular, he said, faced the threat of 'Japan's starving millions' coming 'knocking at her door'.¹³¹

Hughes was disgruntled as a backbencher. Bruce's detached leadership style and his focus on domestic matters made him popular, but Hughes found it difficult to resist attacking him. To distract Hughes, a group of friends organised a lecture tour of the United States to remove him from Australia for much of 1924. The businessman H.C. Armstrong, a long-time acquaintance of Hughes, had good connections in the United States, and arranged for Hughes to deliver eight lectures under the management of a New York agent, Lee Keedick. The visit was not a great success. The route took Hughes from California to St Louis, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York and Washington. His lectures were on such topics as the Versailles Peace Conference, the League of Nations and world peace. In New York at a luncheon hosted by the Australian Commissioner, Donald Mackinnon, he gave a speech that the *New York Times* described as 'an eloquent plea for closer relations between the United States and Australia'.¹³² In Washington, he addressed the English-Speaking Union on the subject of 'World peace through the co-operation of the English-speaking peoples'.

Perhaps the most controversial subject addressed by Hughes was immigration. In 1924 the United States government was debating immigration legislation, including the National Origins Act and the Asian Exclusion Act. The laws limited the number of migrants from any country to 2 per cent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States, based on the 1890 Census. These laws essentially excluded Asians, especially Japanese. The legislation came just two years after the Washington Conference, and the secretary of state, Charles E. Hughes, warned the new president, Calvin Coolidge, that the legislation was an unnecessary snub to the Japanese, and damaging to US relations with Japan, particularly in view of the attitude taken by the Japanese at the Washington Conference. He felt that the United States could have drawn upon 'the spirit of friendship and mutual confidence then evoked' to deal with the issue of immigration by negotiating an accord similar to the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908.¹³³

The former Australian prime minister had no such reservations, nor any hesitation in commenting on the issue. In articles syndicated for the Hearst newspapers, he supported the US legislation, comparing it to the White Australia policy and stating that the proposed legislation rested 'upon just principles, is dictated by wisdom and is necessary for the economic and national well being of the great republic as it was for that of the young Australian Commonwealth'.¹³⁴

Citing the threat of the growing Japanese population to peace in the Pacific, he took up the now familiar theme of the need for cooperation between the two nations. In the notes for a speech entitled ‘The Problem of the Pacific’, Hughes enlarged on his theme:

It is not that we desire your assistance; for the distance between us is such that we could in the event of an attack receive only moral help. But we feel that we have a common heritage in the Pacific, and a common obligation. And we would prefer to take action while the initiative still rests with us, in order that we might by finding a solution escape the inevitable danger of national procrastination and delay.¹³⁵

Such sentiments were out of step with the post-war *Zeitgeist*. Many people believed in the possibility of international peace, and there was much goodwill for disarmament and talk of abolishing war and aggressive nationalism. Pressing economic problems, both international and domestic, also demanded the attention of governments. In Australia questions of defence were subordinated to the priorities of nation-building under the new prime minister’s slogan of ‘men, money and markets’.

For those Australians still concerned about national security there was a visit by the Royal Navy’s Special Service Squadron, commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Field, on a world cruise to show the flag. The six ships included the battlecruiser HMS *Hood*, then the largest warship afloat, together with another battlecruiser, HMS *Repulse*, and the light cruisers HMS *Delhi*, *Dauntless*, *Danae*, *Dragon*, and *Dunedin*. From late February until April the squadron called at Albany, Adelaide, Melbourne, Jervis Bay, Sydney and Brisbane. It was a convincing display of UK naval power and the ships and their 4,572 men received a warm welcome. There were parades through city streets and a variety of entertainments.¹³⁶ To reinforce the naval bonds of Empire, the light cruiser HMAS *Adelaide* joined the squadron when it left Australian waters. As part of a regular exchange of RAN and RN ships *Adelaide* spent a year with the cruiser squadron in the China Station. The visit seemed to signal that the Pax Britannica had returned and to demonstrate that the Empire could defend even its most distant Dominions.

3 Highs and lows



1925–1936

Internationally, the mid-1920s were a time of prosperity and optimism. While tensions still existed, the disputes between the Pacific nations were being addressed in a number of conferences and meetings in the same spirit of goodwill that had marked the Washington Naval Conference. In 1925 another US fleet visited Australia and received a warm welcome. With the onset of the Great Depression, however, there was a sharp increase in international tensions. The economic collapse had dire consequences for Australia and its relationship with the United States. The trade policies of the Lyons government set Australia at odds with those of the Roosevelt administration. Moreover, Australia's lack of diplomatic representation in the United States ensured that there was little chance that these differences could be dealt with satisfactorily. By the mid-1930s, Australia was in a very difficult position. The economy was still fragile and the deterioration of the international environment made it necessary to seriously consider preparations for defence against the possibility of a Pacific war.

The unsolved problem of the Pacific

In 1925 Kiyo Sue Inui, a lecturer in international relations at the Tokyo University of Commerce, published *The Unsolved Problem of the Pacific*. The book was subtitled 'a survey of international contacts, especially in frontier communities, with special emphasis upon California and an analytic study of the Johnson report to the House of Representatives'. This wordy explanation indicated that his primary motive was to present a Japanese reaction to the immigration laws enacted by the United States the year before. Professor Inui was well acquainted with the issues, since he had also taught political science at the University of Southern California. From his unique perspective he noted:

Perhaps not since the retrocession of the Liao Tung Peninsula, forced by the Triple-interference in 1905, has any single action of a foreign nation aroused such sentiments of disappointment and indignation among the masses of Japan as did the passage of the United States Immigration Law of 1924.¹

Rehearsing the history of the immigration dispute, he pointed out that Japan, appreciating the difficulties experienced by the United States as a result of its heterogeneous population, had cooperated in resolving the issue through the Root–Takahira Agreement.² Ambassador Hanihara warned the secretary of state, Charles E. Hughes that the exclusion of Japanese immigrants by legislation would have ‘grave consequences’ for the ‘otherwise happy and mutually advantageous relations between our two countries’.³ The laws had inflamed Asian feelings against the United States, and Japanese sensibilities in particular.

In July and August 1925, the inaugural meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations in Honolulu was dominated by the immigration issue. The institute had been established as a forum to cultivate better relations between Pacific nations. Financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and other major US businesses, it symbolised the spirit of internationalism in the United States following the world war. One of its aims was to promote liberal democracy. To advance its agenda the institute funded conferences, research projects and publications. The institute was presided over by the ‘Pacific Council’ and each member state had a national council. Members included the United States, the USSR, China, Japan, Australia and ten others, including colonial powers. When the discussions in Honolulu turned to immigration, the Japanese delegates pointed out that, in addition to marring relations between Japan and the United States, the US Immigration Act was hindering the cause of liberal politicians in Japan.⁴

Nor did the immigration policies of Britain’s Pacific Dominions escape the scrutiny of the Asian delegates. The leader of the Australian delegation, H. Duncan Hall of the University of Sydney, reported to John Latham—now a federal parliamentarian—that he and his fellow delegates had given ‘a very frank exposition’ of the democratic and economic basis of the White Australia policy. According to Hall, the oriental delegates claimed that the exchange had cleared up ‘serious misunderstandings’ and in future their attitude to Australia and New Zealand would ‘be much more sympathetic than in the past’.⁵ This new appreciation did not prevent one Japanese delegate from telling Hall: ‘To Japan the typical Australian was Mr. W.M. Hughes’.⁶

Hall came away from the meeting with ideas about how the administration of Australia’s immigration policies might be modified. Admitting small quotas of well-educated Asian migrants would, he felt, ‘satisfy the sensibilities of the

educated classes, who matter most, without sacrificing any of the essentials of the White Australia policy'.⁷ After the conference, Hall and a colleague put forward a suggestion from the Asian delegates to dispense with the term 'White Australia', which they pointed out was the source of much avoidable offence.⁸ In light of the animosity caused by the US legislation this was probably good advice, especially as jingoistic sections of the press in the United States, Australia and Japan had used disputes over immigration to rattle sabres and speculate about war.

US war plans for the Pacific

War was very much on the minds of United States naval planners in 1924 and 1925. Under Article XIX of the Five-Power Naval Treaty, the United States had agreed not to fortify its bases in Manila and Guam. This provision was a considerable handicap, especially in the event of war in the Far East. Honolulu was the closest base where a fleet could concentrate before sailing to the defence of the Philippines. In addition, the War Plans Division knew that it still had to prepare for the possibility of hostilities in the Atlantic. To overcome these difficulties the newest types of ships were kept in the Pacific and designated the Battle Fleet, while the older warships were stationed on the east coast and designated the Scouting Fleet. Twelve new oil-burning battleships and their escorts comprised the Battle Fleet, while six older battleships formed the nucleus of the Scouting Fleet. Clearly the Pacific was considered the most likely location of conflict, and this emphasised the importance of the Panama Canal to a concentration of the whole fleet in either ocean.

The navy's planners worked on two approaches: the Basic Readiness Plan, which established the level of preparedness to be attained in peace time; and the Basic War Plan. The plan for hostilities with Japan was Basic War Plan Orange. Following the Washington Conference, the assistant secretary of the navy, Theodore Roosevelt Jr, had asked the planners to devise a grand strategy for a Pacific war.⁹ The main concept of the finalised plan called for

An offensive war, primarily naval, directed towards isolation of Japan through control of all waters around Japan, through the equivalent of blockade operations and ... the capture and occupation of all outlying Japanese islands intensified by an air war against Japanese territory.¹⁰

This strategy would require an immediate advance to Manila to secure a fleet base in the Far East, and reinforcement of the Philippines with ground and air forces. In late 1923, Roosevelt commissioned a report on the fleet's ability to relieve Manila. The report found major deficiencies in equipment and personnel; the navy did not have the resources to project a force to the

Philippines in the event of a war.¹¹ Subsequent versions of Basic War Plan Orange were jointly produced by the army and the navy. The 1924 version had two prongs: a rapid movement to Manila and a staged advance across the central Pacific. The plan faced two difficulties. The first was political. Any large-scale movement of ships might itself provoke a war, so the relief force would not be able to depart for the Philippines until hostilities broke out. Thus the plan was predicated on a Zero-Day or no-warning time schedule.¹² The second issue was the requirement for a floating dry-dock and other repair facilities, which had to be balanced against the need for ships.



Admiral Robert E. Coontz, Commander of the US Combined Fleet, 1925

US NAVAL
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

After consideration, priority was given to warships over logistic facilities.¹³

The problem of how to send and support a naval force in the Philippines would preoccupy senior naval officers for most of the 1920s and 1930s. One of the first was Admiral Robert Coontz, who as we saw in Chapter One had been a lieutenant commander and executive officer of the USS *Nebraska* in 1908 when the Great White Fleet visited Australia. A highly competent officer, he had become a rear admiral by the end of World War I. In late September 1919 he was appointed Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), the highest rank in the United States Navy. His tenure was difficult due to post-war economies, the need to deal with technological change, the impact of the Washington Conference, and the political scandals that marked the last months of the Harding administration.¹⁴ Despite these hurdles he managed to introduce administrative reforms that consolidated the position of CNO and established the unified fleet concept, in which the Battle Fleet and the Scouting Fleet would concentrate in either the Atlantic or the Pacific.

When his term as CNO expired in 1923, Coontz returned to sea as Commander-in-Chief of the unified United States fleet (CINCUS) he had created. As CINCUS, he was intimately involved with the issues of Basic War Plan Orange and the defence of the Philippines; and he set out to assess the tactical and logistical capacity of the fleet to conduct long-range operations into the western Pacific. The 1925 manoeuvres on the west coast of the United States were among the largest in the series. The Battle Fleet and the Scouting

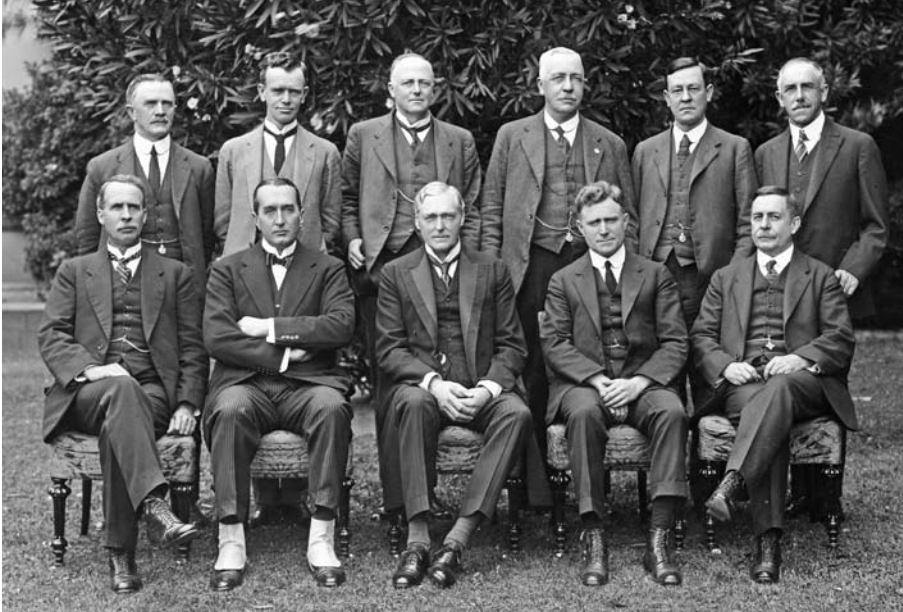
Fleet hunted each other 600 nautical miles south-west of San Diego, before returning to that port for a thorough critique of the exercises.¹⁵

‘Australia wants to see your sailors again’

San Diego was only a brief halt. At some stage in late 1924 the Navy Department decided to send a large segment of the fleet to visit Australia and New Zealand. From a US perspective, a cruise from Hawaii to Australasia, which approximated the distance from Hawaii to Manila, would provide an excellent demonstration of the fleet’s ability to project force across the Pacific.

Speculation about such a cruise had been widespread since early 1924. In April, the Australian commissioner in New York, Donald Mackinnon, had reported that senior commanders in the US Navy ‘were anxious to see an American Fleet follow the example of the British Fleet which has recently been in Australian waters’.¹⁶ However, Mackinnon cautioned that it would be difficult to confirm anything before the presidential election in November. In May, he reported that he had raised the possibility of a visit to Australia by US warships with Secretary of State Hughes, who had received the idea ‘very favourably’ and promised to take it up with both President Coolidge and the secretary for the navy, Curtis Wilbur.¹⁷ Rumours and press reports of a trans-Pacific visit persisted. Apart from the presidential campaign, another reason that might have delayed an announcement was Japan’s rancour over the new immigration laws, in particular the National Origins Act, 1924. The delay in the announcement of the cruise to Australasia was perhaps intended to avoid further inflaming Japanese sensibilities.

Under the circumstances, however, the Japanese press were not well disposed to either the announcement of the 1925 fleet manoeuvres or conjecture over a visit to Australasia by US warships. Reporting on the manoeuvres, *Shizuoku Shimpū* was critical of the exercise scenario in which operations would be launched after ‘diplomatic relations being abruptly severed with a “certain imaginary country” (Japan is implied)’¹⁸ It is evident that the author believed the Americans’ ability to rapidly amalgamate the Atlantic and Pacific fleets via the Panama Canal posed a threat to Japanese security. Indeed, the consequence of the fleet exercises would ‘be to render meaningless ... the disarmament of the nations of the world’.¹⁹ The story also claimed that Australian warships would take part in the 1925 manoeuvres and cooperate with the US fleet in the final battle with the imaginary enemy. The article concluded by surmising that a secondary purpose of the fleet exercises was ‘To inculcate in Australia and New Zealand a great Pro-American fever, with fear of Japan and the necessity of placing great reliance on America. These are reasons which have come to light, it is reported’.²⁰ Another article in the same newspaper speculated on a



*The Bruce–Page
Ministry, 1926.
The Prime
Minister is seated
2nd from L
wearing spats*

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secret treaty between the United States and Australia that took advantage of Australia's pro-American tendencies.²¹ Significantly, as information passed to the Royal Australian Navy's Directorate of Naval Intelligence noted, similar stories were published in most of Tokyo's vernacular press, but Japan's English-language papers did not carry the reports.²²

The Australian authorities were certainly keen for the visit to occur. As in 1908, the government did all in its power to encourage the Americans to send their ships. In October 1924, Prime Minister Bruce's office wrote to the US consul-general, Ezra Mills Lauton, in Melbourne asking for confirmation of unofficial reports, assuring him that 'the Commonwealth Government would regard such a visit as of the utmost importance, and would take the opportunity of according the Naval Representatives of the United States a fitting welcome'.²³ Lauton could not answer the enquiry. President Coolidge was also unable to give a firm answer when he met the Australian businessman James Elder, who had replaced Mackinnon as Australian commissioner to the United States. However, Coolidge did convey that, if re-elected, he would 'be personally in favour of the visit'.²⁴ Following Coolidge's victory in November, Elder wasted no time in pressing Curtis Wilbur for a decision. Elder reminded Wilbur that

the people of Australia are looking forward with the greatest possible pleasure to the anticipated visit and the Navy would be assured of a most hearty welcome by the Federal and State Governments and by the people of Australia generally. We have ... pleasant recollections of the previous visit paid by your Navy some years ago and I know that Australia wants to see your sailors again.²⁵

Wilbur explained politely that any trip to Washington by Elder before the Congress vote on naval appropriations would be premature.²⁶

Elder's correspondence with US officials had to be copied to the UK ambassador to the United States, Sir Esme Howard. In early November, Sir Esme took the opportunity to remind Elder that the proper channels for arranging any US naval visit to Australia would be 'from the State Department to this [the UK] Embassy and by us direct to the Government of Australia ... as the visit is a matter of Inter-Imperial concern'.²⁷ These procedures proved cumbersome. On 24 November, the *New York Times* gave an accurate account of the sequence and timing of the manoeuvres and visit to Australia, including a list of the ships that would participate.²⁸ Subsequent press reports stated that the secretary for the navy had given his approval for the cruise in July of the following year. Despite the information being available in the press, Whitehall was unable to confirm the visit to the Australian government until 26 November. This delay did not prevent Bruce from anticipating success. Following the story in the *New York Times*, the government sent a cable to Elder. The text was intended for release to the US press and it quoted Prime Minister Bruce's reaction to the news of the visit.²⁹ In terms echoing those of Deakin in 1908, Bruce picked up the themes of racial and linguistic kinship and common democratic heritage. He also recalled that the two nations now shared the sacrifices and comradeship of the world war. Added to these historical links was their present mutual 'burning ambition [to] serve [the] cause of enduring world peace'.³⁰

'With reference to your enquiry': Planning the visit

In late January 1925, official information regarding aspects of the visit still lagged behind the more confident reports in the press. James Elder wrote to Sir Esme Howard detailing his contacts with US officials and suggesting that direct communication between the US authorities and the Australian government should now be opened to facilitate planning.³¹

From press reports the Commonwealth government already knew the approximate size of the fleet. With twelve battleships, their escorts and support vessels, the fleet would number around fifty-six vessels.³² Questions were asked regarding the ability of shipping channels and berths in Port Phillip Bay to accommodate the large battleships (32,000 tons). Another concern was the size of the crews (23,000 officers and men). It was also necessary to point out that the reception arrangements 'would be greatly facilitated if the main portion of the fleet could visit Melbourne prior to proceeding to Sydney as the former is the seat of government'.³³ This problem would be resolved by splitting the fleet. Twelve battleships and one escort would visit Sydney, while the bulk of the fleet, including the flagship USS *Seattle* and the cruiser and destroyer squadrons

(forty-three vessels), went to Melbourne. The visits to both ports would last fifteen days, starting from 23 July.

Among the most important issues was the cost of the visit. In 1908, the price of entertaining the 13,000 personnel of the Great White Fleet for one month had been £31,460.³⁴ The visit by the seven ships and 4,500 personnel of the Royal Navy's Special Service Squadron in the previous year had cost the Commonwealth £11,619.³⁵ Obviously, the outlays for the coming visit would be considerably larger.³⁶ They included the cost of a public holiday in New South Wales and the adjournment of federal parliament for the duration of the visit to Melbourne. As a matter of economy it was decided to decorate, but not illuminate, public buildings in Sydney and Melbourne.³⁷ The administrative arrangements were coordinated by the prime minister's office, with state committees handling the detailed arrangements for the fleet's reception. The draft program for the first day of the visit to Melbourne charted the events from an aerial demonstration by the air force and welcome by the Commonwealth and state leaders at 10 am, until a vice-regal dinner at 7.30 pm.³⁸

Once the US Navy Department and the UK authorities had approved the visit, Coontz and Elder met in San Francisco. In answer to a comprehensive request for information by the Commonwealth Entertainment Committee, the admiral sent equally comprehensive answers: the number of men to be granted liberty in Sydney and Melbourne each night (4,000 and 4,500). He also agreed that personnel would be free to sleep ashore and to take extended trips. He listed the sports that his crews would be able to play: teams would not be fielded for hockey, lacrosse, bowls, ice hockey, soccer, tennis, Australian football or rugby and the fleet's boxers would not compete against civilians. As he explained, football teams would not be fielded 'as it is our off season'.³⁹ One sport that the Americans would play was baseball and matches were planned in both New South Wales and Victoria. The sport had a history in Australia that went back to the gold rush of the 1850s, when Americans brought the game to Ballarat. In 1888, an American sports promoter, Albert Goodwill Spalding, had staged the first exhibition matches in New South Wales and Victoria. Since then the game had prospered with associations in both states. The Victorian Baseball Association requested £202 14s for a seven-day baseball carnival.⁴⁰ In Sydney, Spalding donated a trophy for the competition between the fleet and New South Wales.

There were a myriad of other arrangements to be made. Both states published a souvenir program. These contained useful information about transport and the hospitality available at the YMCA. Both programs had fold-out maps of the cities and environs.⁴¹ Perhaps because he had been the recipient of Australian hospitality before, Coontz felt it wise to pass on hints 'regarding

what the American sailors will appreciate'. This advice was sent via the special correspondent of the Melbourne *Herald*, who was travelling with the fleet. The admiral's five 'hints' were intended to ease the burden of the hosts and make the men's stay more enjoyable:

Don't kill us with kindness.

Don't spend too much money on us.

Allow us as much free time as possible for sightseeing.

Information tents near the wharves, telling the men places of interest to visit and how to get there.

Plenty of balls and plenty of nice girls to dance with.⁴²

Perhaps anticipating this last point, Melbourne's committee had sent out a request via the press for 850 young women as dancing partners for a ball hosted by the Australian Natives' Association at the Exhibition Building on 30 July.⁴³ Official calls for people to billet sailors received some interesting responses. Mrs T. James of Brunswick was happy to oblige but stipulated 'we can accommodate two provided they are musical and come from Texas'.⁴⁴ As the fleet neared Australia, the newspapers carried stories and pictures of the ships and their crews. Some papers also provided a daily countdown that listed the current fleet's position.

On 22 July, the day before the separate divisions arrived, the *Sydney Mail* carried an article by Consul-General Lauton. The article, entitled predictably *Hands Across the Pacific*, presented a positive view of relations between the two nations. Lauton observed that before the world war Australia was viewed by most Americans as 'an almost unknown land'. In contrast, Australians were 'undoubtedly the most travelled people of any country'.⁴⁵ He wrote of how the friendship of the Diggers and Doughboys during the war had given each a better understanding of the others' country and its problems. Besides this shared history there were now many other reasons for Americans to know of Australia. Sydney's role as the host of the 1923 Pan-Pacific Scientific Congress was well known and Australian artists such as Melba and Percy Grainger were greatly appreciated by Americans. Lauton acknowledged that the terms of trade between the two nations were not generally favourable to Australia, but President Coolidge had announced that the United States would soon be importing wheat and meat and it was 'up to Australia to supply any such demand'.⁴⁶ The consul observed that the ships visiting Australia were America's finest and the 24,000 men on board would be able to report on their visit. Even more important, the press would send reports to an estimated 20,000 newspapers across the United States. He concluded by saying,

No such advertising campaign was ever planned than will culminate in the next few weeks, with Australia the most talked of country in the United States, and the present ties of Australian–American friendship will be so strengthened that each nation will unconsciously include the other in consideration of all problems of mutual interest, safety and advancement.

'Fleet Arrives To-day, Great Pageant Expected'

The headline of the *Argus* reflected the eagerness with which Melbourne looked forward to the visit on 23 July. Despite showers and wind, thousands of spectators watched the progress of the fleet up Port Phillip Bay or waited at the docks. The official reception committee on the steamship *Weeroona* was prevented from witnessing the spectacle when the ship's firemen refused to work until the prime minister disembarked.

This wildcat action was due to a long-running dispute between the Bruce government, the Seaman's Union and waterside workers. Earlier in the year Bruce had introduced legislation to change the Immigration Act so that it would be possible to deport union activists not born in Australia. At 12.30, Senator George Pearce was forced to tell the 1,700 passengers on the *Weeroona* that they would not be leaving the wharf. Ironically, Bruce was not on board, but this did not stop the firemen from demanding a bond of £100 from the passengers to guarantee the veracity of this claim. Pearce refused to negotiate. This embarrassing start to the visit underlined the hostility between the government and the unions. Eventually, official messages of greeting and goodwill were



*The cruiser
and destroyer
squadrons enter
The Rip, Port
Phillip Bay*

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*The battleship
division arrives in
Sydney in brilliant
sunshine*

HOOD COLLECTION,
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NEW SOUTH WALES



exchanged and Melbourne braced itself for two weeks of festivities that included fifteen banquets, dinners and luncheons, thirty-nine dances, nine smoke nights, twenty picnics and seventeen sporting events. In Sydney, the battleship division entered the harbour in brilliant sunshine. The foreshores were crowded with onlookers in a holiday mood as they too anticipated a carnival fortnight.

Early the next day misfortune struck Melbourne when an awning on Hoyt's Theatre de Luxe in Bourke Street collapsed under the weight of spectators who had climbed onto it to watch 2,000 men from the fleet march through the city. The theatre was close to the reviewing stand outside the federal parliament building and the crowds were tightly packed. Over one hundred people were injured, but the efforts of the sailors, marines and civilians who rescued those pinned under the awning or were hurt as they fell received much praise. The injured were treated in the Tivoli Theatre before being taken to Melbourne Hospital. Although no Americans were wounded, a few days later two sailors were hospitalised after being hit by trams while sightseeing.

Amid the country excursions, sporting fixtures, dances and picnics, several minor incidents detracted from the spirit of friendliness. Posters put up by the Industrial Workers of the World urged a boycott of the fleet, claiming: 'Armed force keeps union men in America's goals'. There were a few fights in bars and on the streets. Old diggers scrutinised every aspect of the Americans' drill and bearing, and discussions about military techniques inevitably descended into arguments over who had won the war. Towards the end of July, critical press reports began to circulate in the United States, intimating that the visit had been marred by widespread violence against individual sailors and an attempt at a general boycott. These reports were the work of an American

journalist, Martin Connors, the Associated Press correspondent. In an effort to repudiate the reports, James McClintic, a Congressional Representative from Oklahoma travelling with the fleet, sent a formal denial to President Coolidge.⁴⁷ Prime Minister Bruce, Admiral Coontz and others added their voices to the disclaimer.

Despite this setback, the visits were generally successful and well organised. Due to a lack of accommodation in Sydney, sailors could not get the 24-hour liberty pass available in Melbourne, but they experienced a round of dinners, race meetings, sports and dances similar to those on offer in the Victorian capital. In Sydney, visits to the battleships proved popular. On 2 August, an estimated 4,000 people were stranded on the USS *Tennessee* due to a lack of launches and ferries. Thousands more were queuing ashore and had to be turned away. According to a report in *The Age* it was dark before the ship was cleared of its visitors.⁴⁸ The governor, Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, and his family took Admiral Robison and his staff on a weekend excursion to the snow at Mt Kosciusko. There was a whaleboat race between the US sailors and teams from the Royal Australian Naval Reserve. One of the more interesting entertainments was the Military Tattoo at the Sydney Showground, arranged by Brigadier General Charles Brand, commandant of the 2nd Military District. Along with the usual displays of riding, massed bands and exhibitions by school children, the tattoo included 'vivid representations of the battles of Omdurman and Rorke's Drift' that were 'much enjoyed by thousands of people'.⁴⁹

Other Australian cities hoped to entertain the Americans but it was only possible for a squadron of four ships from Rear Admiral Magruder's Light Cruiser Division to visit Hobart. Admiral Coontz regretted that he was unable to accompany the squadron as he had 'always wanted to go to fascinating Tasmania. I had read *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and knew of the *grewsome* early days'.⁵⁰ The cruiser squadron called at Hobart for just forty-eight hours. On board USS *Richmond* was the governor of Victoria, Colonel George Edward John Mowbray, Earl of Stradbroke, who stayed with the ship until it reached New Zealand.

The Victorian festivities culminated in a ball for 6,000 guests on board the battleships USS *Pennsylvania*, *Oklahoma* and *Nevada*, moored at Princes Pier with their quarter-decks decorated and illuminated for dancing. Two days later the separate divisions left Melbourne and Sydney to rendezvous in New Zealand. Unlike the visit seventeen years earlier, only ten men were missing when the ships left Melbourne and most were reunited with the fleet in New Zealand.⁵¹ The fleet was reported to have left a windfall of £400,000. An official farewell from the Commander-in-Chief recalled his experiences of Australian hospitality in 1908 and declared them to have been 'put in the shade' by the 'outpouring

*Part of the
fleet moored at
Victoria Dock*

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of friendship and kindness' encountered by the officers and men of his fleet during the present cruise. He assured his readers that

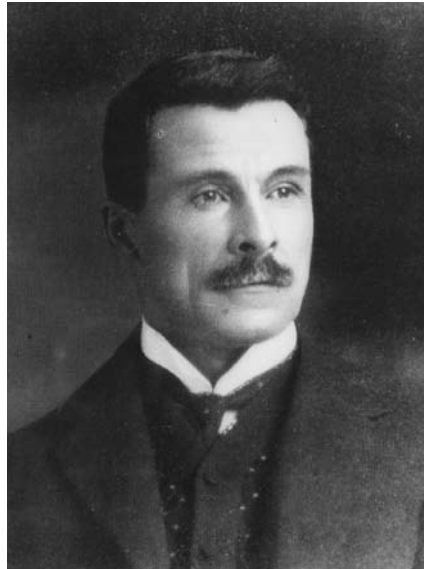
The Fleet leaves Australia with the kindest thoughts for its people; with thankful hearts for the great courtesies extended; believes that Australia has a great future, and a wonderful place in the world in the years to come, and bids them good-bye and God-speed along the road.⁵²

The deeper meaning of the visit

In contrast to the visit of the Great White Fleet, there was little or no pressure from the Australians to use the 1925 fleet visit to extract a formal security relationship. As in 1908, the themes of kinship, linguistic and political heritage were employed in hundreds of speeches, but the Australian orators were less importuning, and a genuine effort was made to develop the level of understanding between the two nations. A speech by Rear-Admiral Cole, the fleet's chief of staff, was typical. Cole told a meeting of the English-Speaking Union in the lounge of Scott's Hotel on Collins Street, Melbourne, of his admiration for the British people: he felt that the war had created an *entente cordiale* between the United States and the Empire. Playing on the theme of kinship, he declared his belief that any future disputes could be solved by a handshake and a discussion because 'families had to do that'.⁵³ The address reflects the optimism of the mid-1920s. The Washington Treaty seemed to show

that disarmament could be negotiated by an international conference. Only a few months later a similar congress of world leaders would sign the Locarno Treaty and dispel fears of another European war.

Similar themes were addressed by Sir Henry Braddon in a long and well-argued article in the *Sydney Mail* at the same time as Martin Connors' negative reports were circulating in the US press. He drew on his experiences as the first Australian commissioner to the United States to point out that Australians who harboured prejudices against Americans had not experienced the 'manifold kindnesses of American home life' nor attempted 'to ascertain adequately the other side of the case'.⁵⁴ The article, *The Deeper Meaning of the Fleet Visit*, provided readers with a sympathetic explanation of Americans and American policy. Addressing Anglo-Saxon solidarity, Braddon pointed out that, while the United States' mixed population caused special problems, 'over 60 per cent of Americans are Anglo-Saxon and the dominant trend of their civilization is Anglo-Saxon'.⁵⁵ Sir Henry also clarified the circumstances of the US entry into the war. On the question of war debts he cited America's generosity over interest rates and criticised the French for lending funds to Czechoslovakia and Poland. From a US perspective such behaviour confirmed that Europeans were decadent and militaristic. Braddon, who became a founder of the Australian–American Association, returned to the theme of Anglo-Saxon solidarity to make his final point:



Sir Henry Braddon was the first Australian Commissioner to the United States and went on to co-found the Australian–American Association

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

Outside Europe are two great nations akin to one another, branches of the English-speaking people and capable of doing infinite good if they frankly pull together. No formal alliance is suggested, no joint hectoring over other nations; something indeed quite other than that, it is their opportunity and their duty to interwork to the end that the world may be made saner and safer. Prejudices and pinpricks seriously retard that great work, and must be discarded forever.⁵⁶

Braddon's article is significant for several reasons. That he felt it necessary to defend the US position suggests some level of anti-American feeling during the visit. More importantly as the Australian commissioner to the United States,

he could provide such a comprehensive account of the issues that had given rise to anti-American sentiment. Australia was fortunate to have Braddon and his predecessors, Donald Mackinnon and James Elder, looking after its interests in the United States. Although technically their role was to further commercial links, they were in fact quasi-diplomats. Mackinnon and Elder had greatly facilitated the visit of the fleet. Before Australia had its own diplomatic service, these men could represent the interests of their government and also interpret America and Americans for Australians, who were poorly informed on the subject.

'Peculiarly susceptible': Popular culture and Australian-US relations

A few newspaper articles and the visit of thousands of servicemen could have little long-term impact on relations between the United States and Australia. Anti-Americanism existed, if only because direct contact was rare. Although steamers plied the Pacific, the services were neither fast nor particularly profitable. The problem was illustrated in a letter to the *New York Times* in May 1921.⁵⁷

The anonymous Australian businessman called himself 'Forty Years on the Pacific' and pointed out that, despite such innovations as steamships and the Panama Canal, the average time for a trans-Pacific passage had changed very little. A voyage under sail in the 1880s from New York or Boston to Sydney, via the Cape of Good Hope (a distance of 15,000 miles), took eighty to one hundred days. Surprisingly, this compared favourably with voyages by steamships. The recent voyage of the SS *Bellbuckle* from New York to Sydney, via Panama (a distance of 7,000 miles) had taken ninety-three days, largely because the ship called at three ports in New Zealand and then at Hobart and Melbourne before arriving in Sydney. Such a sluggish service, the author observed, was no basis for building strong economic ties. Other Pacific routes called at Vancouver, San Francisco and Honolulu, but they required heavy government subsidies. In these circumstances, only 15,000 US tourists travelled to Australia during the 1920s.⁵⁸ Fewer still decided to stay.

Between 1924 and 1933, a government scheme encouraged Americans, especially farmers, to settle in Australia.⁵⁹ Data from the 1921 census shows that 6,604 people living in Australia had been born in the United States.⁶⁰ By 1933 the number had fallen to 6,066.⁶¹ With contact so limited, most Australians gained their knowledge of the United States from newspaper reports and films, music and novels. In addition, the flow of information was generally one-way:

The United States may not have been much moved by Australian regard for American history, because Australia has never loomed large across the Pacific. But circumstances, and a specially well-informed Press, have made Australasia peculiarly susceptible to the import of lessons based upon the development of national life in the United States.⁶²

Roger C. Tredwell, the US consul-general to Australia in 1931, saw no virtue in Australia's reliance on press reports. While the United States had a professional diplomatic service to keep its government informed about Australia, the Commonwealth's lack of a similar resource meant that governments too frequently depended on press reports for information about the United States. Tredwell complained that the Australian press tended to accentuate news that reflected poorly on the character of the US government and people: 'This not only makes for a great deal of ill-will, but increases misunderstandings, and ... leads a large number of people to the conclusion that Americans are the most wicked and the worst people in the world'.⁶³

An earlier American visitor, J. Merle Davis, had reached a similar conclusion. Davis was a businessman involved in the Institute of Pacific Relations. He visited Melbourne in 1926 with a view to establishing a branch of the institute. He found that being an American in Australia was 'no special asset'.⁶⁴ He reported a general suspicion of Americans: "American Penetration of Australia" was a frequent reaction ... Resentment of the engulfing of Australia with American capital, products, movie films, prize fighters, automobiles, sharp business practices and vulgarities of all sorts ... "What is he slipping over us now?" is the first reaction of many people'.⁶⁵ What Davis reported as isolationism is probably best described as parochialism—a preference for British culture and products, reinforced by a tendency for many to refer to the United Kingdom as Home. The major Australian newspapers kept their readers well informed on world events. Membership of the British Empire was part of popular consciousness. The awareness of being part of a global power gave them a broader perspective on international events. In contrast, after observing the US delegation at Versailles, Robert Garran concluded that they 'are curious folk. They have lived so long in a world of their own that they have great difficulty in seeing things from the point of view of Europe ... their ignorance of things outside America is abysmal ...'.⁶⁶

Some Australians, such as Frederick Eggleston, did harbour the resentments that Davis had observed. Eggleston supported a tax on American films, which he believed 'debauch the public tastes with vulgar rubbish'.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, after a visit to the United States in 1927, he returned 'profoundly impressed by the art galleries, museums and orchestras' he had experienced.⁶⁸ Naturally, Americans in Australia also formed their own opinions of Australian society.

Mack Mathews, who spent four years in Australia during the late 1920s, remarked on the influence that jazz and Hollywood films had in Australia. About the opinions of his fellow Americans, he suspected that

Wherever Yanks foregather, privately, may be heard an enlightening recital of Australia's obsolete business methods, obnoxious social customs, and general economic instability. A popular toast goes: 'To Australia—the land where the flowers have no fragrance, the birds no melody, and the women no virtue'.⁶⁹

In 1928 the American author Nicholas Roosevelt in *The Restless Pacific* claimed, 'As the bonds of Empire weaken, the ties that bind the Dominions to the United States will strengthen'. Responding to this assertion, W.K. Hancock wrote,

It is absurd to imagine that Australia, because she buys American motorcars and submits to the deluge of Hollywood culture, is drifting vaguely towards some new political combination. It is indeed easy to exaggerate the sympathy which the vigorous, healthy populations of Australia and the United States feel for each other.⁷⁰

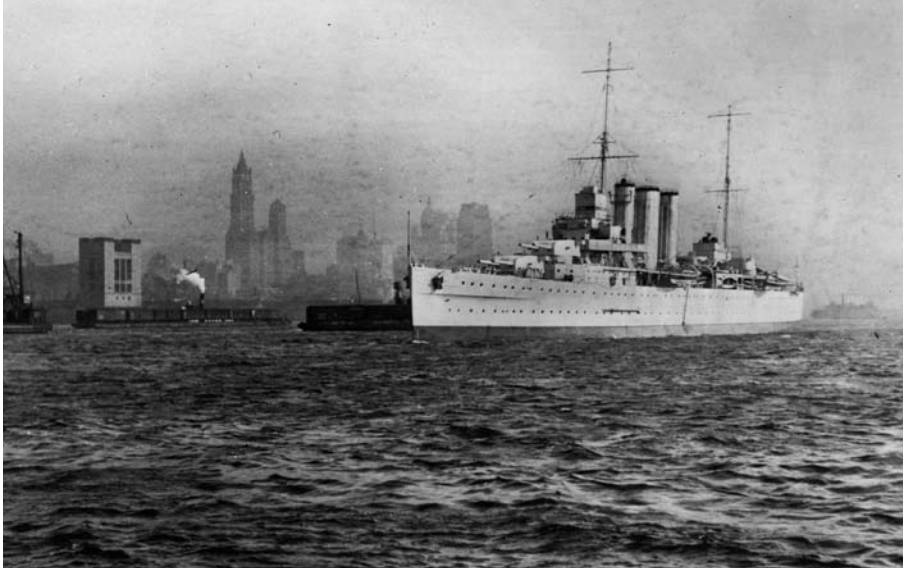
Hancock was at pains to point out that Australia's main trade routes ran through the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. How could the US Navy protect Australia's trade in these waters?

Singapore and the defence of Australia

Even if the United States had been inclined to provide protection to Australia, a US fleet would hardly reach Australia before an attacker had secured a foothold or even captured a major population centre. The nearest US naval base was in Hawaii. For Hancock the United States could not provide Australia with the 'security she ... enjoys in virtue of her honourable co-operation with her fellow-members of the British Commonwealth'.⁷¹ In the 1920s and 1930s, it was almost an article of faith that the foundation of Australia's national security was cooperation between the parts of the Empire. At the 1926 Imperial Conference, Prime Minister Bruce expressed his belief that

The guiding principle on which all our defence preparations are based, whether for the Sea, the Land, or the Air Force, is uniformity in every respect—organisation, methods of training, equipment with the fighting services of Great Britain, in order that in time of emergency we may dovetail into any formation with which our forces may be needed to co-operate.⁷²

The previous year, the Commonwealth had commissioned two new cruisers. Built in Britain at a cost of £1,900,000, HMASs *Australia* (II) and *Canberra* were part of the County Class, thirteen ships built for the UK and Dominion



*HMAS Australia
(II) on its second
visit to New York,
1932*

US NAVAL
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

navies to the tonnage limits specified in the Washington Treaty. The County Class displaced 10,000 tons and were armed with eight-inch guns. Their size, long range and seakeeping qualities suited them to the Pacific. *Australia* was completed in 1928 and on its voyage to Australia called at Boston, New York and Annapolis before passing through the Panama Canal. *Australia* and *Canberra* represented a significant investment in the idea of imperial defence cooperation, especially as their wartime deployment would not necessarily be in Australian waters. A strategic appreciation of the possibility of war in the Pacific, conducted by the three Australian service chiefs in 1928, concluded that Australia's defence rested on the superiority of the Royal Navy.⁷³ The chiefs also agreed that 'local defence by naval forces must be subordinated to concerted measures designed to allow the British Fleet to concentrate its maximum strength at the decisive point, wherever that might be'.⁷⁴ The appreciation rejected the view that the Japanese could sever Australia's sea communications and trade routes, because they could not afford to disperse their fleet in anticipation of the Royal Navy's arrival in the Far East. The chiefs did concede, however, that Japanese forces would have the ability to launch raids on Australia's trade routes, ports and cities and inflict 'very grave inconvenience and loss'.⁷⁵

After the Washington Conference, the development of the Singapore base proceeded fitfully. Work halted in 1924 for political and economic reasons. In 1928 the UK Chiefs of Staff Committee decided to postpone the building of the base's land defences until 1932–1933. The decision was made because of 'the necessity for economy' and to investigate the possibility of using aircraft to defend the base.⁷⁶ The slow development did little to engender confidence in 'the

main fleet to Singapore' concept. In early 1929, Prime Minister Bruce felt that 'the general policy as to the development of the Naval base at Singapore was still sound and should be adhered to'.⁷⁷ The concept of the 'main fleet to Singapore' was the incontestable foundation of all Australia's defence arrangements. As a politician, he was content to rely on the advice of experts. He acknowledged: 'While I am not quite clear as to how the protection of Singapore is to be assured, I am quite clear on this point, that apparently it can be done'.⁷⁸ Relying on advice provided by the Committee of Imperial Defence in April 1925, he recognised that it was necessary for Australia to keep local forces sufficient 'to maintain the situation against vital and irreparable damage pending the arrival of the main fleet, and to give the main fleet on arrival sufficient mobility'.⁷⁹ He was reassured by the strategic guidance provided by the committee stating that 'aggressive action against the British Empire on the part of Japan within the next ten years is not seriously to be apprehended'.⁸⁰

Planning the defence of the Commonwealth on the basis of such promises was soon questioned by sections of the Australian military, particularly by army officers. They felt that if a crisis in Europe held the fleet in home waters, the idea of sending ships to the Far East was vacuous. In September 1926 Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Wynter gave a lecture to the United Service Institution of Victoria. Wynter argued that the security of the United Kingdom was the primary consideration of imperial defence, so the Commonwealth should provide for its own defence by building a fleet base in Australia and developing land and air forces.⁸¹ Other officers agreed. Two in particular, John Lavarack and Horace Robertson, added their voices to Wynter's and questioned the strategic wisdom of the Singapore base and main fleet concept in a series of articles in the *British Army Quarterly*.⁸² In 1929 Lavarack was a colonel and had just come back to Australia after completing the Imperial Defence College course in Britain. On his return, he was appointed Director of Military Operations and Intelligence at army headquarters.

Also recently returned from the college was a civil servant from the Defence Department, Frederick Shedden, who was appointed secretary of the Defence Committee. Shedden had come under the influence of the college's commandant, Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, who was a strong proponent of imperial defence based on the Royal Navy and championed both the development of the Singapore base and the main fleet concept. Shedden also supported this view, especially as it was a much less expensive option than building up the Commonwealth's land and air forces. Asked to prepare a paper for the defence minister, Sir Thomas Glasgow, who was travelling to London for discussions on defence, Shedden wrote a lengthy exposition entitled, 'An Outline of the Principles of Imperial Defence with Special Reference to Australian Defence'.⁸³ This paper

accepted that Australia's defence was dependent on the Royal Navy and the Singapore base.

Lavarack and many other army officers felt that this strategy made Australia vulnerable to attack, especially if the United Kingdom was preoccupied in Europe. The Australian Naval Staff naturally accepted Shedden's opinion, but Lavarack was tasked by the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel, with drawing up plans for an invasion by the Japanese. Lavarack believed that the 1928 strategic appreciation had greatly underestimated the threat. He challenged the assumptions



Colonel Lavarack discussing the Depression with Billy Hughes and Richard Casey, 1933

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behind the creation of the Singapore base and the efficacy of the main fleet concept and argued that Japan would not attack until the United Kingdom was involved in Europe to the point that it would have few resources left for the Far East and the Pacific. In these circumstances, it would be simple for Japan to raid or invade Australia's vital population centres in the south-east.⁸⁴ Australia needed to develop its coastal, land and air defences to defend itself in such a scenario.

The year 1930 was a difficult one. James Scullin's Labor government had been elected on 22 October 1929, two days before the Wall Street crash precipitated a worldwide depression. Australia's reliance on exports made it particularly susceptible. Australia's terms of trade had been in decline since 1925, when the UK government returned sterling to the gold standard at parity with 1913 prices. The Australian currency was pegged to sterling, making exports of wool, wheat and meat far less competitive. Following the Wall Street crash, falling demand for exports and lower commodity prices put intense downward pressure on wages, particularly in labour-intensive industries.

In February 1930, the government reduced defence expenditure by £616,700. The Defence Committee met to consider where the cuts might be made. Lavarack chaired a sub-committee to review the 1928 strategic appreciation in the light of this reduction. When Shedden circulated his paper on imperial defence to this sub-committee to win support for the naval point of view, Lavarack took

the opportunity to deliver a rigorous critique. He rejected Shedden's ideas as 'fallacious' and concluded that they could not 'be accepted as a practical guide to Australian Defence policy'. Lavarack went on:

The dispatch of the British battle fleet to the Far East for the protection of Imperial (including Australian) interests cannot be counted upon with sufficient certainty, and the risk that it will be withheld, added to the risk of the non-completion, capture, or neutralisation of Singapore, results in a total risk that no isolated white community such as Australia would be justified in taking.⁸⁵

Lavarack pointed out that Shedden had overlooked the most recent disarmament negotiations in London. The London Naval Treaty of 1930 was made necessary because loopholes in the Washington Treaty had led to intense competition in the construction of smaller vessels not covered by the 1921 agreements. In addition, at the Geneva Disarmament Conference of 1927, the United States and the United Kingdom had been unable to agree on a formula to overcome their differences regarding cruisers. The British had argued for more light cruisers, while the Americans had wanted fewer, heavier ships.⁸⁶ Three years later in London, the UK prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, was eager to sign any pact that would reduce expenditure for the Royal Navy. The delegates agreed to halt construction of capital ships until 1937 and to impose greater controls on the use of submarines in war. A significant alteration was made to the capital ship ratios agreed to in Washington, with the limit now set at 10:10:7 for the United Kingdom, the US and Japan. France and Italy excluded themselves from this agreement. The London negotiations made Japan even stronger in the western Pacific, thereby increasing the concerns of men such as Lavarack and Wynter.

In late March 1930, the Defence Committee met to consider the nature of the threat and hence the allocation of scarce financial resources among the services. Both the air force and army representatives felt that the possibility of invasion could not be discounted. Rear Admiral Munro Kerr, a Royal Naval officer on secondment to the Commonwealth, reckoned that, the London Treaty notwithstanding, the sea power of the Empire made 'the possibility of invasion so remote that, in the present financial state of the country, it should not be considered'.⁸⁷ The committee was deadlocked, so the finance secretary, Colonel Thomas, advised the government that reductions should be applied equally across the three services.

With the economy continuing to deteriorate, the government made plans for even greater reductions in the defence budget.⁸⁸ The conflicting claims of the three services shaped the strategic debate until World War II. Torn

between an impulse towards greater self-reliance and the cheaper option of imperial defence cooperation, Australian defence planning was hampered by indecision over strategy and poor investment of the limited funds provided. The depression and the years of slow financial recovery exacerbated these trends. So did an almost blind faith that the Royal Navy would save Australia, despite the persistent refusal of the UK authorities to guarantee support and the absence of formal plans for Empire cooperation.

Depression and trade: Australian–US relations in the context of the world economic crisis

The government's concern over defence was soon eclipsed by the depression as Prime Minister Scullin tried to manage the worsening economic situation. The gold standard was abandoned, assisted immigration curtailed and tariffs raised. To aid people who had already lost their jobs, the government increased social services. These policies had little success. Australia had a difficult time because of its high level of foreign debt. In the post-war decade, the main priorities of all Australian governments had been internal—the development and settlement of the continent. The majority of infrastructure and development projects and even the assisted migration schemes were funded by capital raised in London and, to a lesser extent, in the United States.

The policies of the Bruce government had centralised debt in the hands of the Commonwealth. In 1923 Bruce convened the Australian Loan Council, comprising the prime minister, treasurer and state premiers. The council's role was to coordinate borrowing and avoid competition for overseas loans. Four years later, Bruce abolished per capita grants to the states in return for the Commonwealth assuming responsibility for state debts. As part of the deal the premiers agreed that the Loan Council become a statutory body, giving the Commonwealth permanent control over all public borrowing, which was a considerable move towards centralising the financial power of the federal government.⁸⁹ Significantly, however, the Commonwealth did not have the power to restrict borrowing by the states until 1929. When the economic crisis hit, the economy stagnated and tax revenues fell, but the requirements for state and federal governments to service their loans were unchanged. By 1930 Australia was at risk of defaulting on its considerable foreign debt.

Concerned that the Commonwealth would default, the UK government pressured Scullin to invite a delegation from the Bank of England. Scullin had a good understanding of conventional economics, but he was hampered by a hostile Senate and by the fact that the Commonwealth lacked the powers to deal with an exigency on this scale. One measure that Scullin tried to pass was an expansion of credit, but the government lacked the legislative power to force

the chairman of the Commonwealth Bank Board, Robert Gibson, to implement its policies. When the Bank of England delegation arrived, Sir Otto Niemeyer formed a poor opinion of the Scullin government's ability to cope with the crisis. In August 1930, Niemeyer and his mission met Scullin and the state premiers in Melbourne. The result was the Melbourne Agreement, a series of deflationary measures to address Australia's debt crisis. They included balanced budgets, an end to overseas borrowing until external debts were repaid, limits on internal borrowing to income-producing schemes, reductions to all areas of government expenditure (including social services and defence) and cuts in wages. Under these measures unemployment reached almost 29 per cent by 1932, one of the highest rates in the world.

As the Scullin government struggled, other nations were experiencing similar problems. In the United States the economy spiralled out of control. By early 1930 stocks actually returned to the same values they had been in the first half of 1929. Credit was still available and relatively inexpensive, but consumers were now anxious about debt and reduced their spending. Prices started to decline, followed by wages. Adding to these difficulties, in 1930 drought reduced US agricultural production, already distressed by the fall in commodity prices. Unemployment spread. Because of the central role of the United States in the international economy, US problems quickly spread to other nations.

The United States had just had a change of government. In his presidential campaign Herbert Hoover pledged assistance to US farmers in a range of measures that included higher tariffs. In office, his administration began to work on these promises. However, the revision of tariffs for agriculture led to demands for protection from other sectors. The end result was the (Smoot–Hawley) Tariff Act of 1930, which granted high protection to all sectors. Hoover had wanted limited tariff increases, but the Congressional committee drafting the bill was forced to compromise and protect their constituents. The legislation provoked a wave of retaliatory policies by US trading partners that resulted in a deeper financial crisis and contraction of international trade by more than 60 per cent between 1929 and 1934.⁹⁰

The US Tariff Act was the source of much resentment in Australia, and revived ill-feeling over war debts, interest rates and tariffs which Braddon had attempted to address. The Smoot–Hawley Act also revived memories of the 1922 Fordney–McCumber Act, which was intended to assist US farmers to compete with cheaper imports. The result of this measure was to increase the financial difficulties of European nations recovering from the world war. Many could not now service their debts to the United States by selling goods on the US market. In the 1930s Australians, who were already suspicious of the United States, tended to blame US economic policies for the global financial disaster.

As the US consul, Albert Doyle, reported in 1932, the Australian popular press and business journals blamed the United States for the depression because of its policy ‘of insisting upon payment of war debts’.⁹¹

Dealing with the depression was difficult for politicians steeped in classical economic theory, which advocated *laissez-faire* policies in the belief that markets and the private sector operated best without intervention from governments. Inspired by these theories, the Scullin government adopted many measures that deepened the depression. Scullin’s first budget in 1930 was designed to increase expenditure, but planned to fund this by increasing income taxes, postal charges and imposing a sales tax. Hoover on the other hand rejected strict *laissez-faire* thinking and promoted regulation and legislation for targeted intervention in the economy. He had served the Harding and Coolidge administrations as secretary of commerce. His economic philosophy had its roots in his training as a mining engineer and the Efficiency Movement of the Progressive Era, which proposed that social and economic problems could be solved by technical solutions.⁹² Hoover also favoured cooperation between government and business on a voluntary basis. However, under the stresses of the depression, he supported the Revenue Act of 1932, which raised income and corporate tax rates. The combined effect of this measure and the Smoot–Hawley Tariff Act was to further deepen the nation’s economic stagnation.

Scullin’s problems were increased when his treasurer and deputy, Edward (‘Red Ted’) Theodore, was forced to stand down as a result of the Mungana Mines affair just hours before the 1930 budget was presented.⁹³ The government’s problems deepened while Scullin was away from Australia between August 1930 and January 1931 attending an Imperial Conference. In his absence the Labor Party became deeply divided over the handling of the economy in general and the Melbourne Agreement in particular. Its members split into two factions. James Fenton, the acting prime minister, and Joseph Lyons, acting treasurer, supported Scullin in adhering to the agreement. They were opposed by Theodore and the New South Wales premier, John Lang, who favoured policies to expand credit. The latter also called for the repudiation of interest payments on overseas loans and cuts in interest on government borrowings within Australia. As a result of this split, the government lurched from one crisis to the next. In April legislation to fund welfare policies was rejected by parliament. Dissension continued during a special Premiers’ Conference in mid-1931. Although this conference resulted in the development of the Premiers’ Plan, which became the blueprint for Australia’s management of the depression, discord in the Labor Party brought the government down in late November.⁹⁴

The new government elected in December 1931 was a coalition headed by Joseph Lyons. Lyons, together with former Labor members, joined with John

*Prime Minister
Joseph Lyons*

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Latham's Nationalist Party to form the United Australia Party. The party attempted to adhere to the Premiers' Plan, balancing welfare and public works while restricting expenditure. This policy aimed to keep the nation solvent, placing great emphasis on consumer spending rather than government intervention. High domestic prices were used to subsidise agricultural exports. This involved complex mechanisms to stop producers selling on the lucrative domestic market.

In July and August 1932 representatives of Britain and the Dominions met in Ottawa for an Imperial Economic Conference. The

outcome was a series of agreements on tariffs and trade. The agreements amounted to a system of preferential trading that allowed items such as meat, wheat, dairy products and fruit from the Dominions to enter the United Kingdom duty-free. As a reciprocal arrangement, the Dominions would reduce tariffs on manufactured goods from the United Kingdom.⁹⁵ The Ottawa Agreements were retaliation for the Hawley–Smoot Act, but they only eased the problems of the United Kingdom and the Dominions to some extent, without providing any stimulus for broader international recovery.

One year later, Hoover was voted out of office. His administration had instituted increasingly interventionist measures, including increased subsidies for farmers and shipping companies as well as unemployment relief. On the international scene, Hoover had called a one-year moratorium on the payment of reparations by Germany to France and on the war debts owed by Allied nations, to contend with a serious banking collapse that threatened Central Europe in June 1931. Despite these policies, Franklin Roosevelt was elected with a great majority. Roosevelt's New Deal built on the relief programs of his predecessor. He also instituted agriculture relief via the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which attempted to increase the price of commodities by paying farmers to take land out of production and reduce livestock numbers. In industry, the National Industrial Recovery Act attempted to moderate aggressive competition through codes and rules of operation that set minimum prices and production quotas. Internationally, Roosevelt's administration was committed to reviving trade through lowering tariffs.

At the 1933 London Monetary and Economic Conference, Secretary of State Cordell Hull proposed resolutions on tariffs, price levels, ways of creating an 'adequate and enduring international monetary standard', non-tariff trade barriers, restrictions on foreign exchange and commodity controls. Hull had been instructed not to discuss war debts, disarmament or the stabilisation of currencies.⁹⁶ Roosevelt issued this injunction to prevent agreements that could endanger his program of domestic economic recovery. He feared that measures such as adhering to the gold standard and granting concessions on tariffs and debt would restrict US monetary policy in implementing the New Deal. To the chagrin of Britain, France and the other sixty-four nations at the conference, Roosevelt refused to enter an agreement to stabilise currencies because he suspected that the French and British would manipulate their exchange rates, which would undo the depreciation of the US currency that had followed his own abandonment of the gold standard. The influential journal *The Economist* believed that Roosevelt's decision placed US interests above the stability of the world economy: 'The United States refused to consider a return to the gold standard, and that exchange stability depended on the rest of the world maintaining price levels comparable to the US'.⁹⁷ Roosevelt was committed to restoring international commerce, but the atmosphere of suspicion that caused the failure of the London Monetary and Economic Conference became a distinguishing feature of international relations during the 1930s.⁹⁸ The decade of the depression was conspicuous for the aggressive, nationalistic policies instituted by many nations.

*'The greatest advantages under prevailing world conditions':
Australia's trade diversion policy, 1934–1936*

A global economic slump was a poor environment in which to negotiate trade agreements. In the early 1930s Australia was attempting to negotiate a convention with the United States covering the terms under which Australian businessmen might be admitted into the country. For the Americans, a sticking point was 'the conduct of trade' between the two nations.⁹⁹ In particular, they objected to Australian customs regulations which imposed on exports from the United States 'circuitous and uneconomic' routes.¹⁰⁰ The Americans proposed to amend their immigration laws to allow entry of Australian businessmen, if Australian customs regulations were revised. In late 1930 the treaty had reached draft stage. The negotiations, conducted via the UK Foreign Office, stalled over the US counter-proposal, but this was not the only commercial dispute Australia had with the United States.¹⁰¹

When Australia looked to improve its overseas trade, the obvious problem was the unfavourable balance of trade with the United States. In 1927–1928,

for example, the United States accounted for 23.66 per cent of Australia's total imports, but 6.25 per cent of its exports.¹⁰² The reason for this imbalance was, as Hancock pointed out in his 1930 book *Australia*, because the economies of the two countries were competitive, not complementary.¹⁰³ Australia imported motor vehicles and other industrial products, but most of its agricultural commodities were already produced by US farmers.

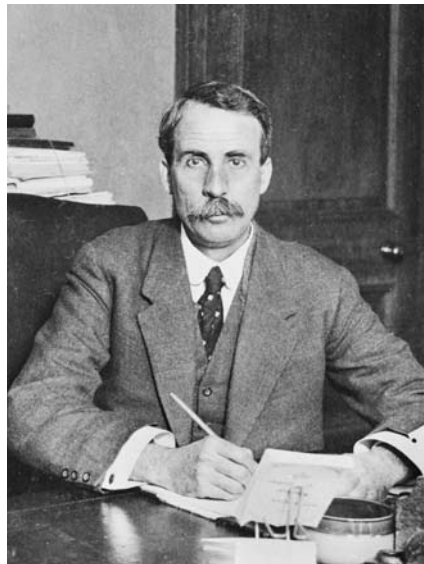
Rather than recognising this fact, in early June 1934 the Lyons government proposed to restructure trade with the United States on a basis that would give Australian goods preferential entry. As an opening gambit the Australian proposals were, in the words of the chairman of the US Tariff Commission, Robert O'Brien, 'unexampled in commercial negotiations' and not something that the United States could 'safely give consideration to'.¹⁰⁴ Australia had listed five commodities as the main points for negotiation, including free entry of a 'reasonable amount of wool' with progressive reductions in duty, and the right to export 50,000 tons of butter, either free or at a nominal duty, and 10,000 tons of beef under similar conditions. Perhaps the most audacious aspect of the proposal was a request for the United States to restrict its exports of apples and dried and canned fruits to Europe and the United Kingdom 'in the interest of Australian exports' in that market!¹⁰⁵ Discussing these proposals with Australia's high commissioner to the United Kingdom, Stanley Bruce (who was visiting the United States), the assistant secretary of state, Francis Sayre, pointed out that it was unsound to attempt to balance trade between the United States and individual countries. Bruce agreed but nevertheless pressed Australia's case on the grounds that the severe depression made it a special case.¹⁰⁶ Sayre countered that, for domestic reasons, it was prudent for the United States to begin its program of trade negotiations 'with countries whose products were not so directly competitive' with its own.¹⁰⁷

The Australian proposals were completely at odds with the Roosevelt administration's approach. Rather than preferential reciprocal arrangements, the United States wanted a general lowering of tariff barriers. Communication over the proposals was slow, but when Secretary of State Cordell Hull replied to Lyons in January 1935, he noted that the US trade program, 'far from diverting trade from one country to another [had] as its chief purpose the opening up on world trade by lessening generally the obstacles to trade'.¹⁰⁸ In Australia the rejection of the prime minister's proposals was 'not altogether unexpected'.¹⁰⁹ However, there was little to gain from the program outlined by Hull. While the United States was spending vast sums of money to take agricultural commodities out of production, Australia was proposing to export many of the same commodities into the US market at concessional rates. In

reality, the United States could do little to assist Australia without damaging its own interests.

When Lyons visited Washington on his way back from London in 1935, he was Roosevelt's guest and had discussions with Hull. In a tradition that dated back to Deakin and Hughes, Lyons raised the idea of a security pact covering the Pacific. The president's response was favourable. He expressed his belief that peace was important and that he would consider an agreement with Japan or any other nation in order to secure it.¹¹⁰ Commercial matters were not discussed with the president and Hull could do little than reiterate his country's position. Lyons returned to Australia without any economic concessions from the United States.

Arriving in Sydney as the trade dispute gathered force was a new US consul-general, Jay Pierrepont Moffat, an experienced and well-educated diplomat who welcomed his posting. He had been chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, with responsibilities that covered the whole of the British Commonwealth. His arrival in the spring of 1935 coincided with an Australian government decision to act on the imbalance of trade. In October he met the minister for external affairs, Sir George Pearce, who provided Moffat with a full inventory of Australia's resentments towards the United States.



Senator George Pearce, Minister for External Affairs, 1935. Pearce felt that the US–Australian relationship had reached its peak in 1908 with the visit of the Great White Fleet and had been going downhill ever since

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

During the interview, Pearce even found reasons to mention the US refusal to join the League of Nations. The minister also warned Moffat that, unless the United States acted to improve the trade imbalance, Australia would take steps to curtail US imports.¹¹¹ Moffat found antagonism towards US trade policies was widespread and at times they were 'so bitterly resented as to amount to almost an obsession'.¹¹²

Australia's trade relations with the United States were uppermost in the minds of many businessmen, especially those who sought to export to the United States. Just prior to the passing of the trade diversion bill, the wine producer Leo Buring had written to Lyons about trade relations with the United States. He had been forced to pay £2 10s for a visa to enter the United States on business, whereas France and Germany did not charge a similar fee. Buring learned from Moffat that if Australia did not impose a similar charge on Americans, the

United States would be happy to drop the requirement as part of a reciprocal arrangement. Buring's view was that 'these small matters always act as pin-pricks when they are really of no benefit to either our finances or our trade'.¹¹³ He also urged Lyons to adopt measures that would improve Australia's trade with the world and mentioned Japan and the United States as trading partners that Australia could not afford to offend: 'it would be detrimental if the policy of the government is to be ... the introduction of legislation which will reduce the trade either way that is now existing between the two countries'.¹¹⁴ Lyons restated the philosophy behind the legislation:

Unhappily so many countries have embraced the bilateral principle ... that there is practically no prospect of increasing exports to 'good customer' countries unless we are prepared to afford those countries some facilities for expanding their trade with Australia. So long as international trade is largely governed by these principles the policy of the Commonwealth must necessarily be shaped to attain for Australian industries as a whole the greatest advantages under prevailing world conditions. It will, I think, be apparent to you that if 'good customer' countries insist on a measure of reciprocity in their trade with Australia we in turn have no alternative but to make the same demands on our 'bad customer' countries. To ignore the trends in international trade and act otherwise would only endanger equilibrium in our balance of payments.¹¹⁵

Lyons' position was at once pragmatic and parochial. The government would be acting on the basis that retaliation was a legitimate policy when dealing with 'bad customer' countries.

On 1 April the resentment against the United States came to the fore in the House of Representatives when Archie Cameron, the member for Barker, alleged that 'Everything is for the United States of America and nothing for the other fellow'.¹¹⁶ Moffat was concerned and urged Hull to send a telegram

to Lyons. The secretary of state did so, declaring that America was 'not indifferent to [Australia's] welfare' and pointing out that misconceptions over the US policy probably had their basis in 'the absence of [Australian] diplomatic representatives with whom constant contact could be maintained'.¹¹⁷ Despite these



*Jay Pierrepont
Moffat, US Consul-
General in Sydney,
1935-37*

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AND RECORDS
ADMINISTRATION

reassurances, and the hint about diplomatic relations, the government began drafting legislation for a licensing system that would restrict trade with the United States.¹¹⁸ As the minister for trade negotiations, Sir Henry Gullet, told the parliament when he introduced the bill on 22 May 1936, the government would be prepared to consider ‘a modification of the restrictions in proportion to increased purchases from Australia’.¹¹⁹ The intention of the bill was to pressure the United States into concessions. However, it was a blunt instrument with which the Lyons government managed to alienate not only the Americans, but also Japan.

Japan retaliated swiftly. One month after the Australian law passed, the Japanese imposed a licensing system of their own on Australian wheat, flour and wool. Other Australian goods were subject to high duties, and trade between the two countries effectively ceased.¹²⁰ The impact of the trade diversion policy on Australia’s trade with the United States was £2 million, or 20 per cent of the annual volume of bilateral trade. Moreover, the licensing system could damage some Australian industries. Had the United States chosen to follow the Japanese example and limit the number of vehicle chassis exported to Australia, the move would have hurt the tiny Australian motor vehicle industry.¹²¹ Remarkably, the Americans did not immediately impose restrictions. Instead, they waited until August before withdrawing Australia’s benefits under the trade agreements legislation. As Hull told the visiting New South Wales premier, Bertram Stevens,

I was amazed at our Australian friends ... on suddenly learning that they, for whom we have entertained the warmest friendship, are putting a knife to our throat and bending every effort to obstruct and prevent this great beneficial trade program of ours from being carried forward ... more surprising still, our Australian friends ... expect us to continue to be their friends.¹²²

To Moffat it was clear that the impetus behind Australia’s policy was expediency for domestic reasons. As he informed Hull in April, Lyons was acting out of the need to preserve his leadership. He was ‘not a strong man and ... even less a deep man; he possesses the Australian characteristic of seeing the immediate effect of any given policy and ignoring its long-term implications’.¹²³ It should also be recognised, however, that Lyons headed a fractious coalition, comprising Nationalists like the hard-line Gullet, and former Labor men like himself. The prime minister was noted for his tact, a quality useful for maintaining consensus and keeping the United Australia Party together. In this context, the trade diversion policy is perhaps best seen as a political compromise. Moffat reserved his strongest criticisms for Gullet, who he believed was motivated by a sense of personal frustration:

He has tried for years (unsuccessfully) to conclude a trade treaty; his personal policy is bankrupt; he has sold his birthright of economic orthodoxy for the pottage of expediency. His speech [of 1 April] in parliament on American trade was grossly unfair, full of *suggestio falsi et suppressio veri* [false suggestions and suppressions of the truth]; in two places he came perilously close to misrepresenting our position.¹²⁴

A government memorandum explained, 'one of the principal advantages of the licensing system is that it provides a flexible method of regulating imports'.¹²⁵ Perhaps another mechanism might have been more appropriate. The deterioration in Australia's relations with the United States and Japan could not have come at a worse time. In October of 1935, in his initial interview with Moffat, Sir George Pearce reckoned that Australia's relations with the United States had reached their height with the Great White Fleet and since then they had been in decline.¹²⁶ Perhaps his pessimism was also a reflection of the decline in the world's security environment.

'The narrowness and intolerance of militarism': Disarmament and rearmament, 1930–1936

The five years between the first and second London Naval Disarmament Conferences witnessed a seismic shift in international relations, with a general move away from the cooperative spirit of disarmament to a confrontational mood that promoted rearmament. In 1930 at the first London Conference diplomats and statesmen were still firmly in control of the agenda. During the treaty's ratification hearings before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Henry Stimson dismissed the objections of many military professionals:

Opposition comes mainly from some extremists among professional warriors ... The critics are naval officers—fighting men. They are handicapped by a kind of training which tends to make men think of war as the only possible defense against war ... They are naturally against any naval limitation ... I have no intention of including all naval men in this criticism ... [but in general he believed that] ... The professional military viewpoint ... is narrow ... only covers a portion of the field ... Never was the narrowness and intolerance of militarism exhibited in more striking light.¹²⁷

However, as the trade barriers went up, the forces of competition, nationalism and militarism destroyed any hopes of the kind of arms limitations achieved in Washington in 1922 and London in 1930.

In 1925, the League of Nations had created a commission to investigate the scope of disarmament and the methods by which it could be achieved. In 1931

the commission drew up a framework for arms limitation discussions and a Disarmament Conference was called to begin in Geneva in February 1932. The hope was that the conference might bring about a worldwide reduction in arms. It was attended by sixty-one nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union. The negotiations were soon mired in details. The issue of aircraft proved to be particularly divisive. As an island, the United Kingdom wanted to prohibit strategic aerial bombardment. However, discriminating between the ‘tactical’ use of aircraft and their ‘strategic’ employment rapidly became contentious and highly technical.¹²⁸ A sub-committee was devoted to drawing up a complicated set of proposals to regulate civil aviation and restrict the construction, payloads and range of military aircraft. There were similar disagreements over aircraft carriers. The Japanese felt threatened by the prospect of air attacks from carrier-based aircraft and attempted to have the conference eliminate aircraft carriers altogether. More generally, France was reluctant to agree to any arms limitation because of its fear of German aggression. For its part, Germany argued that all nations should be forced to disarm to the levels imposed upon it by the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, if there was no general disarmament, Germany would have the right to rearm in self-defence.

The complexity of the issues and the general level of distrust meant that the negotiations reached a stalemate by June 1933. When negotiations resumed in mid-October, Adolf Hitler withdrew from both the conference and the League of Nations and began overt preparations to rearm. The Japanese had left the League in March, over the refusal of the League’s assembly to recognise its puppet regime in Manchukuo (Manchuria). Japan’s departure gave it a free hand in China and the ability to refuse access to its mandated islands in the Pacific, which it began to fortify. The Imperial Japanese Navy also began to build warships that violated the 1930 London Treaty. By the time the Second London Naval Treaty was signed in March 1936, the only great power signatories were France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Japan had withdrawn from negotiations in January, and Italy refused to sign because of the opposition of the League to its invasion of Abyssinia. By this stage the concept of disarmament, naval or otherwise, was moot. Germany, Japan and Italy had embarked on expansionist policies backed by extensive rearmament. As the world recovered from the depression, all nations began to build their defences.

‘The counsel of despair’: Australia’s defence preparations, 1936

The deteriorating international security situation increased Australia’s fear of Japanese aggression. Australia’s anxiety over conditions in the Pacific rose throughout the 1930s. In 1933, the US decision to grant the Philippines the first step towards independence was balanced by the decision to expand Pearl

Harbor to accommodate the entire battle fleet. Australia's discomfort at the news that the United States might withdraw from the Philippines was increased by speculation over the future security of the islands. Talk of guaranteed neutralisation increased Australian fears that Japan would fill the strategic vacuum created when the Americans departed. Even the United States accepted that if the Japanese occupied the islands, 'with unrestricted naval building in view and having eliminated the ... threat of an American naval base in eastern waters, Japan believes that she could disregard the United States and proceed with her Asiatic ambitions'.¹²⁹ The nature of these ambitions was manifest from Japanese aggression against the Chinese in the Mukden Incident in 1931 and the Shanghai Incident of 1932. In 1935, Lyons had failed to interest Roosevelt in a mutual security pact. The United States' lack of interest meant that Australia's primary defence still rested with the Royal Navy, the Singapore base and the main fleet concept.

The army still had little faith in the policy and wanted the government to increase the ability of the land and air forces to repel raids. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, several chiefs of the general staff had tried to increase the funding for coastal fortifications and augment the size of the army. In July 1934, the Chief of the General Staff, Major General Julius Bruche, convinced Senator Pearce, now the defence minister, not to scrap the army's plans for defence against invasion.¹³⁰ In October 1934, Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, visited Australia to report on its defence arrangements and boost confidence in imperial defence cooperation. Hankey also struggled to debunk the idea of raids and invasion.¹³¹ He even recommended that the Australian army be reduced from seven divisions to three. His report reignited the dispute between the navy and the army over how to defend the Commonwealth.

In April 1936, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* published an article entitled 'How Can We Defend Australia?'¹³² The minister for defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill, was incensed by the article, which suggested a greater role for the army and air force. The story followed a series of attacks on the government's policy by the Labor opposition. Parkhill had been stung by criticisms of defence policy during a debate in parliament by the leader of the opposition, John Curtin.¹³³ Curtin called for greater self-reliance and local defence, with more attention to land and air forces. He was adamant that 'a really effective system of Imperial defence with the Royal Australian Navy as a unit thereof does not meet the requirements for Australia's safety'.¹³⁴ Parkhill, who knew little about his portfolio, was particularly angered by the fact that Curtin's critique mirrored the arguments of the army.¹³⁵ Suspecting a deliberate leak, he called for an investigation. Colonel Henry Wynter and Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Beavis

were both removed from their posts. Wynter was never court-martialled. The evidence against him was circumstantial, including the fact that his son was a journalist with the *Daily Telegraph*. Despite attempts to clear his name, he was refused any recourse to justice.¹³⁶ Beavis had been the author of technical reports that were also critical of defence preparations.¹³⁷ Both men appear to have been victims of a minister unsure of himself and intent on reinforcing the orthodoxies provided by his senior military and political advisers. When the Military Board, which comprised navy, army and air force members, seemed to support the thrust of the *Daily Telegraph* article, Parkhill asked the Naval Board to comment. The board supported the policy of imperial defence, but also stated alarmingly:

The Naval Board wish to stress that the temporary decline of British Naval strength to a level dangerously low against certain foreign combinations is no argument for abandoning the principles of naval defence. The Naval Board regard this theory of deliberate 'isolation' and concentration on 'protection against invasion' as a counsel of despair both strategically and politically unsound.¹³⁸

*Cover of a
souvenir booklet*

AUSTRALIAN
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MARITIME MUSEUM





*Two battleships
and a fleet tender
in Sydney Harbour*

PERIER COLLECTION,
STATE LIBRARY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES



*A ferry passes by
USS California in
Sydney Harbour.
Thousands of people
visited the ships on
open days*

PERIER COLLECTION,
STATE LIBRARY OF NEW
SOUTH WALES

*Sun News
Pictorial,*
25 July 1925
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AUSTRALIA

Forecast: Mists and fogs; inland frosts, otherwise fine. Variable winds.

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FOR AUSTRALIA
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A SHOCKING ACCIDENT MARRIED THE MARCH OF THE AMERICAN SAILORS yesterday. The verandah of Hoyts Theatre and Spencer's drapery establishment collapsed under the weight of many men, women and children. More than 100 people were injured, and pathetic scenes were witnessed during the prompt rescue work. The picture shows the surging crowd being kept back by U.S.A. marines and mounted troopers. The motor-bus was utilised to take the injured people to hospitals.




from a section of the verandah severed from its fall.

A first-aid service station that was quickly established.

Sun News
Pictorial,
25 July 1925

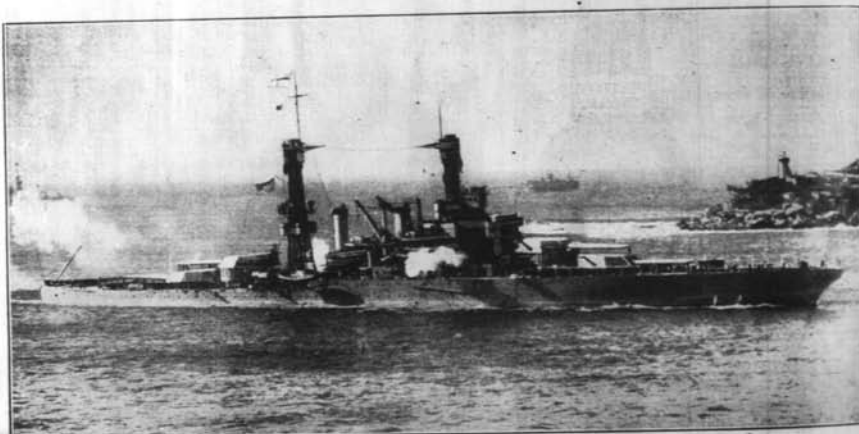
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THE SUN NEWS-PICTORIAL, SATURDAY, JULY 25, 1925



"AND THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER IN TRIUMPH DOETH WAVE."—One of the U.S.A. naval bands leading 2000 men down Macquarie-street, Sydney, on Thursday. In contrast to the grey mists of Melbourne, brilliant sunshine flooded the procession.



A STEEL THROATED ROAR BOOMED OVER SYDNEY HARBOR when the flagship, California, fired her salute guns soon after entering the water Roads.



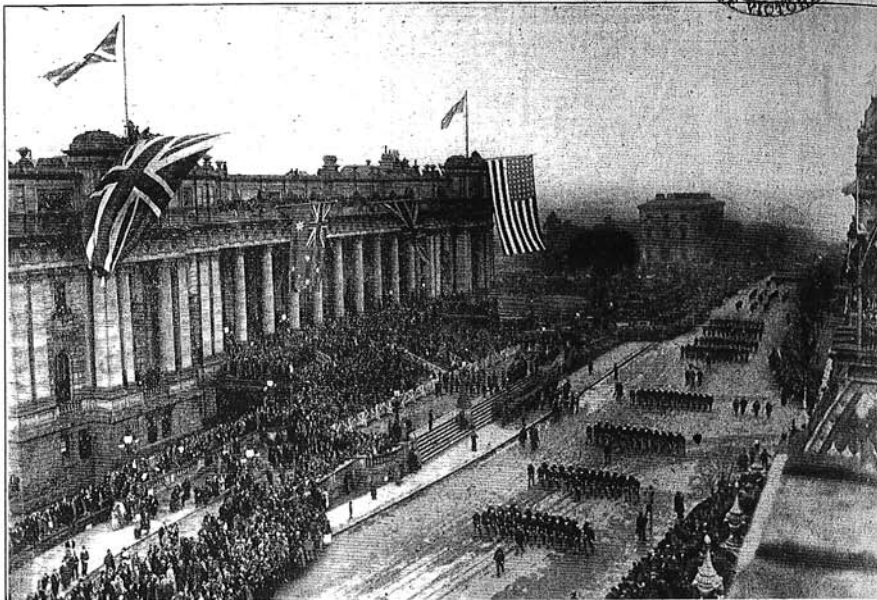
ST. KILDA'S OFFICIAL WELCOME TO THE FLEET was given yesterday morning. In the centre is Admiral Counts with Mrs. Counts, beside whom is the Mayor of St. Kilda (Cr. Levi) in his robes of office. Between the Admiral and his staff officers is Mrs. Levi.

*Sun News
Pictorial,
25 July 1925*

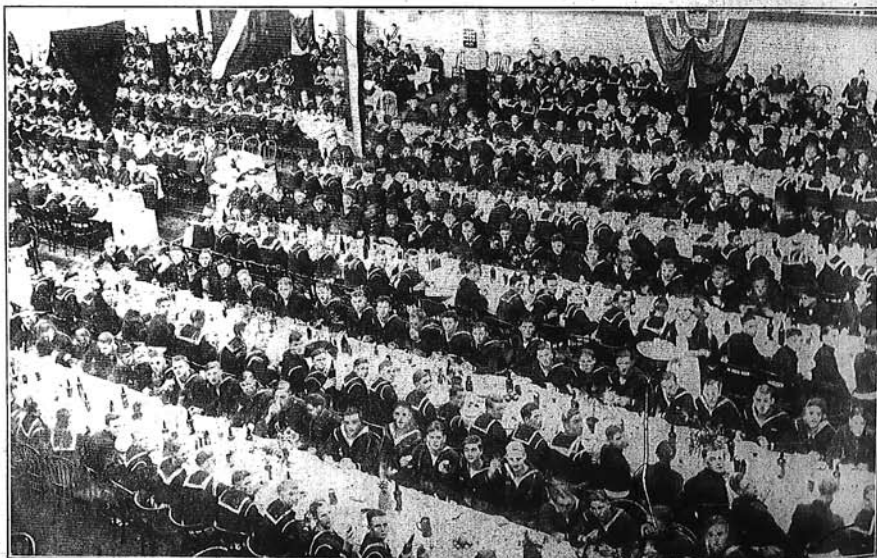
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THE SUN NEWS-P ICTORIAL, SATURDAY, JULY 25, 1925



"TRAMP, TRAMP, THE BOYS ARE MARCHING."—The American sailors after turning out of Collins-street, proceeding past the saluting base at Federal Parliament House yesterday. The picture was taken from the top of the Princess Theatre.



AN ATTACK WAS MADE BY THE 2000 MEN OF THE FLEET who marched through the city yesterday. It was upon the viands prepared for them in the Exhibition Building. "Some menu!" declared the sailors. They were dry after the march, a fact that was not overlooked. All palates were catered for, and the men proceeded to have an "un-corking" good time!



*USS California
leads the
battleship
division
into Sydney.
Watercolour:
Fred Elliott,
c. 1925*

AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL
MARITIME
MUSEUM



*Admiral Coontz
is welcomed at
St Kilda*

STATE LIBRARY
OF VICTORIA

*US marines from
the combined fleet
marching down
Swanston Street,
Melbourne*

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
MARITIME MUSEUM



*Sailors marching
past the reviewing
stand, Spring Street,
Melbourne*

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4 Diplomatic representation and war



1937–1941

This chapter examines the development of Australian–US relations from just before the outbreak of the undeclared Sino-Japanese war in 1937 to the US attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. At the beginning of 1937, the Washington Treaty system was on the verge of collapse. At that time, Australia took the initiative to establish a new treaty in the Pacific that committed the signatories to the status quo in the Pacific and to the open-door policy in China (excluding Manchukuo). The failure of this initiative, the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China in 1937, and the looming war in Europe prompted the Lyons government to agree in 1939 to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Australia and the United States. War between the British Commonwealth and Germany, and the latter's successful *blitzkrieg* attack on France, emboldened Australia's wartime prime minister, R.G. Menzies, to appeal in 1940 for an English-speaking alliance against Germany.

After the fall of France and Japan's alliance with the Axis powers, Germany and Italy, Australian governments led successively by Robert Menzies, Arthur Fadden and John Curtin unsuccessfully sought a guarantee from the United States of armed support in the event of a Japanese attack in the Far East. The administration of Franklin Roosevelt, both for constitutional reasons and the state of US public opinion, would not give such a guarantee. The US government steadily increased an economic embargo on Japan, threatening to cut off its oil supplies unless it reversed its foreign policy. At the same time, the United Kingdom and Australia worried about the possibility that Japan might confine

*In 1941,
Australia had
three prime
ministers within
the space of two
months.*

*L–R: John
Curtin, Arthur
Fadden and
Robert Menzies*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



its attacks to UK and Netherlands possessions and begin a Pacific war in which the United States would remain neutral. The United Kingdom itself was threatened by invasion from Germany and it was unclear whether the Royal Navy would be able to reinforce the naval base at Singapore, so Australia

looked increasingly to the US Pacific Fleet for security in 1940 and 1941. A visit of part of the fleet to Australian shores in March 1941 reprised the warm reception that the Great White Fleet had received in 1908. But Australia's strategic position steadily worsened during the rest of 1941. After the breakdown of diplomatic negotiations between Japan and the United States, Japan launched an attack on Pearl Harbor that brought with it the most serious challenge that the Commonwealth of Australia had ever faced.

Australia's suggestion for a regional pact in the Pacific and the Sino-Japanese war

At the beginning of 1937, the Australian government was seriously concerned by developments in the Pacific and the Far East. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Washington Conference of 21 November 1921 to 6 February 1922 had resulted in three treaties of particular relevance to Australia. First, a nine-power collective treaty had guaranteed China's independence. Second, a quadruple UK–French–Japanese–US treaty had guaranteed the territories of the other signatories in the Pacific. Third, a tripartite naval convention had pledged the naval powers in the Far East not to build capital ships for ten years, and established a ratio for capital ships of 5:5:3 between the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan. The treaties were to remain in force until two years after notification of withdrawal by any of the signatories.

The nine-power treaty, however, lacked any means for its enforcement. So when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, the United States could do little more than issue protests and apply economic sanctions. In the 1920s and 1930s, action in the western Pacific on a major scale was beyond the resources of the US Navy and the bases at its disposal. This was notwithstanding the navy's Basic War Plan Orange. This strategic plan, which dominated interwar US thinking, conceded that, in the early phase of war in the Pacific, Japan would conquer

lightly defended outposts and easily seize the raw materials and oil of South-East Asia. But the US fleet would mobilise in the eastern Pacific and steam westwards with superior naval and air power. After two or three years, according to the plan, it would regain a base in the Philippines, interdict Japan's ocean trade, and at length fight a 'cataclysmic gunnery engagement which American dreadnoughts would win'.¹² The plan found its way into US strategic thinking after the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in 1942, but in the 1930s, as the historian Waldo Heinrichs has argued, 'it simply would not work, given the existing strengths of the two fleets and the great distance that had to be covered under constant attritional attack'.³

As we saw in the last chapter, Japan, in retaliation against the sanctions imposed after invading Manchuria and the US non-recognition of Manchukuo, withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. In the following year, it gave notice of withdrawal from the provisions of the Washington Naval Treaty which caused it to lapse at the end of 1936. A further Naval Conference in London in 1935 and 1936 resulted in a new naval treaty that set limits on capital ships and guns and provided for advance notice of new naval construction. The British Commonwealth, France and the United States signed the new treaty, but neither Japan nor Italy adhered to it. The latter's aggression against Abyssinia in 1935, on top of the earlier Japanese seizure of Manchuria, had drawn attention to the limits of the League of Nations in enforcing peace.⁴ A world organisation including only three major powers (the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union) and without Germany, Japan or the United States, was shown to be toothless.

In the case of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, the Lyons government had worried that the imposition of sanctions on Italy might spark a war which both Germany and Japan would join. In the event, the dispute drew Italy and Germany closer together and alienated Italy from the League of Nations. Japan also became increasingly estranged from the League and the West. In 1934, Japan issued a statement to the effect that it alone was responsible for maintaining the peace in Asia, and in the following year it overtly extended its control and influence in northern China.⁵ While Japan in the 1920s had been committed to the League of Nations and its surrounding rules of international behaviour, it became increasingly disillusioned in the 1930s with the Versailles settlement and the notional Washington Conference system of cooperation in the Far East. This disillusionment was accompanied by the subordination of civilian policy-making institutions to the military.⁶

Australia's greatest fear in the approach to World War II was that the United Kingdom would be engaged with war against Germany, and perhaps Italy, in Europe while simultaneously fighting Japan in the Far East. In those

circumstances Australia would be in danger of raids from Japan, attacks on its shipping, or even direct invasion. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Samuel Hoare, frankly admitted to the Australians in May 1937 that if the Japanese navy were unopposed by the UK fleet and determined to launch a naval expedition against Australia, covered by the full strength of its naval and armed forces, then 'no measures of local defence, no Army and no Air Force which the Commonwealth of Australia could conceivably maintain could save her from invasion and defeat at the hands of the Japanese'.⁷ The UK government, however, gave assurances that Australia would be secure from invasion as long as the Singapore naval base held out against attack. Even so, some Australian defence planners remained concerned in the late 1930s that either the British would not be able to send a fleet to the Far East at all, or that what they did send would be insufficient to protect the base.⁸ While the Australian government continued to endorse the Singapore strategy, the US Navy loomed increasingly larger in Australian strategic thinking as World War II approached.

*Prime Minister
Lyons attempted
to ease tensions in
the Pacific at the
1937 Imperial
Conference in
London*

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE



In response to adverse developments, both global and regional, Australia's prime minister, Joseph Lyons, took an initiative to ease tension in the Pacific at the Imperial Conference held in London from 14 May to June 1937. He envisaged a regional understanding and pact of non-aggression conceived in the spirit of the League of Nations. Lyons argued that the Washington Treaties had helped to maintain peace in the Pacific over the previous fifteen years and warned that developments in world affairs in the 1930s, particularly the arms race, threatened that peace. What he had in mind was to revive the Washington

Treaties. The new arrangement would model itself on the quadruple treaty, embrace a general declaration of non-aggression and respect for the sovereignty of the other signatories, and reiterate the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928 which renounced war as an instrument of state policy. Any new Anglo-Japanese understanding, Lyons considered, had to include a mutual policy respecting the integrity and independence of China and the continued maintenance of the open-door policy. The corollary of this was that, if China could receive international guarantees against any further acts of aggression or violation

of its sovereignty by Japan, it would be ready to collaborate in a wider Pacific agreement.

China welcomed Lyons' proposal and, within the US State Department, the chief of the Far Eastern Division, Stanley Hornbeck, advocated wholehearted US support.⁹ The British, however, treated the idea with scepticism. UK ministers and officials were unhappy that Australia had not consulted them beforehand about the initiative and worried what to do about Manchukuo. More importantly, Japan, the only country which threatened the security of the Pacific, immediately ruled itself out of such a treaty.¹⁰ By the beginning of July 1937, Lyons' idea had therefore gone nowhere. It was killed off when war between China and Japan began on 14 July.

Relations between the United States and Japan steadily worsened during this undeclared Sino-Japanese war, especially after Japan accidentally sank the USS *Panay* in December 1937. Following the sinking of the *Panay* and Japan's sacking of the Nationalist Chinese capital, Nanking, the United States approached the United Kingdom to join a naval blockade of Japan to deter its aggression in China. It is not clear whether Australia would have welcomed such Anglo-American naval cooperation or deprecated the prospect of war with Japan. The idea, however, was aborted when the UK prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, advised Roosevelt that he was about to launch his plan for appeasement in Europe that commenced with recognition of Italy's conquests in Abyssinia.¹¹ This policy required a strong UK fleet in the Mediterranean to persuade the Italian leader, Benito Mussolini, to respond favourably. The Anglo-American blockade idea was in any case never viable in 1938 because the naval base at Singapore would not have been able to accommodate a large battle fleet for at least another two years. This left the British without the naval strength to back up a robust Far Eastern diplomacy and with no other choice but to try to appease Japan.¹²

Meanwhile, with war threatening to break out in Europe and the Pacific, President Roosevelt authorised a billion-dollar Naval Expansion Bill aimed ultimately at giving the United States a two-ocean capability. The plan involved the building of two new battleships, more naval aircraft and 40,000 tons of carriers in addition to the three in construction and three others operational. Nonetheless, this still left the United States behind Japan, which had six in operation and was building more.¹³

Establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States

It occurred to some critics of the Australian government to question why it would initiate its Pacific Pact idea without having formal diplomatic representation in either Washington or Tokyo. The Lyons government was

*The Lyons
Ministry, 1939*DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

philosophically not disposed to extend Dominion responsibilities in foreign affairs. Its instinct was to strengthen imperial communication rather than to establish a separate Australian diplomatic network. One reason why it was antipathetic to separate Australian diplomatic representation was fear of the supposed deleterious effect of expanded Dominion representation in foreign countries on imperial unity. As the attorney-general, Robert Menzies, wrote to Lyons as late as January 1939: 'my feeling is that if each Dominion begins separately to accredit diplomatic representatives to foreign powers, grave divisions in our foreign policies will begin to appear and a serious blow will have been delivered at British unity'.¹⁴

The more nationalist of the Dominions, the Irish Free State, Canada and South Africa, had begun to establish diplomatic missions in overseas countries from the 1920s onwards.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the prospect of this practice being systematically extended raised the uncomfortable question of how the potentially different foreign policies of the United Kingdom and the Dominions could be reconciled. An even more unpalatable prospect for Australia was that some parts of the British Empire could be at war and others neutral. As the UK Foreign Office had warned in 1926: 'It is obvious that if this is so the British Empire has ceased to exist as an international entity'.¹⁶ Another reason for Australian reluctance to establish separate diplomatic missions abroad was that many United Australia Party and Country Party ministers felt that Australia could gain all the information it required about foreign countries from the UK embassies in those countries. Most Australian politicians were conscious of the costs of maintaining diplomatic missions abroad and happy to let Britain pay for it, while Labor politicians generally viewed diplomats as elitist.

Consequently, the Lyons government sought not to establish its own diplomatic network in the mid-1930s but to strengthen the flow of information from important UK posts in the Pacific region to Canberra. This would be

achieved, the Lyons government considered, by placing Australian officials in UK embassies. In October 1936 Lyons asked Bruce, the high commissioner in London, to sound out the Foreign Office about the possibility of officers of the Australian Department of External Affairs being attached to the staffs of the UK embassies in Washington and Tokyo. The UK foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, responded favourably to the Australian idea, and Lyons proceeded to transfer an experienced Australian diplomat, Keith Officer, from the high commission in London to the UK embassy in Washington where he assumed duty on 3 May 1937. The appointment of Keith Officer to the UK embassy in Washington was also seen as a good way of mitigating any misunderstanding that might have resulted from the trade diversion policy and of providing a means of approach to the US government.

In the late 1930s, however, with war looming, some of Australia's leading policy-makers and political commentators began to feel the necessity for direct Australian representation abroad. One reason for this was an emerging sense that Australian interests might not always coincide with UK interests and that Australia consequently required its own sources of information and its own representatives overseas to express its policy. Another was that powerful foreign countries, most importantly the United States, were pressing Australia to follow the example of other British Dominions in establishing foreign missions abroad.¹⁷ A third reason was the sense that Australia could actually add to UK prestige and unity abroad, rather than subtract from it, by establishing legations. The view that diverging Australian and UK interests necessitated separate Australian representation was admittedly not one that was widely held by members of the Lyons government. Lyons himself, however, had been given cause to worry about the possible divergence of Australian and UK interests in the Far East by the failure of his initiative in 1937 for a Pacific Pact. He doubtless felt the UK rebuff to his initiative personally, and this may have sowed the seeds for his cabinet's later decision to establish direct representation abroad.

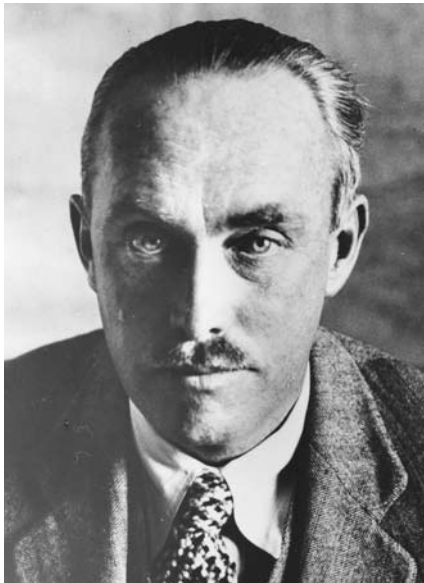
If Lyons was feeling uneasy about Australia's lack of direct representation in Tokyo and Washington towards the end of the 1930s, it is not clear that many of his other ministers were. The decision to extend the liaison system had only been taken in 1937, and Australian ministers were generally concerned to give it a fair trial rather than to embark on a course that was potentially harmful to the unity of the British Empire. The view that Australian interests in the Far East differed from the United Kingdom's was expressed publicly not by members of the Lyons government but by newspapers and people outside the government. One such critic was the professor of history at the University of Queensland, A.C.V. Melbourne. Melbourne was interested in East Asia and the university, with the approval of the Queensland government, had sent him to China and

Japan in 1931. He had applied unsuccessfully in 1935 for the position of trade commissioner in Tokyo, but returned to the Far East in 1936 where he compiled a report on the universities of China and Japan.¹⁸

On the basis of his first-hand experience of East Asia, Melbourne wrote to Lyons at the end of December 1938.¹⁹ He argued that Japan was aware of the weakness of the position of the United Kingdom in the Far East and that continued UK support for China might precipitate an Anglo-Japanese war, of which Australia would have to bear the brunt with little support from the United Kingdom. He considered that UK hostility was driving Japan into the arms of Germany, and that Japan might possibly adopt German tactics against Australia, for example in demanding that Australia permit Japanese immigration. Melbourne suggested that, in view of the possible consequences, all members of the British Commonwealth should take part in the formulation of UK foreign policy on China. He also submitted that the Australian government should appoint ministers to the United States and Japan, and that it should work towards an effective alliance between the British Commonwealth and the United States, or at least an agreement between Australia and the United States covering the UK area. In a second letter dated 28 December 1938, Melbourne elaborated his theme that passive acquiescence in UK policy might involve Australia in an unnecessary war with Japan, despite the fact that most Japanese were not hostile to Australia. Lyons distributed copies of Melbourne's letters to all his ministers and the high commission in London.²⁰

The reaction of Lyons' ministers to Melbourne's ideas was mostly negative. Menzies, the attorney-general, Archie Cameron, the postmaster-general, and

W.M. Hughes, the minister for external affairs, all criticised the idea of separate Australian representation overseas. Despite the negativity or indifference of his colleagues, R.G. Casey, the treasurer, was moved to write to Keith Officer, Australia's liaison officer in Washington, to obtain his view. Surprisingly, Officer, who had until then been a strong supporter of Australian liaison with UK missions, gave qualified support to establishing an Australian legation in Washington. On the one hand, he considered that the presence of an Australian counsellor in Washington was sufficient to supply Australia with



*Keith Officer
was Australia's
counsellor
attached to the
British embassy
in Washington,
1937-40*

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information about the United States and to provide the UK ambassador with advice on matters affecting Australian interests. Moreover, he thought that the liaison system was an extremely cheap method of doing things. On the other hand, he saw advantages in direct Australian representation. The United States clearly wanted Australia to be represented in Washington in the same way as were Canada and South Africa, and an Australian legation would enable Australia ‘to make representations on a definitely Australian basis from time to time at the State Department not only formally but informally’. Officer went on:

So the question boils down to this—what do we want? Merely information, or do we wish to play a more important part? If the latter, we must have our own Legation. As you know, I was always a supporter of the present system: I admit frankly that I am becoming a supporter of the idea of a Legation mainly for the reason that I believe in these times of stress an Australian Legation co-operating closely with the British Embassy would be some use to British prestige and influence in this country.²¹

In March 1939 the Lyons cabinet changed its mind about separate representation overseas. The precise reasons are not entirely clear. It seems that Casey had been converted to the idea and Pearce was urging it from retirement.²² Perhaps more importantly, Bruce visited Washington in 1938 on his way for a brief visit to Australia. There Bruce confided to Moffat that he had concluded that relations with Washington should be established and promised that he would recommend the project to his prime minister.²³ Moffat had a generally low opinion of Australian



Stanley Bruce, Australia's high commissioner in London, and Robert Menzies, attorney-general in the Lyons government

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politicians but a high regard for Bruce and Menzies. In a memorandum to his superiors written in the late 1930s, he commented: ‘In fact, at the present moment I should select only two public figures in Australia as having the mental equipment to hold their own in any international gathering: Mr Stanley Bruce, the present High Commissioner in London, and Mr Menzies, the Attorney-General’.²⁴ After speaking with Bruce, Lyons, still unsettled by the UK rejection

of his proposal for a Pacific Pact, gave it his imprimatur. Menzies, an opponent of separate Australian representation, had left the cabinet on 14 March because of a dispute with Lyons over the latter's deferment of a scheme for national insurance. With Menzies now on the back bench, the Lyons government opted for separate representation overseas. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 28 March 1939 that Lyons had instructed Bruce to return to London via the United States to discuss an exchange of US and Australian ministers.²⁵

On 30 March 1939, Lyons cabled the news to the secretary of state for Dominion affairs, Sir Thomas Inskip. He reminded Inskip of his 1937 initiative for a Pacific Pact, arguing that regional agreements made by separate members of the British Commonwealth would be of assistance both to the United Kingdom and the cause of general peace. Lyons regarded this issue as of paramount importance in international affairs and considered that Australia should establish separate diplomatic missions, commencing with Washington and Tokyo. The promotion of goodwill between the British Commonwealth and the United States, together with Australia's considerable trade interests in, and social, cultural and scientific contacts with the United States made Washington the obvious first selection. Lyons added that Japan would feel slighted if Australia established a mission in the United States. Consequently, Australia would also open a mission in Japan. Lyons concluded:

You will recall the fact that over a long period of years the policy of successive Australian Governments has been against the establishment of direct diplomatic representation abroad. Australia has steadfastly stood for the maintenance of the common British diplomatic front. We are still of this opinion and by the proposals contained in this telegram we do not in any way mean to imply that this common diplomatic front will be in any way endangered. We are moved to the present proposals solely by reason of the necessity to improve and cement Australian–American relations which we believe might be valuable to the cause of improved Anglo-American relations.²⁶

Lyons died suddenly from a heart attack on 7 April 1939. He was succeeded by the man who had been restless in the last years of his premiership, Robert Gordon Menzies. Menzies, although he had not been a member of the cabinet that made the decision to establish direct representation abroad, moved swiftly to announce it publicly. He did so in a radio broadcast on 26 April 1939 before receiving the views of the UK government on Australia's decision. This was because a leak of the Lyons cabinet's decision to the press had forced Menzies' hand.

In his speech announcing the decision, Menzies spoke of the importance of Britain to Australia. If Britain was at war, so would Australia be, even

though the war was in European battlefields. Menzies affirmed that, in European affairs, Australia must continue to be guided by Britain's knowledge and affected by its decisions. In the Pacific, however, Menzies declared that Australia had 'primary responsibilities and primary risks'.



Menzies and Churchill. Menzies believed that the Australian government had 'primary responsibilities and primary risks' in the Pacific

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The problems of the Pacific are different. What Great Britain calls the Far East is to us the near north. Little given as I am to encouraging exaggerated ideas of Dominion independence and separatism which exist in some minds, I have become convinced that, in the Pacific, Australia must regard herself as a principal providing herself with her own information and maintaining her own diplomatic contacts with foreign Powers. I do not mean by this that we are to act in the Pacific as if we were a completely separate Power; we must, of course, act as an integral part of the British Empire. We must have full consultation and co-operation with Great Britain, South Africa, New Zealand, and Canada. But all these consultations must be on the basis that the primary risk in the Pacific is borne by New Zealand and ourselves. With this in mind, I look forward to the day when we will have a concert of Pacific Powers, pacific in both senses of the word. This means increased diplomatic contact between ourselves and the United States, China, and Japan, to say nothing of the Netherlands East Indies and the other countries which fringe the Pacific.²⁷

Menzies indicated to the UK government that an Australian minister to Washington would be appointed as soon as a suitable person could be found. But over the next few months he kept changing his mind over whether a legation should be established in Tokyo at the same time as Washington or after it, and the related question of whether a minister should be appointed to China or a liaison officer simply attached to the UK embassy. The opening of the legation in Washington was therefore delayed for several months. In the meantime, war broke out between the United Kingdom and Germany, and on 3 September 1939, Menzies announced that, since Britain was at war, Australia also was at war. In the European war between Germany, later joined by Italy, on one side and France and the British Empire on the other, the United States remained

resolutely neutral. Under legislation enacted between 1935 and 1937, US citizens were forbidden to supply armaments or make loans to belligerents.

In September 1939, no appointment had been made to the new diplomatic position in Washington. The principal reason for the delay was the difficulty in finding a suitable minister to head it. In the middle of September 1939, Menzies sent a cablegram to Bruce, telling him that an Australian minister in Washington would perform an invaluable function 'if he were able to contribute towards a better British–American understanding and in particular the development of a growing sense of American responsibility for the integrity of another white English-speaking country on the Pacific Basin'.²⁸ Menzies indicated that he had considered resigning as prime minister to take it himself and suggested that Bruce, as a former prime minister with an international reputation, might consider going to Washington. Bruce, however, was reluctant to move from London; in the end Menzies chose one of his ministers, Casey, for the position.²⁹

The king approved the establishment of a separate Australian legation in Washington in late November 1939, and the US government approved the

legation being headed by a *chargé d'affaires* until the appointment of a minister later in 1940.³⁰ On 25 December the *New York Times* published the leaked news that the Australian government intended to appoint Casey to Washington, and finally, on 8 January 1940, Menzies broadcast the



*Richard Casey
(R) became
Australia's first
ambassador to the
United States in
1940*

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announcement that Casey was to be the first Australian minister to the United States. He declared:

This is the first time that Australia has made a full diplomatic appointment to a foreign country and the event is therefore of great historic interest to us. We have for a long time felt that the problems which concern the nations surrounding the Pacific Ocean are of special and vital interest to Australia and that as an independent nation within the British family of nations we might quite reasonably expect to play an effective part in the development and strengthening of peaceful contacts between all the Pacific Powers.³¹

Casey sailed on the ship *Monterey* on 2 February 1940 to take up his position. He presented his credentials to President Roosevelt on 6 March 1940. The first US minister to Australia, Clarence E. Gauss, would arrive in Australia in July.³²

US neutrality, the fall of France and Australia's first wartime appeal to the United States

Two months after the installation of Australia's first minister to the United States, the Germans attacked Belgium and the Netherlands and pushed on towards France. Around the same time, Neville Chamberlain's successor as UK prime minister, Winston Churchill, defiantly assured the US ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, that even if England were burnt to the ground, the UK government would move to Canada and take the fleet with it to fight on.³³ The successful *blitzkrieg* attacks on the Netherlands, Belgium and France, and the ensuing air offensive against the United Kingdom, made Casey's immediate task that of combining with the UK ambassador in pressing the United States to join the war in Europe, or at the least to provide the maximum possible assistance to the British Commonwealth.³⁴

The imminent collapse of French armed resistance to Germany prompted the first of Australia's appeals to the United States for assistance at a time of military adversity. In May 1940, Menzies cabled Churchill suggesting an immediate personal appeal from the members of the British Commonwealth to Roosevelt for the release to the United Kingdom of every available aircraft and volunteer airman to aid the imperial war effort.³⁵ He sent a copy of his message to the prime ministers of South Africa, New Zealand and Canada, Jan Smuts, Peter Fraser and W. L. Mackenzie King. Fraser and Smuts each had reservations. Smuts doubted that the war situation was as dire as Menzies thought and felt that Roosevelt might view the Empire as trying to inveigle him into taking action 'in a case where the necessity is not clear to him or his people'.³⁶ Fraser worried that wavering neutrals might view such an appeal as an admission of defeat and that it might also antagonise the US government.³⁷ Somewhat later, on 24 May, Mackenzie King expressed the view that any public appeal by outside governments 'would arrest rather than assist the formation of public opinion favourable to action'.³⁸ Churchill eventually responded to Menzies that 'every



Clarence E. Gauss, first US minister to Australia, July 1940

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*The Empire's
prime ministers
(L–R): Field
Marshal Jan
Smuts, William
Mackenzie
King, Winston
Churchill, John
Curtin, Peter
Fraser*

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form of intimate personal appeal and most cogent arguments' had already been sent to Roosevelt, although the Dominion prime ministers would be welcome to supplement these with their own personal appeals.³⁹

Notwithstanding the lukewarm responses of his Dominion counterparts, Menzies was not dissuaded from sending a personal appeal to President Roosevelt on 26 May, 'In this hour of emergency, not only for Great Britain and for France, but also for Australia and the other British Dominions'. He warned of the danger of a Germany that completely dominated Europe and that had undisputed power in the eastern Atlantic and its adjoining seas and pleaded with Roosevelt to provide the United Kingdom with all available aircraft.⁴⁰ Roosevelt sent a sympathetic reply, assuring Menzies that, 'subject to the necessary limitations of the position of this country, the production facilities of the United States are available in their entirety to the Allies'.⁴¹ On 6 June 1940, however, when Casey pressed the secretary of state, Cordell Hull, for a US declaration of war, Hull summarily dismissed the idea.⁴² After the conversation, Casey reported to Menzies that the disposition of the UK fleet was one of the profoundest considerations in the mind of the Roosevelt administration in 1940. As Menzies described US thinking to Bruce:

They have only realised [Royal] Navy has been protecting the United States and Monroe Doctrine last hundred years. Consequently we should continue to emphasise the impossible position the United States would be in if she had to meet ultimately and alone a combination of German and Italian Fleets supplemented by remnants of British and French Navies on one side, and the Japanese Navy on the other.

The UK ambassador in Washington, Lord Lothian, a close collaborator with Casey, raised this matter directly with the US undersecretary of state, Sumner Welles, on 21 May. Lothian felt that there was still hope of staving off a German victory if the UK fleet remained out of German hands and could cooperate with the US fleet in controlling the Atlantic. But he warned that, in the event of a UK defeat, the United States would have to ‘become the focal point upon which the British fleet and the policy of the British dominions could be based’.⁴³ In the following month Menzies followed his initial appeal to Roosevelt with a second one for the creation of an English-speaking alliance. On 14 June 1940 he repeated his warning of the possibility of both France and the United Kingdom being beaten and urged the United States to ‘make available to the Allies the whole of their financial and material resources’. He added: ‘The effect on the spirit of France would be transfiguring while the whole of the English-speaking peoples of the world would by one stroke be welded into a brotherhood of world salvation’.⁴⁴ On the very day of Menzies’ second appeal to Roosevelt, France fell to Germany.

Australia, the United States and the Far East, 1940–1941

The unexpectedly rapid fall of France and Italy’s entry into the war in May–June 1940 had dire implications for the position of the British Empire and Australia in the Far East. The United Kingdom was then compelled to attach stronger reservations to its previously stated policy of being prepared, in the event that Japan threatened the security of Australia or New Zealand, to abandon the eastern Mediterranean and send part of its fleet to Singapore. With the French fleet no longer able to contain the Italian navy, the United Kingdom needed to retain a sufficient naval strength in European waters to watch both the German and Italian fleets. The UK government informed Menzies of this development in June 1940, adding that the Empire now needed to reinforce Singapore and plan to defend not just the island of Singapore but the whole of the Malayan area, with two divisions (including one Australian division) and two squadrons of aircraft.⁴⁵ The United Kingdom was fighting for its national existence in the Battle of Britain, the air battle between the UK and German air forces. Japan took advantage of the opportunity to raise the stakes by demanding that the United Kingdom close the Burma Road, the route across the UK colony of Burma along which the nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek were receiving aid, mainly from the United States. Counsels within the UK government were divided. Some favoured resisting the demand. Others, like the UK ambassador in Tokyo Sir Robert Craigie, and Bruce, recommended that the United Kingdom seek a comprehensive settlement with Japan, based

on a mediated peace in China and a formal undertaking by Japan to remain neutral in the European war.⁴⁶

In Washington in the middle of 1940, Casey was pessimistic that the United States would give anything more than moral backing to the British Commonwealth if attacked by Japan in the Far East. And he doubted that a settlement could be reached of the Sino-Japanese war that did not leave Japan in control of some parts of the country and Chiang Kai-shek in others. Casey also considered that it was likely that part of the US Pacific fleet would move to the Atlantic once France fell. Thus the situation was becoming perilous for Australia, insofar as 'we are now maintaining a policy *vis-à-vis* Japan which cannot be backed up by force because American Government appears unlikely to allow its fleet to become engaged against Japan in the near future and their fleet may even practically disappear from the Pacific'.⁴⁷

After the Japanese demanded that the United Kingdom close the Burma Road, Casey and Lothian jointly approached the US government. They submitted that, now that the British Empire was the sole power resisting Nazi Germany, it could no longer resist the demands of Japan to alter the status quo in the Pacific to the point of involving itself in a war in the Pacific which it would fight alone. The two diplomats asked whether the United States was prepared to pursue either of two courses. The first was to impose a full economic embargo on Japan or to despatch ships to reinforce Singapore, in the knowledge that those steps might lead to war with Japan. The second was to cooperate with the United Kingdom in offering Japan a comprehensive settlement of the Far Eastern situation based on Craigie's recommendations.⁴⁸ They bolstered their case by suggesting possible economic concessions to Japan, with Casey instancing Japanese iron ore privileges in Australia. Hull deprecated the notion of the United States sending its fleet to Singapore since this would leave the whole of the Atlantic seaboard exposed. Moreover, he doubted whether the Japanese were prepared to reach a settlement acceptable to the United States in the Far East.⁴⁹ Instead, in July 1940, Roosevelt issued a proclamation restricting the export of aviation petrol and high-grade iron and steel to Japan. This was the first step in a program of progressive economic sanctions that would eventually lead to war in the Pacific.

With war in the Far East looming as an increasingly likely possibility after the fall of France, Menzies cabled the UK government on 27 June 1940 that it was now imperative to have a clear indication of US policy. He urged that the continued maintenance of the US fleet in Hawaii was essential to hold the UK position in the Pacific and the Far East and that, so long as the UK fleet remained undefeated in the Atlantic, 'there would seem no reason outside American sentiment for it to be transferred to the Atlantic'.⁵⁰ He too doubted

that the Japanese would accept a political settlement based on the complete independence of China, and thus saw virtue in UK mediation of the Sino-Japanese war only if the result was a 'tripartite declaration regarding the status quo in the Western Pacific, and guarantees as to respective territorial integrity in designated spheres, to which the U.S.A. must be definitely committed'. Like the UK government, Menzies felt it undesirable for the United States to become involved in a war with Japan, and hoped instead to see it committed to the war in Europe.⁵¹

Britain accepted the Japanese demands and closed the Burma Road, albeit for only three months.⁵² Immediately afterwards, Cordell Hull irritated both the British and the Australians. After privately indicating that he understood why the United Kingdom felt obliged without US support to close the road, he publicly criticised the closure in New York on 17 July as an unwarranted obstacle to world trade. Reacting to this pronouncement, Menzies complained to Bruce on 25 July 1940 that 'it was now clear that United States will continue to adopt a purely negative policy; will not co-operate with us in any general settlement, and will be resentful if we mediate in war between China and Japan at expense of China'.⁵³ Menzies felt that the Empire should use the temporary closure of the Burma Road to play for time, in the hope that continued UK resistance against Germany would deter Japan from further aggression in the Far East.

In the meantime, Churchill sought to comfort Menzies with UK assessments that Japan was unlikely to take the drastic step of going to war. His particular assessment to Menzies on 11 August 1940 was that the United Kingdom was trying to avoid a war with Japan 'by conceding on points where Japanese military clique can perhaps force a rupture and by standing up where ground is less dangerous as in arrests of individuals'.⁵⁴ He did not think that Japan would declare war unless Germany first made a successful invasion of the United Kingdom. But if Japan did declare war, Churchill thought that its likely target would be the Netherlands East Indies. In this case, Churchill assured Menzies that the United Kingdom would defend Singapore and would base at Ceylon a battle cruiser and fast aircraft carrier which, he thought, would powerfully deter raiding cruisers. He advised Menzies that he would not reinforce Singapore with more first-class units of the eastern Mediterranean fleet unless absolutely necessary since this would entail the complete loss by the United Kingdom of its position in the Middle East. He did not think that Japan, even in the worst scenario, would launch an invasion of Australia because of its absorption in the war in China and its fear of the US fleet. But if it did seek to invade Australia or New Zealand, Churchill promised, 'I have explicit authority of Cabinet to assure you that we should cut our losses in the Mediterranean and proceed to

your aid sacrificing every interest except only defence position of this island on which all depends'.⁵⁵

After the fall of France, Japan proceeded according to a plan drawn up in 1939 that called for the Japanese control and exploitation of South-East Asia's raw materials and markets, subsequently known as the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese foreign minister, Matsuoka Yosuke, formally announced Japan's objective in a press release dated 1 August 1940. In secret documents written around the same time, Japan envisaged the sphere as including Indochina, Thailand, Malaya, Borneo, the Netherlands East Indies, Burma, India, Australia and New Zealand. To further its economic and strategic objectives, in September 1940 Japan secured an agreement with Germany's ally, Vichy France, to establish bases in northern Indochina. When Roosevelt banned the export of scrap iron and scrap steel to Japan, it signed a tripartite agreement with Germany and Italy to help each other militarily, if one was 'attacked by a Power not at present involved in the current struggles'—that is, by the United States or the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

The 1941 US Fleet visit to Australia, Allied military planning and US entry into the war

After Japan joined the Axis powers, pressure intensified on the British Commonwealth, the Netherlands (which governed the Netherlands East Indies and whose government was in exile in London), and the United States to concert their military planning in the Pacific. On 1 October 1940, Cordell Hull approached Ambassador Lothian asking for private staff meetings of the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Netherlands to discuss technical issues associated with possible united military action in the Pacific. This led eventually to military staff talks between the four countries, two of which, the United States and the Netherlands, were still officially neutral towards Japan.

After Hull's initial approach, Roosevelt decided that the United States would not participate in the talks lest anything happen to jeopardise his chances of re-election in the US elections to be held in November of that year. The Dutch, too, worried lest the Japanese use their participation in the talks as a pretext to intervene against their possessions in South-East Asia.⁵⁷ So, in the end, the Singapore Defence Conference of 22 October 1940 was attended only by the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The report of the conference, revealing the abject weakness of Singapore's defences, so alarmed the Australian government that it authorised Menzies to travel to London to discuss the matter personally with Churchill and his military advisers. The Singapore Defence Conference report had revealed that the relief of Singapore depended essentially on US naval assistance, which had to move from the north-



*Prime Minister
Menzies in New
York, 1940*

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eastern Pacific to the western Pacific. While Menzies was abroad, the acting prime minister, Arthur Fadden, pointed out that, without an adequate UK cruiser force to stop them, it would be easy for the Japanese to maintain a cruiser fleet in the Tasman Sea and indefinitely hold up Australian and New Zealand ships out of range of shore-based aircraft.⁵⁸

With Roosevelt convincingly re-elected in November 1940, staff talks eventually took place in Washington between a UK military mission and the United States in the period from January to March 1941. The two sides agreed that the Atlantic and European theatres were the decisive ones, although the great importance of the Mediterranean and North African areas was also noted.⁵⁹ The position of the US delegation was that, if Japan entered the war, its military strategy in the Far East would be defensive. But it agreed to 'employ the United States Pacific Fleet offensively in the manner best calculated to weaken Japanese economic power ... by diverting Japanese strength away from Malaysia'.⁶⁰

During the Washington staff talks, the UK delegation confessed that if Japan attacked Singapore, it required larger forces than the Admiralty was then prepared to provide. The British therefore asked the US Navy to detach four cruisers from their US Pacific fleet and send them to Singapore. If Singapore were to fall, the British argued, Japan would cut off the eastern part of the British Empire, India would revolt and China would cease fighting the Japanese.⁶¹ This request and its supporting arguments the United States decisively rejected. The US delegation considered that the loss of Singapore would be 'unfortunate'

but ‘would not have a decisive effect on the issue of the war’.⁶² It supported this assessment with the arguments that the invasion of Australia and New Zealand was beyond the current resources of Japan and that the United States would be able to ensure the security of sea communications from Australia and New Zealand to the western hemisphere and thence to the United Kingdom.

While the staff talks were taking place, the US government was turning its attention to the possibility of the US fleet making a demonstration in the western Pacific that might deter Japan. In the first weeks of 1941, fears had intensified that the Japanese were preparing an imminent move southwards. In a message to Roosevelt on 16 February 1941, Churchill warned that the Japanese might be about to seize the Netherlands East Indies, from which they would be in a better position to lay siege to Singapore and raid the coasts of Australia and New Zealand. He urged Roosevelt, ‘Everything that you can do to inspire the Japanese with fear of a double war may avert the danger’.⁶³ Roosevelt responded to the request in part by authorising a naval demonstration in the South Pacific.

On 13 March 1941, Stanley Hornbeck, adviser to the US Department of State, asked Casey whether Australia would agree to an informal visit to Australian waters of a detachment consisting of two cruisers, *Chicago* and *Portland*, plus five destroyers, *Clark*, *Cassin*, *Conyngham*, *Downes* and *Reid*, all under the command of Rear Admiral John H. Newton, whose flagship was *Chicago*. These vessels would be involved in the following years in the decisive naval engagements with Japan, some in the Battle of the Coral Sea and others at Midway Island. The US government proposed that the detachment should arrive at Sydney on 20 March 1941 and at Brisbane on 25 March 1941, departing from the latter on 28 March 1941.⁶⁴

*USS Chicago,
flagship of
a visiting
detachment of the
US Pacific fleet,
in Sydney 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



The plans for the reception of the 1941 US naval visit were conducted in secret until the virtually the last moment. One hour before the reception of the first Japanese minister to Australia, Tatsuo Kawai, on 19 March, the Australian parliament adjourned in Canberra so that members could make their way to Sydney to welcome the ships. An official report of the visit described the entry of the fleet into Sydney Harbour on 20 March:

Owing to misty rain the entry of the detachment into the harbour, originally scheduled for 8 a.m., was delayed until about 8.45 a.m. A salute of 21 guns was accorded to the ships as they passed the Heads, and public enthusiasm expressed itself in the hooting of sirens and motor horns and the cheering of the dense crowds lining the foreshore as the detachment proceeded up the Harbour.⁶⁵



*Tatsuo Kawai,
the first Japanese
minister to
Australia,
March 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

More than half a million Australians witnessed six hundred US marines and sailors and six hundred members of the Australian armed forces march through the streets of Sydney. In the course of the morning Rear Admiral Newton exchanged calls with the governor-general, Lord Gowrie, and on various Commonwealth and state ministers. With Menzies still abroad, the acting prime minister, Fadden, issued an effusive welcome at a luncheon in the Sydney Town Hall:

We welcome you as our cousins. We welcome you as people from the other side of the Pacific, who have extended to us not only the hand of friendship, but also the hand of practical support and cooperation. Nothing in the life of Australia has so stirred, inspired, and thrilled the nation as has this visit of part of the great United States Navy, synchronising with the wonderful action and works of President Roosevelt.⁶⁶

At a dinner for Newton and his senior officers in the evening, Fadden proposed a toast to 'our guests' and commented that the visit of the detachment 'signified a new and higher plane of friendship' between the United States and Australia.⁶⁷ For three days in Sydney and three more days in Brisbane, Australians reprised the visit of the Great White Fleet and subsequent US naval visits. John Minter, the *chargé* in Canberra, reported to Hull:

The Navy was greeted as if it were their own returning from a great victory. To my mind while I saw street demonstrations which I did not believe possible

in Australia, the most striking event of the entire visit was the adjournment of Parliament and the trek of the entire government to Sydney.⁶⁸

At the conclusion of the visit Fadden cabled Roosevelt:

I am deeply gratified to inform you, Mr. President, that the visit to Sydney and Brisbane of the United States Naval Squadron, commanded by Rear-Admiral John H. Newton in his flag ship U.S.S. 'Chicago', has brought the keenest pleasure to the people of Australia who have chosen the occasion to express not only their longstanding feeling of comradeship with citizens of the American nation, but also their particular appreciation at this time of the increasing assistance rendered to our cause by your country under your inspiring leadership. It is my privilege and pleasure to inform you personally that the visit of the squadron has been in every way an outstanding success and has, I am sure, done even more than we here had hoped to strengthen ties of friendship between Australia and the United States of America.⁶⁹

Despite the success of the naval visit, the Australian government remained concerned about its position in the Far East. On 22 April 1941, Casey joined forces with Lothian's replacement as UK ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax, in telling the US government that there was a strong possibility of a Japanese movement southwards. This was just after the signature of the Soviet-Japan neutrality pact on 13 April. The two diplomats urged that the United States, the British Commonwealth and the Netherlands should jointly declare that the vital interests of all these countries would be affected by a Japanese move southwards.⁷⁰ The US government, nonetheless, was disinclined to issue such a statement at that time. Hull informed Casey that such statements were liable to play into the hands of extremist elements in Japan and that they were only influenced by 'definite action on the part of the British, the Australians and the United States, such as, for instance, the recent visit of American naval vessels to Australian ports'.⁷¹

By the middle of 1941, the strategic position in the Far East had worsened. On 21 June, the armies of Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and in July Japan moved to occupy the rest of Indochina, giving it a springboard to attack its mineral-rich South-East Asian neighbours. After some internal debate, the United States decided to retaliate by freezing Japanese assets, increasing the pressure on Japan to either moderate its foreign policy or take military action.

The UK government then cabled the Dominions to urge that the Empire take parallel measures to those of the United States. Menzies agreed but urged that, if the Empire was to take action that might result in war with Japan, it needed to have the clearest possible indication that it could count on US armed

support. The UK government demurred, insisting that the United States would not be able to give such a guarantee because of the constitutional position that only Congress, and not the president, could declare war.⁷² Despite Menzies' vigorous protest, the British Commonwealth instituted parallel economic measures without securing an explicit guarantee of US armed support.⁷³

By this stage, a difference in approach was developing between the United Kingdom and Australia towards Japan. The former, anxious to secure US military support against Germany, had decided to let the United States determine Allied policy towards Japan, notwithstanding the reservations some UK diplomats harboured about losing control of foreign policy in the Far East. The UK government perforce accepted the risk of war in the Far East. Australia, on the other hand, desired both more intensive efforts to secure an explicit military guarantee from the United States and an enhanced diplomatic effort to reach a settlement with Japan through diplomacy.⁷⁴

On 2 August 1941, Casey and Halifax urged the US government to warn Japan against occupying Thailand. The US acting secretary of state replied that, while no definite commitment could be made, the United States would probably go to the aid of the British Commonwealth if it were attacked by Japan.⁷⁵ Shortly afterwards, Menzies was informed of Roosevelt's secret invitation to Churchill for talks somewhere off Newfoundland. From London, Bruce reported to Menzies that he had persuaded Anthony Eden, the foreign secretary, to recommend to Churchill that the Far Eastern situation should be placed on the agenda of these talks and urged Menzies to do the same. Menzies took up the suggestion, cabling Churchill on 8 August:

I do not think that there is any doubt that firm and unequivocal attitude by the United States is the one thing that will deter Japan from continuing on a course leading to war. If Japan enters the war or by threat of our vital interests compels the British Empire into war the effect upon the disposition of Australian forces of all arms may be far-reaching and certainly you would have a naval problem of the gravest character.⁷⁶

Before he departed for this Atlantic summit, Churchill received an admission from the Admiralty that it still could not send a fleet to the Far East. In an effort to bluff Japan from resorting to force, Churchill pressed Roosevelt once again to agree to the United Kingdom and the United States issuing parallel notes warning that any further encroachment by Japan in the South-West Pacific would oblige the United States to take counter-measures, 'even though these might lead to war'.⁷⁷ To this Churchill added another draft statement saying that if Japan attacked a third power, 'the President would have the intention to seek authority from Congress to give aid to such a power'.⁷⁸ Roosevelt, however,

refused to give any assurance that the United States would give armed support to the British Commonwealth or the Netherlands East Indies if Japan attacked them. All that he was prepared to give was a watered-down general warning to Japan that avoided any reference to possible war. The president did agree, however, to reinforce the defence of the Philippines with some of the B-17 bombers earmarked for the United Kingdom under the Lend-Lease program instituted after 11 March 1941, under which the United States supplied war *matériel* to designated countries and particularly the United Kingdom. The Americans hoped that a small force of heavy bombers could both protect the Philippines, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies and effectively deter Japan from further aggression. Casey would later report a change in US strategic thinking: US planners had first thought that the Philippines could not be held against a Japanese attack, but they had now decided that, with reinforcement, it could be held.⁷⁹ As part of the deal struck near Newfoundland, Churchill undertook, without asking the Admiralty, to send a force of capital ships to Singapore. This undertaking, with Anglo-American defences in the Far East in such a weak state, was risky. Churchill gambled that Roosevelt would draw diplomatic negotiations out with the Japanese until the northern spring of 1942, when the Anglo-American defensive position would be much stronger.

While Churchill returned from the Atlantic meeting armed with the Atlantic Charter of agreed Allied war aims (which would later provide the basis for the United Nations Charter) and a sense that he had an assurance of US support in the Far East, the Australian government remained extremely worried. Kawai, the Japanese minister to Australia, suggested that Menzies should fly to Tokyo to arrest the drift in the situation. At around the same time, the leader of the opposition, John Curtin, advocated a conference consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and the Dominions at a meeting of the Advisory

*The Advisory War
Council meeting
in Canberra
(L–R): John
Beasley, Norman
Makin, Frank
Forde, John
Curtin, Robert
Menzies, Billy
Hughes, Percy
Spender, Arthur
Fadden, Harold
Holt*

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War Council. And in London, Bruce suggested that the British Empire should warn Japan against encroaching into Thailand even without US support.⁸⁰ Menzies agreed, cabling London for the urgent dispatch of five capital ships to Singapore and recommending that the British countries, with or without US support, should warn Japan that they would regard an attack on Thailand as a *casus belli*.⁸¹ Churchill preferred, however, to wait for the warning that Roosevelt eventually issued on 17 August. Substantially weaker than that which Australia desired, it warned that further Japanese aggression would prompt the United States to take the necessary steps 'toward safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the United States and US nationals and towards insuring the safety and security of the United States'.⁸²

Meanwhile, bilateral negotiations between the United States and Japan, which had taken place intermittently since the beginning of 1941, had resumed after 6 August. The two sides remained far apart. Japan wanted the United States to lift the restrictions on its trade, suspend its military build-up in the South-West Pacific, support Japan in obtaining resources from the Netherlands East Indies, and offer its good offices in the settlement of the Sino-Japanese war. In return for this, Japan undertook to remove its troops from Indochina after a settlement was reached with China. By contrast, the United States remained adamant that Japan should withdraw completely from China, in return for which the United States would restore trade relations and recognise Manchukuo.⁸³

In August 1941, intra-party infighting saw Menzies resign the prime ministership in favour of his Country Party deputy, Arthur Fadden. After a few weeks in power, Fadden's government lost a motion of confidence in the House of Representatives. The Labor Party then took office under John Curtin, exactly two months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

When the Curtin Labor government came to office, four of the divisions of the volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were abroad, three in the Middle East and one in Malaya. The Malay Barrier—the line from Malaya through the Netherlands East Indies to the north of Australia—was defended by one Australian division and two Indian divisions. With war in the Pacific looming, the US War Department instructed General Douglas MacArthur, commander of army forces in the Far East, to integrate the defence of the Philippines, Australia, the Netherlands East Indies and Singapore, and the new Australian government showed its eagerness to help by furnishing bases to assist the common defences.

In November 1941, Churchill was sufficiently concerned by further Japanese troop movements in Indochina to revive with Roosevelt the idea of a joint warning to Japan. Although Washington yet again rejected the proposal, US strategic thinking advanced to the point where the Joint Board of the Army and

Navy recommended to the president on 5 November that, if Japan attacked UK or Dutch possessions in South-East Asia, or advanced into Thailand, Portuguese Timor, New Caledonia, or the Loyalty Islands, then the United States should take military action against Japan.⁸⁴

Not knowing of the trend of thinking inside the US government, Curtin pressed Churchill to issue a warning to Japan, even if US participation could not be secured.⁸⁵ He asked Australia's special representative to the United Kingdom, Earle Page, to take up the matter with Churchill in London. Churchill replied to Page that UK policy was to maintain a stiff attitude towards Japan 'but not to be involved in war with her unless we had an assurance of the United States participation'.⁸⁶

*H.V. Evatt,
Minister for
External Affairs,
1941*

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In the meantime, the Japanese government had issued orders for attacks against US, UK and Netherlands positions unless an eleventh-hour diplomatic effort in Washington was able to avert war. The Japanese ambassador in Washington, Nomura Kichisaburo, accompanied by a professional diplomat, Kurusu Saburo, held discussions with Hull between 20 and 27 November on terms for a *modus vivendi* with the United States. The US reply required Japan to agree to the open-door policy in China and withdraw all military, naval and air forces from China and

Indochina before the United States would allow trade to resume.⁸⁷ Casey reported the progress of the talks to Curtin and the new minister for external affairs, H.V. Evatt. On reading these reports, Curtin expressed disquiet that the talks seemed likely to break down partly because of Chinese opposition to an agreement and the 'reserve shown by United Kingdom Government at critical moment in talks'.⁸⁸ He complained to Bruce: 'If we were certain that United States lead in talks would be followed by similar lead in armed defence against armed aggression position would be transformed, but there now seems to be grave danger of further armed aggression by Japan without any United States intervention'.⁸⁹

One of the reasons for UK reserve during the eleventh-hour talks was that it had shared with the Americans intercepts of Japanese communications that revealed that Japan was preparing for a decisive military strike and the 'complete

expulsion of British and American military and naval strength in China'.⁹⁰ When the Japanese attack did come it was launched not only against Malaya, but at the heart of naval power in the Pacific, the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Japan's Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku considered that if war came, the Japanese must destroy the US Pacific fleet, or be destroyed itself. On 6 December 1941, he launched an attack on the base that destroyed six of the best battleships of the fleet and almost succeeded in sinking three aircraft carriers and their escorts that happened to be at sea. Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who as a young ensign had been part of the visit of the Great White Fleet, commanded the US Pacific fleet at the time of the attack.

Worse was to follow when Japanese planes destroyed in the Philippines the largest concentration of US airpower outside the continental United States.⁹¹ The US army commander in the Philippines, Douglas MacArthur, would overcome the defeat to command the South-West Pacific Area in the Pacific War, while Kimmel would shoulder the blame for the US defeat and be replaced from his command.

The Japanese attack on US territory in December 1941 immediately solved an important problem for both Australia and the United Kingdom. It brought the hitherto neutral United States into the war in the Pacific, and also in Europe after Japan's Axis ally, Germany, declared war on the United States.

In 1908 when the US Pacific fleet had first visited Australia's shores, it had been a colony that was a small part of a great empire directly allied with the strongest Asiatic power, Japan. When part of the US fleet visited Australia thirty-three years later, it was a British Dominion that had just exchanged diplomatic representatives with the United States and would shortly form a military alliance in the Pacific that some years later would be formalised by a security treaty that excluded the mother country. In the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, while Australians could take comfort in support of their new ally, they knew that their defensive situation was parlous. With most of their troops overseas, part of the US Pacific fleet destroyed, and the British uncertain how long Singapore could be defended, the year 1942 promised to be a crucial year for Australia and the Australian–US alliance.



General MacArthur and Prime Minister Curtin quickly formed a close working relationship

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*Marines from
the visiting US
Navy ships parade
through Sydney,
March 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



*Enthusiastic crowds
watch as US sailors
and marines march
down George Street
during a tickertape
parade in Sydney,
March 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL





*Destroyers of the
US Pacific Fleet
Detachment leaving
Sydney Harbour,
March 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



*'Old Glory' leads the
parade of US Pacific
Fleet Detachment on
its visit to Brisbane,
March 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

*US sailors and
marines parade
down Queen Street,
Brisbane, March
1941*

JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY,
STATE LIBRARY OF
QUEENSLAND



*Spectators watch
the parade in
Queen Street,
Brisbane, March
1941*

JOHN OXLEY
LIBRARY, STATE
LIBRARY OF
QUEENSLAND





*Crowds visiting
the US Navy ships
docked in Brisbane,
March 1941*

JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY,
STATE LIBRARY OF
QUEENSLAND



*Arthur Mercer from
USS Salt Lake City
meets Rata, a baby
koala, Brisbane,
July 1941*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

*Sailors from USS
Northampton
and USS Salt
Lake City make
friends with an
Australian soldier,
July 1941 (L-R):
W. Sheeban,
N. Evanich,
J. Cook and
Corporal G. Burns*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



*US sailors
arrive in camp,
Australia 1942*

STATE LIBRARY OF
VICTORIA





*More wildlife: A
US soldier with
a baby wallaby,
Brisbane 1942*

JOHN OXLEY
LIBRARY, STATE
LIBRARY OF
QUEENSLAND



*An Army–Navy
gridiron game
played by US
servicemen in
Sydney, 1943*

HOOD COLLECTION,
STATE LIBRARY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

*US sailors share
cigarettes with
RAN seamen
from HMAS
Australia, 1944*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL



*Swapping hats;
US sailors and
Australian
soldiers enjoy a
laugh, 1945*

STATE LIBRARY OF
VICTORIA



5 The Pacific War and its aftermath



1942–1945

The Washington Treaty was in tatters, and Japan had embarked on war in China. With a wider war looming in the Far East, Australia departed from its policy that, as a British Dominion, it should not be represented diplomatically. It had agreed to establish a legation in Washington in 1939. On the outbreak of war in Europe in September of that year, Australia joined the United Kingdom in trying to persuade the United States to abandon neutrality and form an alliance against Japan. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 brought the United States into the war, and with it the military alliance for which Australia had long been striving. The alliance developed in the context of the collapse of British power in the Pacific. As Australia faced a Japanese invasion, the US Pacific fleet, heir to the Great White Fleet, would play the decisive role in the war in the Pacific. Naval issues would continue to shape Australia's relationship with the United States.

Australia turns to the United States

Some days after the outbreak of the Pacific War, Curtin sent Roosevelt a message expressing Australia's gratitude that 'the English-speaking world and the majority of mankind are now arrayed against the common foe'.¹ US participation was some consolation for the dire threat that Japan now posed. In December 1941, Japan's armed forces were formidable. Its navy was stronger than that of its opponents combined, with eleven battleships, ten aircraft carriers, eighteen heavy cruisers, twenty-one light cruisers and one hundred destroyers. Its army consisted of fifty-one divisions, thirty-four of which were deployed in China, Manchuria and Korea. That left eleven divisions for its

*Prime Minister
John Curtin
asked the British
to send naval
reinforcements to
Singapore*

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drive to the south, including a possible invasion of Australia. The navy and air force each had planes. These totalled about 5,000 ready for combat.² After Pearl Harbor there was nothing to stop the Japanese landing forces at will in the western Pacific. They took advantage of their strong strategic position by aiming to secure an area stretching nearly 20,000 kilometres from the India–Burma border through the Netherlands East Indies and New Guinea to the Gilbert Islands and north to the Kurile Islands.

Apart from the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, the other key strong point that Japan had to neutralise was

the UK naval base in Singapore. At their summit meeting off the coast of Newfoundland in August 1941, Churchill had assured Roosevelt that he would dispatch a ‘formidable, fast, high-class squadron’ to reinforce Singapore.³ For his part, Roosevelt had agreed to strengthen the air defences of the Philippines. Churchill was not only supporting the strategic objectives of the United States in the Far East but profoundly alleviating the anxieties of Australia and New Zealand.

When Churchill returned to London, however, the Admiralty remonstrated that it did not have available a force powerful enough to deter the Japanese, offering only some World War I-era battleships. Churchill refused to send these ‘floating coffins’ and ordered the navy to make available the *Prince of Wales*, the navy’s newest battleship, the vessel on which Churchill and Roosevelt had held their Atlantic summit.⁴ The Admiralty did, however, whittle down his commitment to reinforce Singapore to a single battleship taskforce: the *Prince of Wales* accompanied only by the battlecruiser *Repulse* and escorting destroyers for the journey around South Africa.⁵ This was a far cry from the eight capital ships, three aircraft carriers and several cruisers, destroyers and submarines that UK planners had estimated in 1940 as the force required to reinforce Singapore. They had concluded: ‘It is only the U.S. Navy which can provide the reinforcement of the naval forces in the Far East necessary to contain the Japanese fleet and provide for the security of all Allied territories and communications’.⁶

In Australia the Curtin government, like the Fadden and Menzies governments, had insistently urged the dispatch of naval reinforcements to Singapore and was clearly relieved by Churchill's decision, especially in view of reports of the weakness of the defences of the naval base. One appeal was from Earle Page, sent by Fadden to England via Singapore as a special envoy. He concluded on 1 October 1941 that:

the only real deterrent to further Japanese aggression would be a UK fleet based at Singapore and in the absence of this fleet there is little doubt that Japan will be able to strike at her selected moment. We feel sure that everything is being done to make provision for this requirement as soon as ships can be spared from other theatres ... but we would stress the propaganda value of even one or two battleships at Singapore.

However, South Africa's prime minister, Jan Smuts, warned against the decision to dispatch the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in a prophetic cablegram to Churchill on 16 November 1941. Smuts feared that Churchill was taking a grave risk in sending a single battleship group, unprotected by air cover, into waters where the Japanese maintained overwhelming sea and air supremacy.⁷ Recognising this risk, Churchill's strategy was to withdraw the ships to a safe distance in the Indian Ocean or have them join what was left of the US Pacific fleet. In either case, his aim before Pearl Harbor was that the ships constitute a 'vague menace' that would discourage Japanese expansion.⁸

The *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* steamed into Singapore on 2 December 1941. After hostilities commenced, the commander of the *Prince of Wales*, Admiral Tom Phillips, should have heeded a warning from the Chief of Staff, Singapore, that the enemy could have sighted him and might attack within five hours.⁹ Instead, he reacted to a false alarm that the Japanese were landing half-way down the Malayan coast at Kuantan.¹⁰ Phillips believed that urgent naval intervention was required to prevent UK troops north of Kuantan from being cut off. Meanwhile, in London, the UK government debated what to do with its taskforce, as it had failed to act as a deterrent. Churchill favoured its joining the US Pacific fleet 'as a proud gesture' to 'knit the English-speaking world together'.¹¹ Others preferred that it return to the Atlantic. While they debated, on 10 December Japanese aircraft sank both the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* 160 kilometres off Kuantan. UK seapower based at Singapore ended after only eight days.

In less than a fortnight Churchill met Roosevelt again, this time in Washington. The conference, which began on 22 December 1941 and was termed Arcadia, reaffirmed the Anglo-American grand strategy developed in the military talks of 1941. In essence this was to beat Germany first, while fighting a holding war against Japan. Australia took no direct part in the

conference, and the Curtin government claimed next year to be surprised to learn of the strategy.¹² In general Roosevelt's administration found it convenient to reach decisions on matters of grand strategy involving Australia through direct discussions with Churchill. During the course of the war, however, the Curtin government found this state of affairs increasingly unsatisfactory. Also resulting from Arcadia was a decision to establish an Australian–British–Dutch–American (ABDA) command. Stretching from Formosa to the northern shores of Australia and from Burma to New Guinea, it was placed under the command of a British general, Sir Archibald Wavell. Wavell was tasked with defending the Malay Barrier, the line from Malaya through the Netherlands East Indies to the north of Australia.

After the Arcadia conference, Curtin's government was less sanguine about the strategic position in the Far East than Churchill's. Throughout December 1941, Curtin repeatedly asked Churchill and Roosevelt to reinforce Singapore and the South-West Pacific. He sought additional aircraft, asked for the UK Indian Ocean fleet to unite with the US Pacific fleet, and informed both leaders that Australia would 'gladly accept United States commander in Pacific area'.¹³ Through Casey in Washington, he urged prompt action to save Singapore.¹⁴ Churchill replied that Singapore was not his top priority and that it could not be strengthened at the expense of the UK position in North Africa.¹⁵

It was partly out of frustration with his inability to make headway with Churchill that Curtin issued a public call to the United States for assistance. On 27 December the Melbourne *Herald* published his New Year message. Curtin announced that Australia looked to the United States 'without any inhibitions of any kind' and 'free of any pangs as to our traditional links with the United Kingdom'.¹⁶ He called for the Soviet Union to enter the war against Japan and declared that Australia refused to 'accept the dictum that the Pacific struggle must be treated as a subordinate segment of the general conflict'. Furthermore, he recommended a 'concerted plan evoking the greatest strength at the Democracies' disposal, determined upon hurling Japan back'.¹⁷ This was a direct criticism of Anglo-American strategy, of which the Australian government had incomplete knowledge. As such Churchill strongly resented it.¹⁸

Curtin's call to the United States and his reaction to Japan's instigation of the Pacific War are often described as a turning point in which Australia swapped 'British masters for American ones'.¹⁹ The extent to which 1941 was a turning point in Australian history has been contested, with some historians pointing to the close political, economic and cultural relations which Australia retained with the United Kingdom for decades.²⁰ These qualifications are valid but, as Geoffrey Blainey argues, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*:

marked for Australia the waning of an era in which history or tradition was dominant and the emergence of a new era when geography was probably as crucial as history. To use another analogy, they marked the end of a time when heredity ceased to be so powerful, when Australians ceased to have nearly all their commercial, military financial and human ties with Britain. It marked the start of a time when Australia's environment—her position on the tail of Asia and on the shores of the Pacific—became more important.²¹

As it became apparent to Australians that they could no longer be assured that the Royal Navy could protect them, what was left of the US Pacific fleet, the heir of the Great White Fleet, assumed a position of vital importance.

The fall of Singapore, the invasion threat, and alliance with the United States

The first four months of 1942 witnessed the collapse of imperial defence arrangements in the Far East as the Japanese seized Singapore and occupied Britain's colonies in South-East Asia. Australia faced the prospect of being blockaded and cut off from its allies, or even being invaded. Japan had conquered Hong Kong, Manila and much of Malaya, and was moving into Burma. By the early part of the year, it had also secured much of the world's rice production, most of the world's sources of natural rubber and tin, and the oil resources of the Netherlands East Indies.²² To Australia's near north in January 1942 the Japanese navy seized Rabaul and transformed it into a major fleet base. The UK naval force sent to reinforce Singapore was at the bottom of the ocean, and the US Pacific fleet was recuperating from the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The sinking of UK capital ships had a dramatic effect on Australian public opinion. On the following day the UK consul in Adelaide reported that the general public 'were the closest to actual panic that I have ever seen. Staid businessmen who only the day before were complacent about the menace of the "yellow dwarf" were now almost reduced to ringing their hands'.²³ Menzies, speaking later, commented on 'a real ugly fear over the prospect of invasion among many of the Australian Government leaders around February–March ... men turning a "nasty colour" etc.'. ²⁴ Curtin was seriously concerned and remonstrated to Churchill on 29 December 1941 that UK naval strategy was merely to form in the Indian Ocean a fleet inferior to what the Japanese could bring against it. He proposed instead that the Royal Navy join forces with the US Pacific fleet so that it was decisively superior to the Japanese in capital ships and carriers. In that case:

the situation in the Pacific would again become more favourable, and an attack on the Japanese possessions in the Mandated Islands would again become

possible, thus leading to a fleet action and, by the defeat of the Japanese Fleet, enable us to regain control of the sea. Such offensive action will provide a more effective protection to Australia than the mere presence in the Indian Ocean of a British force inferior to the Japanese main fleet.²⁵

On 11 January 1942, Curtin expressed alarm to Churchill that the Japanese had overrun Malaya so easily and asked that 'nothing be left undone to reinforce Malaya to the greatest degree possible'.²⁶ Churchill replied that it was futile to expect that Malaya could be defended 'once the Japanese obtained command of the sea and whilst we are fighting for our lives against Germany and Italy' but that the main focus should be the defence of Singapore.²⁷ Curtin snapped:

As far back as 1937 the Commonwealth Government received assurances that it was the aim of the United Kingdom Government to make Singapore impregnable. When the defence of Singapore was under review by the Committee of imperial defence in 1933, the High Commissioner pointed out the grave effects that would flow from the loss of Singapore or the denial of its use to the main fleet. He stated that in the last resort the whole of the internal defence system of Australia was based on the integrity of Singapore and the presence of a capital ship fleet there. He added that, if this was not a reasonable possibility, Australia, in balancing a doubtful naval security against invasion, would have to provide for greater land and air forces as a deterrent against such a risk. I repeat these earlier facts to make quite clear the conception of Empire and Local Defence in which we have been brought to believe. It has also influenced our decisions on co-operation in other theatres from the relatively small resources we possess in relation to our commitments in a Pacific war.²⁸

To alleviate some of Australia's anxieties, Churchill had suggested in December 1941 that Australian troops be withdrawn from the Middle East to join the fight against Japan. His intent, however, was not that they should return to Australia but rather that they should be deployed in Singapore or India.²⁹ Australia insisted that they be employed in the Netherlands East Indies. Later when Churchill, on the recommendation of his general, Wavell, tried to divert 1 Australian Corps to Burma, Curtin insisted, in an acrimonious exchange, that it return to Australia.³⁰

Towards the end of January 1942, even the ebullient Churchill appeared to have conceded that Singapore's fall was only a matter of time. Accordingly, he discussed with his chiefs of staff the idea of cutting UK losses and diverting reinforcements from Singapore to Burma.³¹ When Earle Page reported rumours of this to Canberra, Curtin cabled a forceful remonstrance to Churchill:

After all the assurances we have been given, the evacuation of Singapore would be regarded here as an inexcusable betrayal. Singapore is a central fortress in

the system of empire and local defence ... we understood it was to be made impregnable and in any event it was to be capable of holding out for a prolonged period until the arrival of the main fleet.³²

Curtin's sharp telegram did something to harden British opinion against abandoning Singapore. The British held their course of sending the 18th Division to Singapore—and ultimately to internment in Japanese prison camps.³³

Without adequate naval and air defences, Singapore quickly fell. Designed for use against an attack from the sea, its great guns were less effective against land forces. The army that defended Singapore consisted of 85,000 men, while one estimate of the Japanese troops arrayed against them was as low as 35,000. Twice the strength of the besieging force, the defences should have been able to hold out longer.³⁴ But Singapore's water supply was controlled from the mainland and could not accommodate the army and more than a million civilians who had flooded into the city. Faced with the possibility of an artillery siege and bombing from the air, the General Officer Commanding, Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, decided to surrender Singapore on 15 February 1942. At a cost of only about 10,000 men, the Japanese captured more than 130,000 troops with 8,000 of the defenders killed or wounded. The Australian share of the casualties was 1,306 wounded and 15,395 captured.³⁵

The fall of Singapore added to the psychological blow caused by the sinking of the capital ships. Curtin proclaimed on 16 February 1942, 'The fall of Singapore opens the Battle for Australia'.³⁶ In the aftermath, the Japanese landed paratroops on Sumatra, captured Bali, and launched an invasion of Java on 1 March. First, however, it launched its biggest single air strike since Pearl Harbor on the city



Curtin in discussion with General MacArthur. Curtin believed that the fall of Singapore had opened the battle for Australia

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of Darwin. Although this seemed to presage a more forceful attack on the Australian continent, it had nothing to do with invasion plans. Rather, the attack was related to Japan's conquest of Timor and Java.³⁷ On 8 March the Dutch surrendered in Java and the Japanese made unopposed landings at Lae and Salamaua on the north coast of New Guinea. Many Australians feared that the Japanese would crown these achievements by occupying Darwin, Perth and

Townsville, if not Sydney and Melbourne. The UK chiefs of staff, conceding that Japan wanted to capture Port Moresby, and perhaps Darwin, did not think that Australia had to fear a direct invasion. Japan, they considered, had to keep in mind the possibility of war with the Soviet Union, in which case its military and air resources would be insufficient for simultaneous operations against Australia. They also thought that Japan could accomplish its major object, the consolidation of the Asiatic Co-Prosperity Sphere, more easily by placing itself astride the eastern and western reinforcement routes to Australia, by occupying Samoa, Fiji and Caledonia in the east and Fremantle in the west: 'At any rate it is only after having thus consolidated her position in the Southern Pacific and when the situation in regard to Russia has become clear, that Japan would decide whether invasion of Australia was either practicable or necessary'.³⁸

The period from the collapse of UK power naval power in the Far East to the consolidation of US strategic control of the South-West Pacific—early to mid-1942—was the time when Australia was in the greatest danger. On 23 March H.V. Evatt commented to Stanley Bruce that the 'position in Australia for the next two months is a desperate one' and on 31 March his confidant, the businessman W.S. Robinson, proclaimed that the country 'might only have six weeks to live'.³⁹ It is now known that the Japanese navy proposed in February–March 1942 a joint operation with the army for the occupation of Australia. The early plans of the Japanese navy general staff calculated in December 1941 that Japan would need three divisions, between 45,000 and 60,000 men, to annihilate the Australian fleet and secure the flanks and centre of the north-eastern and north-western coasts. The army, however, opposed the proposal on the basis that it would need at least twelve (18,000-man) divisions and it did not have sufficient forces for such a large operation. The army chief of staff, Sugiyama Gen, did not think Japan could take only part of Australia, but had to plan for the whole of the country:

because if we take only one part of Australia, it will surely develop into a war of attrition. This, in turn, could escalate into total war. Unless there are in-depth plans that consider the control of the entire continent, it is useless for us to plan for an invasion of only part of Australia. On the other hand, there is no objection to plans to isolate Australia by cutting her lines of communication with the United States.⁴⁰

As the historian Henry Frei has observed, if Japan had attacked northern Australia in January–February 1942, it is likely that it would have scored as quick and easy a victory as it had over the lightly defended Ambon and Rabaul. Darwin was garrisoned by a mere brigade; it had no tanks and minimal naval and air support. Most of Australia's 270,000 militia were located in south-east

Australia defending the bulk of the population, its two biggest cities and its heavy manufacturing industry.⁴¹ By late February, Australia's defence planners were estimating that twenty-five divisions and sixty-four first-line squadrons were required to defend the country,⁴² but there were only the equivalent of eleven divisions and fifteen first-line squadrons.⁴³ The Australians estimated that they needed ground forces twice as large as Japan's Southern Army, and warplanes about one-fifth of Japan's entire air strength.

After the destruction of Darwin, the Japanese army and navy again discussed the question. Once again, the navy recommended an operation against northern Australia but the army was disinclined to become bogged down in a war of attrition such as the Sino-Japanese war had become. It estimated that there were 300,000 soldiers in Australia and a maximum of 600,000 combatants who could be mobilised. To match this number, the Japanese army would have to extract an equivalent number from the Philippines and commandeer at least two million tons of shipping. From that time, the focus of Japanese strategy was not to invade Australia but to isolate it by annihilating the US and UK navies.⁴⁴

After the Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies had fallen to the Japanese, Australia was the only considerable base in the South-West Pacific from which the United States could launch a counter-attack. This meant that Australia could exert greater influence on Washington, especially in 1941–42.⁴⁵ This strategic importance was reflected in a statement by Roosevelt in February 1942 that the United States would strive to prevent Australia from falling into Japanese hands.⁴⁶ By agreement between the US and UK governments, Australia became a strategic responsibility of the United



*General Thomas
Blamey with
Lieutenant General
John Lavarack*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
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States in March 1942 when the ABDA command was superseded by the South-West Pacific Area under the command of US General Douglas MacArthur. Coming under MacArthur's command were all combat units of the Australia's defence forces. The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was integrated with the US Army Air Forces to form the Allied Air Force.⁴⁷ General Blamey, with the title Allied Land Services commander, became MacArthur's subordinate. This was a dramatic development. The Edwardian statesman who held office during the visit of the Great White Fleet—men such as Lord Grey, Herbert Asquith

and David Lloyd George—would have been aghast. The United States also created a navy command, Pacific Ocean Areas, under Admiral C.W. Nimitz. This command was divided into Central and North Pacific Areas, directly under Nimitz, and the South Pacific Area (SOPAC), comprising New Zealand, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and the southern Solomons.

The Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had been startlingly successful, as well as humiliating the US navy. However, unaccountably, the Japanese navy did not press its advantage. It did not destroy the vast oil reserves on Hawaii nor its fleet repair facilities. Perhaps more importantly, Japan was not able to destroy any of the US navy's four major aircraft carriers. At the time of the attack, one was delivering planes to Midway Island, another to Guam, a third was under repair on the US Pacific coast, and a fourth was at sea.⁴⁸

In February–March 1942, Japan embarked on a campaign to extend and consolidate its defensive perimeter in the South-West Pacific. The Japanese hoped to give added protection to their new naval base in Rabaul by capturing Port Moresby on the south coast of Papua. From Port Moresby they hoped to be able to bomb ports and airfields in northern Australia, which were being prepared for the counter-offensive against Japan.⁴⁹ The capture of Port Moresby would also make the invasion of French New Caledonia more viable. Moreover, with bases at Rabaul, Port Moresby and New Caledonia, the navy would be in a stronger position to interdict the supplies of munitions and personnel from the United States to Australia. Some optimists in the Japanese military even ventured to hope that the capture of Port Moresby would knock Australia out of the war.⁵⁰

*Task Force 44
in the Coral
Sea, May
1942 (L–R):
Cruisers USS
Salt Lake City,
USS Chicago,
HMAS
Canberra,
HMAS
Australia*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL





*HMAS Australia
under attack by
Japanese torpedo
bombers during the
Battle of the Coral
Sea, 7 May 1942*

AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL

The Japanese navy assembled seventy vessels for the campaign against Port Moresby, including two aircraft carriers, a light carrier—the converted carrier *Shoho*—six heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, fifteen destroyers and fourteen troop transports.⁵¹ On 19 March, Curtin cabled Evatt in Washington asking him to inform the US government that a Japanese force including carriers and transports was likely to attack Port Moresby, and to follow with attacks on New Caledonia and the east coast of Australia. He suggested that this operation could be countered by Allied forces of at least two aircraft carriers, and submarines.⁵² MacArthur's view of Japan's intentions at the time was that it was unlikely to invade Australia, 'as the spoils were not sufficient to warrant the risk'. He thought the main threat to Australia was from raids, or that it might seek to secure air bases.⁵³ It was too soon after Pearl Harbor for the US Navy to offer full-fledged resistance to the Japanese, but US planners were sufficiently seized of the strategic importance of Port Moresby to consider that the Japanese should be prevented from taking it. The United States therefore scrambled to assemble a fleet that included two aircraft carriers, the *Yorktown* and *Lexington*, two US battleships and a UK battleship, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and seventeen destroyers. The plan was for the two carriers to join forces near the New Hebrides and surprise the Japanese navy as soon as it began operations to capture Port Moresby. An Allied cruiser squadron, consisting of two Australian cruisers, the *Australia* and *Hobart*, and the USS *Chicago*, part of the visiting fleet to Australia in the previous year, was to rendezvous with the two carriers to assist their attack.⁵⁴

The Japanese launched their attack with an assault on the small island of Tulagi in the Solomon Islands.⁵⁵ They hoped that their simultaneous dispatch

of a transport force, protected by a small force of light cruisers and destroyers, to Port Moresby, would entice the US fleet within range of their carriers.⁵⁶ The decisive engagement took place on 7 and 8 May 1942. The Americans sank the *Shoho* and inflicted severe damage on the carrier, *Shokaku*. The Japanese sank the USS *Lexington* and inflicted such damage on its sister ship *Yorktown* that they thought that they had sunk it. They also inflicted damage on the *Australia*.⁵⁷ From this indecisive encounter, both sides retreated, the United States anxious to prevent further damage to the *Yorktown*, and Japan to regroup.⁵⁸ Japan inflicted greater overall damage on the US Navy at the Battle of the Coral Sea than it sustained, but it was a Pyrrhic victory. In addition to losing the *Shoho*, a destroyer and three auxiliary vessels, both of the large carriers were forced to return to Japan for repairs. This was to be important for the later and more decisive encounter at Midway Island.

As far as Australia was concerned, the significance of the Battle of the Coral Sea was that Japan was forced to abandon its operation against Port Moresby.⁵⁹ The importance of the engagement was later underlined by Curtin when he commented to Evatt that MacArthur

observes that the essential backbone of the striking power in this action was the aircraft carriers of the task forces which do not belong to his Command, but only entered it for this operation. I hope there is full realisation in London and Washington of the grave threat with which we were confronted last week. We knew the strength of the enemy concentration, we knew his intentions, and we knew the prospective date of his attack, yet we were unable to marshal the superior strength to deal him a heavy blow and the whole of his convoy of 24 transports fell back on Rabaul unscathed. Fortune will not continue to favour us with these opportunities if we do not grasp them.⁶⁰

After the Battle of the Coral Sea, Admiral Yamamoto convinced his government that Japan's major objective must not be the conquest of further territory but the destruction of what was left of the US Pacific fleet. He reasoned that if the United States could reassemble a formidable navy, it would only be a matter of time before Japan succumbed to a power with superior economic resources. But if, by one decisive and cataclysmic naval action, he could annihilate the US Pacific fleet, the United States might be persuaded to accept a negotiated peace that left Japan with a sphere of influence in East Asia and the western Pacific.⁶¹ He hoped thereby to repeat what Admiral Togo had achieved when he destroyed what was left of the Russian fleet in the Straits of Tsushima in 1905.

The essence of Yamamoto's strategy was to assemble the greatest fleet in the history of the Pacific to conquer the tiny island of Midway in the centre of the

North Pacific, in striking distance of Hawaii, the base of the US Pacific fleet. The United States had held Midway since 1867 but only started to fortify it in 1938, two years after the expiry of the Washington Treaty.⁶² Yamamoto hoped that the United States would respond to the danger that, from Midway, the Japanese could mount raids not only on Hawaii but on the US west coast. The Americans would have to assemble the largest possible naval force to counter the Japanese armada assembled to conquer Midway.

Japan's armada was mighty indeed: eight aircraft carriers, eleven battleships, twenty-two cruisers, sixty-five destroyers and twenty-one submarines. To meet this force, the US Navy was able to muster three aircraft carriers from the seven that existed. One was the USS *Yorktown*, which the Japanese believed sunk, and which the shipyards in Hawaii, intact after the assault on Pearl Harbor, had miraculously been able to repair within three days. In support of the carriers were eight cruisers and fifteen destroyers.⁶³

As in the Battle of the Coral Sea, the fleets were out of sight of each other and the battle was waged by aircraft from their carriers. The US fleet was commanded by Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, who had been one of the young officers who visited Australia with the Great White Fleet. On this occasion, the US pilots got the better of their opponents. Within the twenty-four hours of 4 June 1942, the Americans sank four of the largest of Japan's carriers and a heavy cruiser. They also inflicted serious damage on another heavy cruiser, disabled two destroyers and damaged other vessels. By contrast, they suffered only the loss of the *Yorktown*, one destroyer, 38 shore-based aircraft and 109 carrier-based aircraft.⁶⁴ Within a year of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the sinking of the Royal Navy's capital ships, the Americans had checked the Japanese navy at the Battle of the Coral Sea and, with a technically smaller fleet, won a decisive victory at Midway. After the Battle of the Coral Sea, Japanese hopes of invading the north coast of Australia were effectively abandoned: after Midway, their hopes of being able to attack Hawaii and the west coast of the United States were shelved. Now they had to fight a defensive war against an enemy whose resources surpassed their own and which was strengthened by the resources of the British Commonwealth.



*Admiral
Raymond
Spruance,
Commander
Central Pacific
Force*

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It took some time for the US and Australian governments to appreciate how much these naval engagements had improved their strategic position. Curtin's government remained concerned about a Japanese invasion throughout 1942 and well into 1943. On 13 May 1942, Curtin supported MacArthur's submission to Roosevelt that his command be strengthened by two aircraft carriers, an army corps of three fully equipped divisions and 1,000 first-line aircraft.⁶⁵ For his part, MacArthur encouraged the Australians to press the US government to make the Australian theatre the main theatre of the war, despite the 'beat Hitler first' strategy and in a way which the US secretary of war, Henry Stimson, thought disloyal.⁶⁶ Curtin noted that the only difference between the assessment of the Australian chiefs of staff and MacArthur's was that the former concluded that twenty-five divisions would be necessary for the defence of Australia if it did not have adequate air and sea power. MacArthur's view was 'that if the enemy has superior naval and air power no land forces will be adequate and that air-power, both sea-borne and land-based, is a vital necessity'.⁶⁷ In London, Evatt complained to the war cabinet of his (apparently recent) discovery of the holding policy against Japan and defeating Germany before Japan.⁶⁸ Churchill replied to Evatt that, while Britain

would do all in our power to come to Australia's help if she was invaded, we could not afford to lock up in any theatre (Australia included) sufficient troops to meet all possible invasion risks. Our strategy must be to use our available forces to meet the main enemy effort, whenever it might be made.⁶⁹

Such was Curtin's concern that in June 1942, despite the Battle of Midway, he declared in a broadcast that 'Australia could be lost'.⁷⁰

The Battle of the Coral Sea prevented a Japanese attack on Port Moresby by sea. Instead they landed at Buna and Gona on the north coast of Papua in July. Their strategy now was to advance across the rugged Owen Stanley Ranges to take Port Moresby from the north. The Australian militia troops sent to interdict them had to march along a narrow track that connected Port Moresby with Kokoda, a small town with an airfield in the northern foothills of the Owen Stanleys. Throughout August, Australian troops staged a fighting retreat that delayed the enemy. They also repelled a direct attack on Milne Bay, at the eastern tip of Papua, at the end of the month.⁷¹ By 16 September, with the Japanese almost in sight of Port Moresby, MacArthur sent Blamey to New Guinea to prevent the town falling to the enemy.

By this time frictions were developing, with MacArthur taking an unsympathetic and unfair view of the Australian soldiers' fighting abilities. MacArthur commented on several occasions that 'these Australians won't fight' and Stimson recorded in his diary:

One of the most striking things in Port Moresby was that the Australians would not fight. As MacArthur put it, they were not good in the field, they were not good in the jungle, and they came from the slums of the cities in Australia and they had no fighting spirit.⁷²

Blamey sought to appease MacArthur by dismissing the commander of the New Guinea force, Major-General Sydney Rowell. By that time, however, the Japanese troops were short of supplies. Moreover, the US Navy had commenced an amphibious campaign against Guadalcanal, a tiny island in the Solomon Islands. This savage struggle, which lasted from August 1942 to February 1943, would cost twenty-four warships on both sides and 24,000 Japanese dead. Admiral William Halsey, another of the young ensigns attached to the Great White Fleet, assumed command of naval forces in the area at a critical stage of the campaign.



Former ensigns of the Great White Fleet, Admiral Halsey and Vice-Admiral John McCain, were both senior US commanders during the Pacific War

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Having failed to land at Milne Bay and fighting a major engagement in the Solomons, the Japanese decided to abandon the attack on Port Moresby and withdraw to Buna and Gona. From that time forward, Australian and US troops went on the offensive, attacking heavily fortified beachheads at Gona, Buna and Sanananda. Gona was captured on 9 December 1942 and Buna on 2 January. Resistance on Sanananda was finally eliminated on 22 January.

The Australian–US Alliance, 1943–1945

In the Australian autumn of 1943, there remained a fear among Australian policy-makers that Australia was still susceptible to a Japanese invasion and needed reinforcements, particularly for air defences. MacArthur assisted Curtin with arguments to support the Australian case,⁷³ but during the year Australia's invasion fears were gradually allayed. Curtin's Labor Party won a landslide election and managed to pass an act introducing conscription for members of the Australian militia to serve outside Australian territory but within a 'South-West Pacific Zone'.⁷⁴ The introduction of this measure by a man who

had himself been jailed for opposing conscription for overseas service during World War I had much to do with pressure from MacArthur: concerned lest resources for his command be jeopardised by the continuing criticism in the United States of Australia's war effort, he convinced Curtin to introduce the measure.⁷⁵ US envoys in Australia felt reassured that, with conscription, 'the epidemic of adverse publicity concerning Australia which was so troubling in the last months of 1942 seems to have spent its force'.⁷⁶ Nelson Johnson, the US minister to Australia, described Australia at the end of 1943 as pulled in different ways:

The primary and greater pull is towards the British Empire ... But the Japanese bid for control of the Pacific has increased the pull in the opposite direction, namely toward demand of more independent national status, with freedom of relations with the United States, because of its dominant position in the Pacific and Australia's dependence on the United States for protection here ...⁷⁷

At the beginning of 1944, the Australian government hoped that its forces would be centrally involved in the advance against Japan and understood that MacArthur would bring them with him in his assault on the Philippines. However, it became clear that MacArthur was not going to use them. This became a source of concern for Curtin. As he informed Churchill in August 1944:

There is developing in America a hope that they will be able to say that they won the Pacific War by themselves ... I am deeply concerned at the position that would arise in our Far Eastern Empire if any considerable American opinion were to hold that America fought a war on principle in the Far East and won it relatively unaided, while the other Allies including ourselves did very little towards recovering our lost property.⁷⁸

In 1944 and 1945 the Australian government increasingly considered that the Americans were neglecting its views, just as in the early years of the war Australian governments had felt that the United Kingdom was. Evatt and Curtin were particularly irritated by Australia's exclusion from the Allied Conference at Cairo in November 1943. This conference, which included China, agreed that all Pacific territory seized by Japan would be permanently removed from its control.⁷⁹ The Australians were also uneasy about unilateral US declarations about the future of particular territories in the Far East and the need to retain post-war bases.

In frustration at this lack of influence, the ambitious Evatt held a conference with New Zealand in 1944 which concluded an agreement.⁸⁰ Both countries proclaimed their desire to be represented at the highest levels in Allied bodies dealing with the conclusion of the war, and to establish a regional defence zone in the South Pacific. They also asserted that the construction of wartime



The Commonwealth War Cabinet, 1943 (L–R): J.A. Beasley, Minister for Supply and Shipping; H. De Vere (Bert) Evatt, Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs; Frank M. Forde, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Army; John Curtin, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence; Sir Frederick Sheddon, KCMG, OBE, Secretary Department of Defence and Secretary to the War Cabinet; J.B. (Ben) Chifley, Commonwealth Treasurer and Minister for Post-War Reconstruction; Norman J.O. Makin, Minister for the Navy and Minister for Munitions

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bases in the Pacific did not constitute grounds to claim them after the war. And they signalled their intent to create a commission for the South Seas that would harmonise the development, leading to eventual self-government, of the dependent territories. The Australian–New Zealand Agreement was primarily an attempt to steer the United States towards consultation and multilateral arrangements in the Pacific. Although the agreement irritated the British almost as much as it did the US government, it was clear in late 1943 and 1944 that Australia wished to develop a more amicable relationship with the mother country after the testing times of 1941 and 1942.⁸¹

After the New Guinea campaign of 1942–43, which relieved the threat of invasion, the Curtin government reviewed its war effort in the light of the exhausted reserves of manpower in the civilian economy. After consulting MacArthur, the government decided to release 20,000 men from the army and 20,000 men and women from munitions and aircraft production by June 1944 so as to divert that labour to other urgent needs, the most important of which was food production. It also did not replace normal wastage in the army (76,000 men in 1944). Curtin justified the decision to his allies by pointing out that, with only 66 per cent of its normal labour force, Australia was producing food for 12 million people. This enabled Australia to supply 90 per cent of the needs



A meeting of the Pacific War Council, May 1943 (L–R): T.V. Soong, Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs; Lord Halifax, British Ambassador to the USA; Dr H.V. Evatt, Australian Minister for External Affairs; Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister; President Roosevelt; W.L. Mackenzie King, Canadian Prime Minister; Leighton McCarthy, Canadian Minister to the USA; Alexander Loudon, Netherlands Ambassador to the USA; Manuel Quezon, President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines

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of US forces in the South-West Pacific as well as supplementing New Zealand's supplies to the forces of the South Pacific. Indeed, the value of reciprocal aid to Americans covering all classes of supplies and services was about £100 million in 1943–44, or one-sixth of total war expenditure.⁸²

Nonetheless, headlines in Australian newspapers reporting the decision in terms such as 'Army release of 90,000 men' attracted press criticism in the United States. When these criticisms came to the attention of Churchill, he instructed his military advisers: 'Let a small body of competent officers forthwith begin to examine, in cold blood what really is Australia's contribution'.⁸³ Churchill's advisers defended the Australian war effort, and concluded:

We do not think that any complaint could reasonably be supported against the effort of these forces to date, Apart from current operations in Hollandia, Australian formations have carried out practically the whole of the fighting in New Guinea with minor assistance from an American regiment during the closing stages of the operation against Salamaua and a paratroop regiment which took part in the capture by two Australian divisions of Lae. The only U.S. operation in New Guinea of any importance was the practically unopposed landing of a regiment at Saidor.⁸⁴

Comparing the war efforts of the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, Hastings Ismay, secretary of the UK war cabinet, supplied his prime minister with a table.⁸⁵

	Australia	United Kingdom	United States
Population	7 million	47 million	136 million
Armed Forces	26%	30%	24%
Munitions Production	14%	21%	17%
Agricultural Production for export to UK, and for feeding Allied Forces	7%		
Other Employment	53%	49%	59%

Ismay concluded that it ‘will be noticed that the degree of mobilisation for the war is greater in Australia than in the United States in both armed forces and munitions, provided one lumps in with munitions production the labour employed on producing food for the United Kingdom and Allied Forces’.⁸⁶

Before Curtin left for the conference of Commonwealth prime ministers in London in May 1944, the British Commander of the Eastern Fleet commented:

Australia, as a whole, is still grateful to the Americans, but tired of them and apprehensive. As a result, the feeling in all classes is preponderately [*sic*] in favour of Great Britain. There is general longing—the word is no exaggeration—for the presence of H.M. ships, the R.A.F. and the British Army. This feeling is so strong that it has affected even the Labour Cabinet, in spite of the fact that Mr. Curtin is still spoken of by his opponents as ‘MacArthur’s man’. Only some Irish and a few thugs like Mr. Eddie Ward are still anti-British. Unless something goes badly wrong, it is in this frame of mind that Mr. Curtin will arrive in London. Dr. Evatt, the strong man of the Cabinet, is now in full favour of a pro-British policy, though he is by nature suspicious and still dislikes us at heart.⁸⁷

On the way to London, Curtin made a stop in Washington to visit President Roosevelt.⁸⁸ Meeting on Anzac Day, 25 April 1944, they discussed postwar planning and



Prime Minister John Curtin (left) on a visit to Washington, with the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, 1944

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Prime Minister John Curtin signs the Australian–New Zealand Agreement in Canberra on 21 January 1944, watched by Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt (left) and the New Zealand prime minister, Peter Fraser

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generally tried to repair the damage to the bilateral relationship occasioned by the ANZAC Agreement.⁸⁹ When Curtin visited London, the hope in Britain was that although Australia ‘would naturally as a Pacific nation have close relations with the United States, her closest relations will, unless we play our cards extremely badly, be with the United Kingdom and the other nations of the Commonwealth’.⁹⁰

Curtin obliged, giving assurances of Australia’s continuing loyalty to the United Kingdom and making suggestions for the reform of British Commonwealth arrangements.⁹¹

In the last year of the war, Australia was relegated to campaigns of peripheral importance.⁹² This was all the more galling because the Australian army had paved the way for MacArthur’s campaign in the Philippines. Three of these campaigns began in late 1944 in Australian mandated territory: Bougainville, New Britain and the Aitape–Wewak area of New Guinea. The other three, masterminded by MacArthur, were in Borneo from May to July 1945: Tarakan, Brunei Bay and Balikpapan. These mopping-up exercises were of doubtful utility. The campaigns in Australian territory were fought by one AIF and three militia divisions, and were designed to take over beachheads that the Americans were holding. Moreover, Brunei’s oil, one of the main prizes of the Borneo campaign, had already been denied Japan by naval blockade.⁹³ The Australian general Vernon Sturdee queried the strategic value of the campaigns in 1945: ‘The Jap garrisons are at present virtually in POW camps but feed themselves, so why incur a large number of casualties in the process of eliminating them?’⁹⁴ An alternative strategy might be to have bypassed the garrisons and waited for the Japanese surrender. MacArthur conceded this point in August 1944 when he commented: ‘The enemy garrisons which have been bypassed in the Solomons and New Guinea represent no menace ... The actual time of their destruction is of little or no importance and their influence as a contributing factor to that war is already negligible’.⁹⁵

In Australia, the use of Australian troops attracted strong criticism by the media and a new Liberal Party opposition under the leadership of Robert Menzies. The Melbourne *Herald*, for example, commented on 10 January 1945:

American public opinion, which is inclined to write off Australia as a fighting force for the remainder of the Pacific war, now sees the Digger in the humblest of secondary roles—mopping-up behind the real fighting, slogging Yank. The feeling is reflected by American newspapers, which display the story of Australia's garrisoning job in the Pacific under such headings as 'Australians take over behind the Pacific front'. They wonder who is responsible for this strategy—General MacArthur or the Australian Government.⁹⁶

When parliament assembled in February 1945, Menzies censured the government. He thought that it was correct that US military strength should be primarily used to retake the Philippines because the United States was 'deeply pledged in its honour, self-respect and pride', but that Australia as part of the British race had a strong interest in the relief of Burma, Malaya and Singapore as well as the Netherlands East Indies.⁹⁷ Curtin's government continued the campaigns partly to secure a voice in the post-war peace settlement in the Pacific.



Dominion Prime Ministers' Conference 1944 (R–L): Peter Fraser (New Zealand), John Curtin (Australia), Winston Churchill (UK), the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir (representative of the Indian Government), King George VI (centre), Sir Godfrey Huggins (Southern Rhodesia), W.L. Mackenzie King (Canada), Sir Firoz Khan Noon (representative of the Indian Government) and Field Marshal J.C. Smuts (South Africa)

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In the end, the United States compelled Japan to surrender by a combination of naval, air and land power, culminating in the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Despite the frustration of the last years of the war, including manifestations of anti-American feeling and a return to the British embrace, there was also a sense that the wartime Australian–US alliance had brought about lasting change. As Evatt commented to US diplomats in 1945: ‘more and more [Australians] were coming to the realization that their political future as a people was cast in the Pacific’.⁹⁸ Another of his remarks to Roosevelt’s confidant, Harry Hopkins, was prophetic:

My own view of the future of Australia and New Zealand is that they will quickly develop the fullest autonomy in international affairs without prejudicing the only legal tie that united them with the United Kingdom—that is kinship. This will mean in practice a close relationship with the United States ...

Towards the ANZUS Treaty

World War II demonstrated that command of the sea was dependent on prior command of the air. It was a tragic irony that the commander of the *Prince of Wales*, Admiral Phillips, had been one of those most sceptical about air power. The Americans learned the lesson of Pearl Harbor well. Their carriers prevailed in the battles of Coral Sea and Midway, and they created powerful carrier taskforces to spearhead Admiral Nimitz’s advance across the central

*Admiral Halsey
welcomes
Admiral Nimitz
aboard USS
South Dakota,
Tokyo Bay,
29 August
1945*

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Pacific. The rise of the carrier had as a corollary the eclipse of the battleship. Symbolically, the largest of Japan's battleships, the 72,000-ton *Yamato*, was sunk by carrier aircraft without being able to fire its main armaments against enemy battleships. 'When she went down', argued the naval historian S.E. Morison, 'five centuries of naval warfare ended'.⁹⁹ The end of World War II resulted in the Soviet Union and the United States becoming the world's dominant military powers. The British Empire emerged from the war seriously weakened and with its Dominions on the path to full statehood.

After 1945, the government led by Curtin's successor, J.B. Chifley, nonetheless maintained Australia's political and economic links with Britain and the Commonwealth. At the same time Evatt tried unsuccessfully to link Australia with US security by seeking reciprocal US and Australian use of bases in the South Pacific. At a conference in Canberra from 26 August to 2 September 1947, British Commonwealth countries, led by Australia, endorsed a harsh peace settlement for Japan, with strict limits on its rearmament. But the United States after 1948 pursued a policy of rebuilding Japan economically as a bulwark against Soviet expansion.¹⁰⁰ The policy was a cause of concern in Canberra.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, US policy moved toward the concept of a defensive arc in the North Pacific, from Alaska to the Philippines. Hostilities in Korea in mid-1950 prompted the US government to hasten the conclusion of a peace settlement with Japan. Australia, however, would not agree to a lenient peace without some sort of Pacific security arrangement. The result was a tripartite pact signed by Australia, New Zealand and the United States in 1951, known as the ANZUS Treaty. The agreement did not cover UK colonial possessions in South-East Asia, an omission which prompted the UK to try to quash the treaty.¹⁰¹ Although out of government, Churchill was irritated by the United Kingdom's exclusion and as prime minister in 1952 pressed for a revival of the imperial defence system. He failed to appreciate that something like the ANZUS Treaty had been in the making



Joseph Benedict Chifley became prime minister and leader of the Labor Party after John Curtin died in July 1945. He maintained the political and economic ties between Australia and the United Kingdom.

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

since 1941–42 with the collapse of imperial defence and the consolidation of the Australian–US alliance. As Paul Kennedy has remarked:

The very idea that such a widely dispersed group of territories as the British Empire could be moulded into an organic defence unit was only worth contemplating in an age when Britain was financially strong and uninvolved in Europe, when the dependencies valued the link with Whitehall above all others, and when sea power was predominant. By 1945 none of these preconditions applied.¹⁰²

The wartime alliance between Australia and the United States and the ANZUS Treaty of 1951 were the culmination of a process that began in 1908 with the visit of the Great White Fleet and developed, albeit unevenly, around naval issues over the ensuing four decades. At the end of the war, Australia's historical relationship with the United Kingdom was still flourishing, and it was not until the 1970s that the United Kingdom disengaged militarily from Australia's region. But the Pacific War, and the decisive role of the US Pacific fleet, marked the beginning of a new era in which the United States emerged as Australia's key ally.

Afterword

In late April 1954, almost fifty years after he had first come to Australia as an ensign in USS *Kansas*, retired Fleet Admiral William ‘Bull’ Halsey was in Brisbane. The seventy-one-year-old sailor was in the city as a guest of the Commonwealth and the Australian–American Association to observe the anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea. Commemoration of the battle was a significant date in the association’s calendar because of the momentous role the victory had played in Australia’s recent history. Remembering the battle was also an important symbol of the wartime comradeship between Australian and US servicemen. The Coral Sea victory was the first serious check to the remarkable series of Japanese successes that had begun with Pearl Harbor. Strategically, preventing a Japanese invasion of Port Moresby was vital to the Allied campaign in the South-West Pacific and, after almost six months of setbacks, it had been imperative for their morale.

Speaking at a vice-regal reception, Halsey recalled how he had visited Brisbane many times during the war to confer with General Douglas MacArthur, and told his audience, ‘The hospitality you showed to all our officers and enlisted



Almost fifty years after he first came to Australia as an ensign with the Great White Fleet, Admiral William ‘Bull’ Halsey takes the salute at a ceremony to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea in Brisbane’s Newstead Park, 28 April 1954

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men will never be forgotten in America.’¹ Reflecting on the purpose of his visit, he observed: ‘History has proven that nations who have controlled the sea have won the wars.’² The following day the admiral embarked on a busy round of civic engagements, including taking the salute at the American Memorial in a Coral Sea Service in Newstead Park. Halsey’s presence at the celebrations was a symbolic vindication of everything Australian leaders such as Deakin, Hughes, Lyons and Menzies had wanted from a relationship with the United States. For four decades, sea power had played a central role in the evolution of that relationship. Sailors, politicians and diplomats had all played a part in advancing the foundations of mutual understanding, from vague declarations of cultural affiliation, to a security alliance based on common interests and shared political values.

Appendix I

The fleets

United States Navy Atlantic Fleet (The Great White Fleet), 1908

Commander: Admiral Charles S. Sperry

USS *Connecticut* BB-18 (Flagship)

Battleships

USS *Kearsarge* BB-5

USS *Kentucky* BB-6

USS *Illinois* BB-7

USS *Alabama* BB-8

USS *Wisconsin* BB-9

USS *Maine* BB-10

USS *Ohio* BB-12

USS *Missouri* BB-11

USS *Virginia* BB-13

USS *Nebraska* BB-14

USS *Georgia* BB-15

USS *New Jersey* BB-16

USS *Rhode Island* BB-17

USS *Louisiana* BB-19

USS *Vermont* BB-20

USS *Kansas* BB-21

USS *Minnesota* BB-22

Fleet Auxiliaries

USS *Panther* (Repair Ship)

USS *Glacier* (Supply Ship)

USS *Culgoa* (Refrigerated Supply Ship)

USS *Yankton* (Fleet Tender)

USS *Ajax* (Collier)

Divisions 4 and 5 of the United States Navy Combined Fleet, 1925

Commander: Admiral Robert E. Coontz

USS *Seattle* CA-11 (Flagship)

Battleships

USS *Nevada* BB-36
USS *Oklahoma* BB-37
USS *Pennsylvania* BB-38
USS *New Mexico* BB-40
USS *Mississippi* BB-41
USS *Idaho* BB-42
USS *Tennessee* BB-43
USS *California* BB-44
USS *Colorado* BB-45
USS *Maryland* BB-46
USS *West Virginia* BB-48

Light Cruiser Division

Commander: Rear Admiral Thomas P. Magruder
USS *Richmond* CL-9 (Flagship)
USS *Trenton* CL-11
USS *Marblehead* CL-12
USS *Memphis* CL-13

Destroyer Squadrons

Commander: Rear Admiral Frank H. Schofield
USS *Omaha* CL-4 (Flagship)
USS *Altair* AD-11 (Destroyer Tender)
USS *Melville* AD-2 (Destroyer Tender)

Destroyer Squadron 11

USS *Decatur* DD-341 (Flagship)
USS *Sinclair* DD-275
USS *Moody* DD-277
USS *Percival* DD-298
USS *John Francis Burnes* DD-299
USS *Farragut* DD-300
USS *Somers* DD-301
USS *Stoddert* DD-302
USS *Farquhar* DD-304
USS *Thompson* DD-305
USS *Kennedy* DD-306
USS *Paul Hamilton* DD-307
USS *Yarborough* DD-314
USS *Sloat* DD-316
USS *Wood* DD-317

USS *Shirk* DD-318

USS *Kidder* DD-319

Destroyer Squadron 12

USS *Litchfield* DD-336 (Flagship)

USS *McDermut* DD-262 (Torpedo Training Vessel)

USS *Mervine* DD-322

USS *Chase* DD-323

USS *Robert Smith* DD-324

USS *Mallany* DD-325

USS *Macdonough* DD-331

USS *Farenholt* DD-332

USS *Sumner* DD-333

USS *Melvine* DD-335

Fleet Auxiliaries

USS *Cuyama* AO-3 (Tanker)

USS *Brazos* AO-4 (Tanker)

USS *Neches* AO-5 (Tanker)

USS *Ramapo* AO-12 (Tanker)

USS *Ludlow* DM-10 (Light Mine Layer)

USS *Burns* DM-11 (Seaplane Tender)

USS *Relief* AH-1 (Hospital Ship)

USS *Bridge* AF-1 (Supply Ship)

United States Naval Task Force, 1941

Commander: Rear Admiral John H. Newton

Cruisers

USS *Chicago* CA-29 (Flagship)

USS *Portland* CA-33

Destroyers

USS *Clark* DD-361

USS *Cassin* DD-372

USS *Conyngham* DD-371

USS *Downes* DD- 375

USS *Reid* DD-369

Appendix II

Biographical guide

Listed are the relevant positions of people mentioned in the text at the time when their names occur in the book.

Thomas Blamey:	Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces, and Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces in the South-West Pacific Area.
Robert Borden:	Canadian Prime Minister, 1911–20.
Henry Braddon:	Australian Commissioner to the United States, 1919–18.
Stanley Bruce:	Australian Prime Minister, 1923–29; High Commissioner in London, 1933–45.
Archie Cameron:	Australian Member of Parliament, 1934–55.
Richard Casey:	Australian politician and diplomat. United Australia Party member and first Australian Ambassador to the United States, 1940.
James Catts:	Australian Member of Parliament, 1906–20.
Joseph Chifley:	Australian Prime Minister, 1945–49.
Winston Churchill:	British Prime Minister, 1940–45.
Georges Clemenceau:	French Prime Minister, 1917–20.
Joseph Cook:	Australian Prime Minister, 1913–14, and Minister for the Navy, 1920; High Commissioner in London, 1921–27.
Calvin Coolidge:	US President, 1923–29.
Robert E. Coontz:	US naval officer. He first visited Australia in 1908 with the Great White Fleet and returned as an admiral in command of the US Combined Fleet in 1925.
William Cowles:	Admiral in charge of the Navy's Bureau of Equipment in 1908.
Lord Crewe:	British Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1910–15.
John Curtin:	Australian Prime Minister, 1941–45.
Lord Curzon:	British Foreign Secretary, 1919–24.
Alfred Deakin:	Australian Prime Minister, 1905–08.
Anthony Eden:	British Foreign Secretary, 1935–38; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 1939–45.
Frederick Eggleston:	Australian Minister to China, 1941–44.
James Elder:	Australian Commissioner to the United States, 1924–26.
Herbert Evatt:	Australian Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, 1941–49.
Arthur Fadden:	Australian Prime Minister, 29 August to 7 October 1941.

John Fisher:	First Sea Lord, 1904–10 and 1914–15.
Peter Fraser:	New Zealand Prime Minister, 1940–49.
Clarence E. Gauss:	US Minister to Australia, 1940.
Auckland Geddes:	British Ambassador to the United States, 1920–24.
David Lloyd George:	British Prime Minister, 1916–22.
Lord Gowrie:	Governor-General of Australia, 1936–45.
Edward Grey:	British Foreign Secretary, 1905–16.
Henry Gullet:	Australian Minister for Trade Treaties, 1934.
Lord Halifax:	British Ambassador to the United States, 1940–46.
William T. Halsey:	Ensign in the Great White Fleet; Commander, South Pacific Area, 1942–45.
Maurice Hankey:	Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 1912–38.
William Keith Hancock:	Australian historian.
Warren Harding:	US President, 1921–23.
Samuel Hoare:	British Secretary of State for Air, 1940.
Herbert Hoover:	US President, 1929–33.
Edward House:	Political confidant of President Wilson; chief negotiator and deputy to Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
Esme Howard:	British Ambassador to the United States, 1924–30.
Charles Evans Hughes:	US Secretary of State, 1921–25.
William Morris Hughes:	Australian Prime Minister, 1915–23.
Cordell Hull:	US Secretary of State, 1933–44.
Thomas Inskip:	Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 1940.
Tatsuo Kawai:	Japanese Minister to Australia, 1941.
Husband E. Kimmel:	Ensign in the Great White Fleet; Commander of the Pacific Fleet, 1941.
William Mackenzie King:	Canadian Prime Minister, 1935–48.
John Latham:	Adviser to W. M. Hughes at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.
Ezra Mills Lauton:	US diplomat. Consul-general in Sydney, 1925.
John Lavarack:	Australian Chief of the General Staff, 1935.
Frank Leshner:	US sailor in USS <i>Virginia</i> , 1908.
Lord Lothian:	British Ambassador to the United States, 1939–40.
Joseph Lyons:	Australian Prime Minister, 1932–39.
Douglas MacArthur:	Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific, 1942–45.
Ramsay McDonald:	British Prime Minister, 1924 and 1931–35.
Donald Mackinnon:	Australian Commissioner to the United States, 1924.

Alfred Thayer Mahan:	US naval officer and strategist.
William Massey:	New Zealand Prime Minister, 1912–25.
Franklin Matthews:	US journalist travelling with the Great White Fleet, 1907–09.
Arthur Meighen:	Canadian Prime Minister, 1920–21.
Alexander Melbourne:	Australian historian.
Robert Gordon Menzies:	Australian Prime Minister, 1939–41.
Lord Milner:	British Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1919–21.
Thomas Phillips:	Royal Navy Commander, Far East Fleet, 1941.
Jay Pierrepont Moffat:	US consul-general in Sydney, 1935–37.
John Monash:	Commander of the Australian Corps, 1918.
Patrick Moran:	Catholic Cardinal and Archbishop of Sydney, 1884–1911.
Ronald Munro Ferguson:	Governor-General of Australia, 1914–20.
John H. Newton:	Admiral commanding a US Navy detachment that visited Sydney in 1941.
Otto Niemeyer:	Director of the Bank of England, 1930.
Chester Nimitz:	Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Fleet, 1941–42; Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, 1942–45.
Lord Northcote:	Governor-General of Australia, 1904–08.
Keith Officer:	Australian Counsellor attached to the British embassy in Washington, 1937–40.
Earle Page:	Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, 1923–29; Prime Minister, April 1929; Minister for Commerce, 1934–39.
Archdale Parkhill:	Australian Minister for Defence, 1934–37.
George Pearce:	Australian Minister for Defence, 1908–09, 1910–13, 1914–21, 1932–34; Minister for External Affairs, 1934–37.
Edmund Piesse:	Director of the Pacific Branch, Australian Prime Minister's Department, 1919–23.
Herbert Richmond:	Royal Navy officer; proponent of imperial defence in the 1920s and 1930s.
Franklin Roosevelt:	US President, 1933–45.
Theodore Roosevelt:	US President, 1901–09.
Elihu Root:	US Secretary of State, 1905–09.
Sydney Rowell:	Australian Commander, New Guinea Force, 1942.
James Scullin:	Australian Prime Minister, 1929–31.
Frederick Shedden:	Secretary of the Australian Defence Department, 1937–56.
Jan Smuts:	South African Prime Minister, 1939–48.
Albert Goodwill Spalding:	US sports promoter and entrepreneur.

Charles Sperry:	Commander of the Great White Fleet, 1908–09.
Raymond A. Spruance:	Midshipman in the Great White Fleet; Commander at the Battle of Midway and the Battle of the Philippine Sea.
Henry Stimson:	US Secretary of War, 1940–45.
Vernon Sturdee:	Australian Chief of the General Staff, 1940–44; Commander First Australian Army, 1944–45.
Kogoro Takahira:	Japanese Ambassador to the United States, 1900–09.
Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens):	American humorist, satirist, lecturer and writer.
Archibald Wavell:	British Commander in the Middle East, 1939–41.
Curtis Wilbur:	US Secretary of the Navy, 1924–39.
Woodrow Wilson:	US President, 1913–21.
Henry Wynter:	Australian army officer; advocated greater self-reliance in defence planning in the 1920s and 1930s.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Ornithorhynchidae is the scientific name of the family of monotremes, including the platypus, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*.
- 2 Don Watson, 'Introduction', in Mark Twain, *The Wayward Tourist: Mark Twain's Adventures in Australia*, p. xxxii.
- 3 Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers*, pp. 6–7.
- 4 R.G. Menzies, *The Measure of the Years*, p. 54.
- 5 Richard Armitage, 'Bound to Stick Together', *Weekend Australian*, 16–17 August 2003.

1 The Great White Fleet and World War I, 1900–1918

- 1 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)* House of Representatives (H. of R.), 25 September 1901, vol. 4, p. 5173.
- 2 W.K. Hancock, *Australia*, p. 59.
- 3 *Evening Star*, 16 December 1907.
- 4 Theodore Roosevelt, *State of the Union Message*, 3 December 1907, in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, Santa Barbara, CA, University of California, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29548>>, accessed 12 January 2008.
- 5 Robert Jones, *With the American Fleet from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, p. 2.
- 6 Cited by W. S. Meriwether, 'The Atlantic Fleet's Ocean to Ocean Trip', *New York Times*, 15 December 1907.
- 7 *New York Herald*, 17 December 1907.
- 8 Theodore Roosevelt's message to the first Commonwealth parliament from *Review of Reviews*, 20 April 1901, in Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian–American Relations between 1900 and 1975*, p. 6.
- 9 *Herald*, 12 June 1905.
- 10 Statement by William Loeb, Secretary to the President, *New York Times*, 5 July 1907.
- 11 See Thomas A. Bailey, 'The World Cruise of the American Battleship Fleet, 1907–1909', *Pacific Historical Review*, December 1932, pp. 391, 395.
- 12 Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, p. 563.
- 13 R. Kennedy to Alfred Deakin, 16 December 1907, Deakin Papers, NLA: MS 1540, Series 15, Item 3858. Hereafter, Deakin Papers.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Alfred Deakin to Whitelaw Reid, 7 January 1908, NAA: A1 1908/11034.
- 16 Alfred Deakin to Lord Northcote, 24 January 1908, Deakin Papers, Series 15, Item 3859.
- 17 *Ibid.*

- 18 Root to Roosevelt, 21 February 1908, cited in Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p. 9.
- 19 See Louis Morton, 'Military and Naval Preparations for the Defence of the Philippines during the War Scare of 1907', *Military Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 2, Summer 1949, pp. 95–104.
- 20 Cited in Alfred T. Mahan, 'The Value of the Pacific Cruise of the United States Fleet, 1908' in his *Naval Administration and Warfare: Some General Principles*, p. 314.
- 21 Cited in Bernard de Voto, (ed.), *Mark Twain in Eruption: Hitherto Unpublished Pages about Men and Events by Mark Twain*, p. 8.
- 22 Cited by Morton, 'Military and Naval Preparations for the Defence of the Philippines', p. 96.
- 23 Mahan to Roosevelt, 10 January 1907, Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress.
- 24 Mahan, 'The Value of the Pacific Cruise'.
- 25 Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, p. 568.
- 26 See James Reckner, "'A sea of troubles': The Great White Fleet's 1908 War Plans for Australia and New Zealand' in David Stevens and John Reeve (eds), *Southern Trident: Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power*, pp. 174–96.
- 27 *Argus*, 16 March 1908.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 *The Times*, 26 March 1908.
- 31 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August 1908.
- 32 Sperry cited by W. Farmer Whyte, *William Morris Hughes: His Life and Times*, p. 143, and Deakin by *New York Times*, 20 August 1908.
- 33 Franklin Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads: Cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet from San Francisco to Hampton Roads, July 7, 1908 – February 22, 1909*, p. 86.
- 34 Sperry to Porter, 4 December 1908, cited in Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p. 11. The invitation for the fleet to visit Japan was issued on 18 March 1908 by the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Baron Kogoro Takahira. The invitation was a clever piece of diplomacy, which turned the potentially negative consequences of the cruise into an event that had positive significance for both Japan and the United States. Drawing on newspaper reports of the period, the American diplomatic historian Thomas Bailey suggests that Japan's ally Britain was behind this disarming stroke of diplomacy. See Bailey, 'The World Cruise of the American Battleship Fleet', p. 409.
- 35 Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, p. 87.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Grey to Elgin (Colonial Secretary), 22 February 1908, TNA: CO 418/66/73.
- 38 Minute, Lord Crewe to Lord Dudley, 22 September 1908, TNA: CO 418/61/135–8.
- 39 Letter to Edith Sperry, 4 September 1908, cited in Robert Hart, *The Great White Fleet: Our Nation's Attempt at Global Diplomacy in the Twilight of Its Innocence, 1907–1909*, p. 199.
- 40 Ibid. Hart draws on several of Sperry's letters about his time in Sydney.

- 41 Sperry to Roosevelt, 12 September 1908, cited in Neville Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–1923*, vol. I: *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914*, p. 171.
- 42 See Robert Coontz, *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, p. 285.
- 43 Glen St J. Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian–American Diplomatic Relations since 1945*, p. 3.
- 44 The text of the telegram was reported in the Dublin newspaper *Freeman’s Journal*, 18 June 1908.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Sperry to Gleeson, 22 August 1908, Moran Papers, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives: U2314, 4.116.
- 47 Gleeson to O’Hara, 22 August 1908, *ibid.* Philip Ayres in his account of these events also mentions that there was some thought given to embarrassing Sperry in the press over this matter, but eventually it was quietly dropped. See P. Ayres, *Prince of the Church: Patrick Francis Moran, 1830–1911*, pp. 261–2.
- 48 *The Age*, 25 February 1908.
- 49 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1908.
- 50 ‘Dryblower’ Murphy, ‘Big Brother’, <<http://www.liswa.wa.gov.au/wammo/big/bigviewc.html>>, accessed 28 December 2007.
- 51 Speech, Deakin Papers, Series 15, Item 3938.
- 52 Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, p. 568.
- 53 *New York Times*, 4 May 1908.
- 54 Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, pp. 83–5, describes the festivities in Melbourne.
- 55 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1908.
- 56 Frank Leshner, Letter, 30 August 1908, at <http://www.greatwhitefleet.info/GWF_Sailor_FL_Melbourne.html>, accessed 4 January 2008.
- 57 Ibid., 15 September 1908, at <http://www.greatwhitefleet.info/GWF_Sailor_FL-Albany.html>, accessed 4 January 2008.
- 58 Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, pp. 83–5.
- 59 Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, Correspondence, 30 August 1908, Naval Historical Foundation, Washington, DC.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 See Hart, *The Great White Fleet*, p. 193.
- 62 Ibid., p. 194. In relation to this incident Hart cites the records of the USS *Kentucky*.
- 63 Calvin D. Cowles, *Cowles Genealogy*, pp. 543–4.
- 64 Hart draws on the account in the *Evening Mail* and the US Navy’s *General Court Martial Orders*, 1908, No. 33.
- 65 Both Stark and Kimmel would bear the primary responsibility of the navy’s failures in the defence of Pearl Harbor in 1942, Kimmel as the commander of the Pacific Fleet and Stark as Chief of Naval Operations. Both Halsey and Spruance were more fortunate. They commanded with distinction in some of the most significant naval battles in the Pacific, reaching important leadership positions in the navy during and after World War II.

- 66 A naval aviator, McCain would end the war serving under Spruance as the commander of a carrier group in the Fifth Fleet's Task Force 58, which saw significant action during the battles for the Marianas and the Philippine Sea. He was also the grandfather of United States Senator and presidential candidate John S. McCain III.
- 67 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1908.
- 68 *New York Times*, 11 September 1908.
- 69 *The Age*, 5 September 1908.
- 70 Leshner, Letter, 15 September 1908, at <http://www.greatwhitefleet.info/GWF_Sailor_FL-Albany.html>, accessed on 4 January 2008.
- 71 James Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, p. 105.
- 72 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1908.
- 73 Hart, *The Great White Fleet*, p. 196.
- 74 'Dryblower' Murphy, 'Big Brother'.
- 75 See Leshner, <http://www.greatwhitefleet.info/GWF_P2-WB.html>, accessed on 7 January 2008.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Attlee Hunt, to Governor-General, 22 September 1908, NAA: CP 78/1/50/1988.
- 79 See Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p. 15.
- 80 *The Age*, 31 August 1908.
- 81 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1908.
- 82 For an assessment of Jebb's work see John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa First Assert Their Nationalities, 1880–1914*.
- 83 Deakin to Jebb, 4 June 1908, Deakin–Jebb Correspondence, NLA: MS 339, Item 1/19A.
- 84 Whyte, *William Morris Hughes*, p. 143.
- 85 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 47, 7 October 1908, p. 862.
- 86 Ibid., p. 865.
- 87 *Proceedings of Imperial Conference, Dominions No. 17*, pp. 15–61, TNA: CAB 18/12A.
- 88 Sperry to Roosevelt, 12 September 1908. See Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p. 24.
- 89 *New York Times*, 16 August 1908. The editorial did not dismiss the idea of an alliance, but questioned the need for one under the circumstances then prevailing in the Pacific.
- 90 The term is derived from a West African proverb that was a favourite of Roosevelt: 'Speak softly and carry a big stick: you will go far'. See Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt, A Life*, p. 337.
- 91 *Japan Weekly Mail*, 13 July 1907, p. 31, cited in Bailey, 'The World Cruise of the American Battleship Fleet'.
- 92 Roosevelt to Sperry, 21 March 1908, Sperry Papers, Library of Congress, Box 13.

- 93 Roosevelt to Edward VII, 12 February 1908, in Elting Morison (ed. and compiler), *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters*, vol. 6, p. 965.
- 94 Great Britain, Foreign and Colonial Office, A.H. Oakes (ed.), *British Foreign and State Papers, 1893–94*, vol. 86, p. 40.
- 95 In September 1907, following the anti-Japanese riots in the San Francisco area, the Asiatic Exclusion League had inspired attacks on Chinese and Japanese property in Vancouver.
- 96 See Thomas Bailey, ‘The Root–Takahira Agreement of 1908’, *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 1940, pp. 193–5.
- 97 US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1908, pp. 510–11.
- 98 Three months would give ample time for a Japanese naval force to seize the Philippines and possibly Hawaii. In addition, as the Great White Fleet had also demonstrated, even a peacetime goodwill cruise in the Pacific presented considerable logistical difficulties when the fleet was operating far from its base. See also Louis Morton, ‘War Plan Orange: A Study in Military Strategy’, *World Politics*, vol. 11, 1959, pp. 221–50.
- 99 This doctrine was a statement of principle by President James Monroe in 1823 that asserted that European powers would no longer colonise or interfere with the affairs of the newly independent nations of the American continent, either north or south. The United States intended to remain neutral in any wars between European powers and their colonies. However, should any such conflicts occur in the Americas, the United States would consider them as hostile acts against its interests.
- 100 Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, ‘Report on the Proceedings of the Inter-colonial Convention, November and December 1883, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, 1883–1884 Session*, vol. IX, Sydney, pp. 13–14.
- 101 *The Age*, 18 September 1909.
- 102 Deakin to Crewe, 27 September 1909, Deakin Papers, Series 2, Item 1374.
- 103 Crewe to Deakin, 16 April 1909, *ibid.*, Item 1340.
- 104 Perhaps Deakin’s approach was just mistimed. A Canadian official who visited the White House in February 1908 found Theodore Roosevelt in a bellicose mood (Report on discussions held by the Canadian delegation to the United States, 24 February 1908, TNA: CO 42/918). On the subject of Japanese immigration the president had asserted: ‘we must retain the power to say who shall not come into our country’. On the scope of the Monroe Doctrine in the Pacific, he had agreed that it applied to Canada ‘and to Australia as well—if it doesn’t I’ll make it apply’. See also Donald Gordon, ‘Roosevelt’s “Smart Yankee Trick”’, *Pacific Historical Review*, November 1961, pp. 351–8.
- 105 Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays in International Politics*, p. 229.
- 106 Ian H. Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–23*, p. 67.
- 107 *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 59, 18 March 1914, col. 1933.
- 108 Cited in Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1897*, p. 49.
- 109 See Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914*, pp. 209–16.

- 110 For a brief account of the Australian operations in New Guinea in their contemporary strategic context, see ‘Seizure of the German Pacific Possessions’, *Commonwealth Military Journal*, vol. 6, 1915, pp. 45–54.
- 111 The Admiralty wanted two Japanese cruisers for the Cape of Good Hope and a destroyer flotilla for escort and other duties in the Mediterranean. At the times these vessels were engaged in patrolling the Pacific, where they were considered to be underemployed. See Admiralty to Foreign Office, 18 December 1916, TNA: FO 371/690/256472.
- 112 Governor-General to Secretary of State for Colonies, 7 February 1917, TNA: FO 371/2950/30905.
- 113 See ‘Australian Extols New York Soldiers’, *New York Times*, 29 November 1918.
- 114 John Monash, *Australian Victories in France, 1918*, 2nd edn, p. 64.
- 115 Cited at <<http://www.awm.gov.au/1918/soldier/sammy.htm>>, accessed on 16 January 2008.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 See Kenneth Wheare, *The Statute of Westminster and the Dominions*, p. 15.

2 *Peace for the Pacific, 1919–1924*

- 1 John Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference from an Australian Point of View*, p. 3.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 André Tardieu, *The Truth about the Treaty*, p. 286.
- 4 The points were delivered in a speech to Congress on 8 January 1918.
- 5 Woodrow Wilson, ‘An Address to the Senate’, 22 January 1917, in Arthur S. Link et al. (eds), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 20 November 1916 – 23 January 1917, vol. 40, p. 534.
- 6 Munro Ferguson to Long, 5 June 1918, Novar Papers, NLA: MS 696/1040.
- 7 Reading to Balfour and Long, 2 June 1918, Balfour Papers, British Museum: MS 49741, folio 200.
- 8 William Morris Hughes, *Policies and Potentates*, pp. 229–30.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Wilson, ‘An Address to the Senate’, in Link et al. (eds), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 40, p. 539.
- 11 James Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 11n.
- 12 Hughes’ abilities as both a leader and a politician were vindicated by the election results. After breaking with the Labor party over the issue of conscription, he had formed a new national coalition. He was also forced to abandon his old seat of West Sydney, but was returned with a large majority in the formerly Labor-held seat of Bendigo, Victoria.
- 13 *New York Times*, 1 June 1918.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.

- 17 Former UK prime minister Herbert Asquith noted at this time, ‘The fabric of the Empire will have to be refashioned, and the relations ... between the United Kingdom and our Dominions, will of necessity be brought ... under close ... review’. Speech to his constituents, 14 June 1918, cited in Whyte, *William Morris Hughes*, p. 247–8.
- 18 Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference*, pp. 6–7.
- 19 See David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 6, pp. 3318–19.
- 20 Imperial War Cabinet, Minutes, No. 36, 5 November 1918, TNA: Cab. 23.
- 21 George Louis Beer, *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference*, pp. 454–5, emphasis added.
- 22 David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, vol. II, pp. 106–7.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Records of the United States Senate, Record Group 46, *President Wilson’s Message to Congress*, 8 January 1918, NARA.
- 25 ‘Thoughts on the German Colonies’, 2 May 1918, Papers of William Morris Hughes, NLA: MS 1538, Series 23/3, Item 732. Hereafter, Hughes Papers.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Hughes Papers, Series 23/3, Item 1893; Imperial War Cabinet, Minutes, No. 31, 14 August 1918.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 *FRUS: The Lansing Papers, 1914–1920*, vol. II, p. 433.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Hughes Papers, Series 23/3, Item 1133; Imperial War Cabinet, Minutes, No. 21, 25 June 1918. This observation was made by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Wemyss.
- 35 Hughes Papers, Series 23/3, Item 1893; Imperial War Cabinet, Minutes, No. 31, 14 August 1918.
- 36 Hughes Papers, Series 23/3, Item 1893.
- 37 Hughes Papers, Series 23/3, Item 1891; Imperial War Cabinet, Minutes, No. 30, 13 August 1918.
- 38 Germany’s control of this region had been conducted in a manner that did as little as possible to upset the Chinese government. The Shantung peninsula was culturally important to China as the birthplace of Confucius. In addition, it had resources such as coal and a population of thirty million (to supply both cheap labour and markets). From a strategic perspective, the area commanded the southern approaches to Peking (Beijing), the mouth of the Yellow River and the Grand Canal linking northern and southern China.
- 39 Hughes to Munro Ferguson, 17 January 1919, Novar Papers, MS 696/9.
- 40 *The Age*, 1 February 1919.
- 41 *FRUS: Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. III, p. 749.
- 42 The mandate provisions were set out in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The classification was assigned to territories considered sufficiently

advanced politically and economically to permit a provisional form of independence to be granted, but under the administrative control of a member state of the League of Nations (in effect the mandatory powers comprised one of the World War I Allied states: Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, United States, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand). The former Turkish provinces of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine all became A-class mandates. B-class mandates, territories not considered sufficiently advanced politically and economically for independence, were placed under the administration of League member states with strict provisions regarding guarantees for freedom of conscience and religion, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, arms trafficking, and no military training of the inhabitants except for policing and defence. The B classification was applied to the former German colonies and protectorates in Africa. C-class mandate territories were not considered capable of independence for reasons of their sparse populations, small size and remoteness, particularly where the territory bordered on that of the mandatory powers. In Africa, German South-West Africa (now Namibia) was given on 1 October 1922 as a C-class mandate to the Union of South Africa. (Similarly, New Guinea was mandated to Australia, Western Samoa to New Zealand, and the north-western Pacific islands to Japan.) Indigenous peoples in the territories were given safeguards similar to those in B-class mandated territories. See The League of Nations Information Section, *Covenant of the League of Nations*.

- 43 House to Wilson, handwritten note on draft proposal, Wilson Papers, Library of Congress: File VIII A.
- 44 Secret cable, acting prime minister Watt to Hughes, London, 30 November 1918, NAA: CP 360/8. The same cable also agreed to Hughes supporting New Zealand's case for control of Samoa.
- 45 Cited in Laurence Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger, 1914–1952: A Political Biography of William Morris Hughes*, vol. II, pp. 395–6, nn. 36, 37.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., p. 396.
- 49 Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference*, p. 11.
- 50 Cited in Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, p. 234.
- 51 See Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919*, p. 115. In Japan this period is called the Taisho Democracy because a two-party system had emerged. Following an election in September 1918, power was held by a relatively liberal party headed by the first commoner prime minister, Hara Takashi, who was an elected member of the legislature, not an appointee. His period in government was marked by significant post-war economic adjustment and unrest. Takashi was assassinated in 1921.
- 52 Quoted in Paul Gordon Lauren, 'Human Rights in History: Diplomacy and Racial Equality at the Paris Peace Conference', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 2, no. 3, Summer 1978, p. 261.
- 53 Latham to his wife, 21 March 1919, Latham Papers, NLA: MS 1009, Series 21, Item 1438.
- 54 *New York Times*, 23 July 1919. With China weakened by internal dissension, guarantees of political control were worthless, especially since Japan's armed forces were far superior to those of the Chinese.

- 55 Secret cable, Hughes to acting prime minister Watt, 5 April 1919, NAA: CP 360/8.
- 56 The Covenant of the League of Nations refers to the Monroe Doctrine in Article 21, which provides: ‘Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.’ League of Nations Information Section, *Covenant of the League of Nations*, Geneva, 1936. Even this provision did not satisfy the United States Senate, which rejected the Treaty and the Covenant in 1920.
- 57 E.M. House, *Diary*, 13 February 1919, cited in Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, vol. 2, p. 402.
- 58 Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, p. 145.
- 59 The full text of this interview is provided by Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, vol. 2, pp. 407–9.
- 60 Cable, Hughes to acting prime minister Watt, 13 April 1919, NAA: CP 290/3/1.
- 61 Georges Clemenceau (trans. F.M. Atkinson), *The Grandeur and Misery of Victory*, p. 141.
- 62 Woodrow Wilson, comment to his wife as they departed France on 28 June 1919, quoted in Thomas Schachtman, *Edith and Woodrow: A Presidential Romance*, p. 189.
- 63 Woodrow Wilson, ‘Remarks at the Dedication of the Surennes American War Cemetery’, 30 May 1919, quoted in H.W. Brands, *Woodrow Wilson*, p. 118.
- 64 *CPD*, H. of R., 17 September 1919, vol. 89, p. 12168.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 12419.
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 12421.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 12433.
- 70 Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, *Report on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, May–August 1919, vol. I, p. 13, NAA: A5954, Item 1207/9.
- 71 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1919.
- 72 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 89, 1919, p. 12433.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 12411.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 12425.
- 75 Memorandum on Navy Votes, 8 July 1919, TNA: CAB 21/159.
- 76 *New York Times*, 27 June 1920. In 1920, Australia’s population was 5,411,000. These figures are in US dollars.
- 77 See Henry Higgs, ‘The Geddes Reports and the Budget’, *Economic Journal*, vol. 32, no. 126, June 1922, pp. 12–34.
- 78 Prime Minister to Colonial Secretary, 3 July 1920, TNA: CAO CP.
- 79 *CPD*, H. of R., 9 September 1920, vol. 93, p. 4390.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 4392.
- 81 Cable, Hughes to Lloyd George, 7 October 1920, Lloyd George Papers, Beaverbrook Library: F/39/2/22.
- 82 Milner to Lloyd George, 8 October 1920, *ibid.*

- 83 Ibid.
- 84 The Balfour Declaration was a document produced at the 1926 Imperial Conference declaring the autonomy and equality of Britain and the Dominions in all matters of internal and external affairs. This new relationship replaced the previously hierarchical relationship that had existed in colonial times. The Statute of Westminster (1931) gave legislative force to these principles, but was adopted by Australia only in 1942.
- 85 Notes of Very Secret Meetings, 12 July 1921, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 245.
- 86 Meeting, 19 July 1921, *ibid.*, Item 249.
- 87 The two-power standard had been established in 1889. See p. 3.
- 88 Projected Imperial Naval Expenditure, 1921–26, 20 July 1921, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 275.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid., Item 276.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Notes of a Meeting of Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, 20 June 1921, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 411.
- 93 Ibid., 27 June 1921, Item 422.
- 94 Foreign Office Memorandum, Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 28 February 1921, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 413.
- 95 Papers for the Imperial Conference, *American Policy in the Far East*, 16 June 1921, NAA: A6661/1405.
- 96 *The Times*, 27 July 1921.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Geddes to Kerr, 3 January 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F60/4/11.
- 99 'Australia and the Future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', Piesse to Hunt (Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department), 22 March 1921, NLA: MS 822, Series 5, Item 215.
- 100 Notes of a Meeting of Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, 29 June 1921, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 490.
- 101 Foreign Office Memorandum, Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 28 February 1912, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 413.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Geddes to Curzon, 24 June 1921, *Documents in British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, First Series, vol. XV, Document 308.
- 104 Foreign Office Memorandum, Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 28 February 1912, Hughes Papers, Series 25, Item 413.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Memorandum of a conversation between the Secretary of State and the British Ambassador, 23 June 1921, *FRUS*, 1921, vol. II, pp. 314–16.
- 107 Cabinet Memorandum, 4 July 1921, cited in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. IV Companion, Part 3 Documents, April 1921 – November 1922, p. 1539.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 *New York Times*, 22 July 1921.

- 110 Hughes to Harvey, 13 July 1921, *FRUS*, 1921, vol. I, pp. 28–9.
- 111 Hughes to Harvey, 20 July 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 37–8.
- 112 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 97, 30 September 1921, p. 11737.
- 113 Pearce's account of his time at the conference reads more like a social diary and sheds little light on the role he played in the negotiations. See George Pearce, *From Carpenter to Cabinet*, pp. 160–9. Similarly, the archival sources contain only copies of his report to the parliament. See NAA: A5954 823/1.
- 114 See Herbert Yardley, *The American Black Chamber*, pp. 250–317.
- 115 Memorandum, The Quadruple Pacific Treaty: Its Application to Japan Proper from the Australian Point of View, 27 December 1921, Piesse Papers, NLA: MS 822, Series 7, Item 170–2.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 Importantly, the Japanese interpretation of the Nine-Power Treaty, which affirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China and the open-door policy, did not include an obligation to observe the treaty provisions with regard to its 'special interests' in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.
- 118 The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Conference on the Limitation of Armament held at Washington, DC from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, Report of the Australian Delegate*, Melbourne, 29 June 1922, p. 32.
- 119 *CPD*, Senate, vol. 99, 1922, pp. 821–3.
- 120 *Ibid.*, H. of R., pp. 786–93.
- 121 In early 1924 Ramsay MacDonald's government in London announced a halt to the development of the base.
- 122 Submissions to the Council of Defence Meeting of 28 April 1922 (Naval estimates, and proposals of Cabinet, Military Board and Air Board), AWM: AWM113, MH 1/10 Part 2.
- 123 *CPD*, Senate, vol. 99, 1922, p. 6.
- 124 Alden Abbott, 'The League's Disarmament Activities—and the Washington Conference', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1, March 1922, p. 24.
- 125 Cited in The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Conference on the Limitation of Armament held at Washington, DC from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, Report of the Australian Delegate*, Melbourne, 29 June 1922, p. 32. Janus was the two-faced Roman god of boundaries. The doors of the temple were open in times of war and closed in times of peace. The Greek historian Plutarch noted in his *Life of King Numa*, 'The latter was a difficult matter, and it rarely happened, since the realm was always engaged in some war, as its increasing size brought it into collision with the barbarous nations which encompassed it round about'. *The Parallel Lives*, vol. I, p. 375.
- 126 Frederick Eggleston, 'Washington and After: An Australian View', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 92, September, pp. 463–4.
- 127 *Ibid.*, p. 464
- 128 *Ibid.*, p. 465.
- 129 *Ibid.*
- 130 Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, vol. 2, p. 525.
- 131 *Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 1923.

132 *New York Times*, 3 April 1924.

133 Hughes to Coolidge, 23 May 1924, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1924, pp. 391–3.

134 *Baltimore American*, 18 May 1924.

135 ‘The Problem of the Pacific’, notes for a lecture, Hughes Papers, Series 26, Item 204.

136 British Fleet 1924 Visit, undated memo on expenditure, NAA: A458, G748/2. The Commonwealth outlaid £11,619 for entertainments during the port visits and the states contributed separate sums of between £1,308 and £4,240 depending on their means.

3 *Highs and lows, 1925–1936*

1 Kiyo Inui, *The Unsolved Problem of the Pacific*, Japan Times, Tokyo, 1925, p. 2.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 264–5.

3 Cited in Dexter Perkins, *Charles Evans Hughes and American Democratic Statesmanship*, p. 117.

4 British Consul, Honolulu, to Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, 26 July 1925, Officer Papers, NLA: MS 2629, Series 6, Item 1.

5 Hall to Latham, 3 August 1925, Latham Papers, NLA: MS 1009, Series 21, Item 1437.

6 Hall to Harrison Moore, 3 August 1925, Officer Papers, NLA: MS 2629, Series 6, Item 1.

7 Hall to Latham, *ibid.*

8 H. Duncan Hall and J. B. Condliffe, *What of the Pacific? A Searchlight on its Problems*, p. 8.

9 Roosevelt to General Board, 13 July 1922, NARA: Record Group (hereafter RG) 80, GB 425.

10 W.L. Rogers to SecNav, 26 April 1923, NARA: RG 80, GB 425, Serial 1136.

11 Shoemaker to Chief of Naval Operations, 17 January 1924, NARA: RG 80, PD 196–15.

12 Joint Army and Navy War Plan Orange, 15 August 1924, NARA: RG 225, JB 325, Serial 228.

13 Endorsement by H.P. Jones, 22 September 1924, NARA: RG 80, PD 196–15.

14 See ‘Coontz Asks a Navy Adequate in Wars’, *New York Times*, 10 May 1922. This article gives some indication of Coontz’s difficulties during his term as CNO.

15 Coontz, *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, p. 446.

16 Extract from the report of the Commissioner USA, 2 April 1924, NAA: A458, E748/2.

17 *Ibid.*, 1 May 1924.

18 Translation of Japanese newspaper article, Prime Minister’s Department, Department of External Affairs, 16 October 1924, NAA: A458, E748/2.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

- 22 Minute, Japanese Views on American Naval Manoeuvres containing an extract of a letter from M. Ball to C. Spurgeon, 27 November 1924, NAA: A458, E748/2.
- 23 Prime Minister's Office to US Consul-General, 14 October 1924, *ibid.*
- 24 Elder to Bruce, 31 October 1924, *ibid.*
- 25 Elder to Wilbur, 5 November 1924, *ibid.*
- 26 Wilbur to Elder, 15 November 1924, *ibid.*
- 27 Howard to Elder, 11 November 1924, *ibid.*
- 28 *New York Times*, 24 November 1924.
- 29 Cable to Commissioner USA, 26 November 1924, NAA: A458, E748/2.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Elder to Howard, 23 January 1925, NAA: A458, E748/2.
- 32 Memo on Visit of the American Fleet, Prime Minister's Department, 4 March 1925, NAA: 6006, 1925/03/04.
- 33 Cable, Prime Minister's Department to Elder, 10 January 1925, *ibid.*
- 34 Memo on Visit of the American Fleet, Prime Minister's Department, 4 March 1925, *ibid.*
- 35 *British Fleet 1924 Visit*, undated memo on expenditure, NAA: A458, G748/2. The states contributed separate sums.
- 36 Coontz quotes £25,000 as the sum allocated for their entertainment in Melbourne. This was probably just the Commonwealth contribution to the program of events. See Coontz, *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, p. 455.
- 37 See files NAA: A458, Z3/16, G748/2 and R748/2 Part 3.
- 38 Suggested Programme of Entertainment, Monday, 20 July 1925, undated draft, NAA: A458, R748/2 Part 3.
- 39 Cable, CINCUS to Prime Minister, 4 June 1925, *ibid.*
- 40 Victorian Baseball Association to Minister for Home and Territories, 17 June 1925, NAA: A458, R748/2 Part 5.
- 41 Correspondence, official papers and newspaper clippings contained in an indexed newspaper cuttings book, 1925, NAA: M3635.
- 42 *Herald*, 9 July 1925.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 10 July 1925. The Australian Natives' Association was a friendly society founded in Victoria in April 1871. Its membership was restricted to those born in Australia—hence the name 'natives'. Friendly societies were first established in Australia during the nineteenth century. Each society had its own criteria for membership and benefits, often based on a religion, occupation or place of birth. Founded on the principle of mutual self-help, they provided medical or other services not provided by the government.
- 44 Mrs T. James to Secretary of Commonwealth Entertainment Committee, 1925, NAA: A458.
- 45 *Sydney Mail*, 22 July 1925, p. 20.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Herald*, 31 August 1925. The paper printed a copy of the telegram sent to the president.
- 48 *The Age*, 2 August 1925.

- 49 Ibid., 31 July 1925.
- 50 See Coontz, *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, p. 456. Emphasis added to the ‘original’ spelling used in the memoir.
- 51 *Herald*, 29 July 1925; Coontz, *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, p. 458.
- 52 The message which is reproduced in *From the Mississippi to the Sea*, pp. 458–9, is a slightly edited version of the text that appeared in the Australian press in August 1925.
- 53 *Herald*, 4 August 1925.
- 54 *Sydney Mail*, 29 July 1925.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 The article was entitled ‘Slow Ships to Australia’, *New York Times*, 26 May 1921.
- 58 Cited in John Hammond Moore, *Over-Sexed, Over-Paid and Over Here*, p. 2.
- 59 File, Encouragement [of] Migrants from the United States, 1924–1933, NAA: A458, O154/17. The scheme which was one of the responsibilities of the Australian Commissioner and a topic included in his annual reports during the late 1920s. After the Depression of 1929 it would have been extremely difficult to encourage any form of trans-Pacific migration.
- 60 Sir George Knibbs, *The Second Commonwealth Census*, pp. 41–6.
- 61 Roland Wilson, *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Part 1, pp. 90–5.
- 62 C. Brunson Fletcher, *The Problem of the Pacific*, p. 207.
- 63 Tredwell to Henry L. Stimson, 8 September 1931, NARA: RG 84, File 847.00, Serial 154.
- 64 J. Merle Davis, *Notes From a Pacific Circuit*.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Diary entry, 11 November 1919, Papers of Sir Robert Garran, NLA: MS 2001, Series 3.
- 67 *Stead’s Review*, 1 October 1929.
- 68 Ibid., 1 June 1929.
- 69 *American Mercury*, March 1931.
- 70 W.K. Hancock, *Australia*, pp. 217–18.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Stenographic notes, Imperial Conference, 12th meeting, 15 November 1926, TNA: CAB 32–46.
- 73 See An Appreciation of War in the Pacific, 1928, NAA: MP 1185/8, 1846/4/363.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Defences and development of naval base at Singapore, 1 April 1928, NAA: A10607, S4/1.
- 77 Bruce to Sir Thomas Glasgow, Minister for Defence, 9 January 1929, *ibid.*
- 78 Quoted in John M. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence: A Study in Air and Sea Power*, p. 47.
- 79 Ibid.

- 80 Ibid.
- 81 The lecture on the relationship between naval, land and air forces in the defence of Australia was also published in the British *Army Quarterly* in April 1927 as ‘The Strategical Inter-Relationship of the Navy, Army and Air Force: An Australian View’, vol. XIV, pp. 15–34.
- 82 See John Lavarack, ‘The Defence of the British Empire, with Special Reference to the Far East and Australia’, *Army Quarterly*, vol. XX, January 1933 pp. 207–17.
- 83 See Comments on a Paper, An Outline of the Principles of Imperial Defence with Special Reference to Australian Defence, 1930, NAA: A5954, 39/2.
- 84 See Appreciation—The Concentration of the Australian Land Forces in Time of War, with a covering memo by the CGS, 20 September 1929, AWM: Series 54, Item 243/6/6.
- 85 Memo, Lavarack to CGS, 6 March 1930, NAA: SP1017/1.
- 86 The United States wanted to set the size for cruisers at not less than 10,000 tons (the British and other powers were willing to agree to 7,000 tons). The American position was dictated by its international commitments, particularly in the Far East and the Philippines. Smaller ships would not have the range required for operations in the Pacific, especially as there were only limited logistic facilities west of Hawaii. While willing to compromise on the ratio of capital ships, the United States refused to relent on the issue of cruiser tonnage.
- 87 Minutes of Defence Committee Meetings, 20, 26 and 27 March 1930, NAA: A2031, vol. I.
- 88 Australian Defence Policy Review by Scullin government, 1929–32, Estimates of Expenditure 1931–32, NAA: A5954/69.
- 89 Minutes Australian Loan Council, February 1924 – June 1928, NAA: A6002.
- 90 Barry Eichengreen, ‘The Political Economy of the Smoot–Hawley Tariff,’ *Research in Economic History*, vol. 12, 1989, pp. 1–43.
- 91 Doyle to Henry L. Stimson, 8 June 1933, NARA: RG 84, File 847.00, Serial 168.
- 92 The Efficiency Movement grew from the belief that inefficiency was rife in all areas of society, the economy and government. To combat this condition it was necessary for experts to identify problems and find solutions. The result of this thinking was the introduction of the production line in factories by Henry Ford and time-and-motion research.
- 93 Theodore resigned after a Queensland Royal Commission investigated the Mungana affair. The Royal Commission found that, while premier in 1919, Theodore had profited from a sale to the state government of mines at Mungana, by defrauding it of £30,000.
- 94 The Premiers’ Plan was based on five main points that reflected the economic orthodoxies of the period: (1) a 20% reduction in all government expenditure, (2) a 22.5% reduction of interest on internal government debt, (3) increases in federal and state taxation, (4) a reduction in bank interest rates, and (5) relief for private mortgage holders.
- 95 Ottawa Agreement, 1932, NAA: AA1974/272, M77A.
- 96 *FRUS*, 1933, vol. I, pp. 453, 462–6.
- 97 *The Economist*, 8 July 1933.

- 98 This was certainly the view of the UK government, which believed that the Roosevelt administration was sincere in its efforts to promote international economic recovery and disarmament. See Cablegram, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Commonwealth Department of External Affairs, 23 May 1933, NAA: A981, 47178, Part 1.
- 99 *FRUS*, 1934, vol. I, p. 831.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 See British Foreign Office, *Annual Report—United States, 1930, 1931 and 1932*, NAA: A981 9 UNI Part 1.
- 102 Hancock, *Australia*, p. 216.
- 103 Ibid., p. 218.
- 104 *FRUS*, 1934, vol. I, p. 843.
- 105 Ibid., pp. 841–2.
- 106 Memorandum, John Hickerson, 6 June 1934, NARA RG 84, File 611.4731, Serial 93.
- 107 *FRUS*, 1934, vol. I, p. 842.
- 108 Hull to Lyons, 14 January 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, vol. II, pp. 9–10.
- 109 Ibid., pp. 10–13.
- 110 See Minutes of Fourth Meeting of Principal Delegates to Imperial Conference, in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–38*, vol. I, p. 80. The conversation is also mentioned by Dame Enid Lyons in *So We Take Comfort*, pp. 241–3.
- 111 Diary, 3 October 1935, Papers of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, available on microfilm in the NLA. Hereafter, Moffat Papers.
- 112 Moffat to Cyril Wynne, 25 January 1936, Moffat Papers.
- 113 Leo Buring to Joseph Lyons, 7 May 1936, NAA: A461/9.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 Joseph Lyons to Leo Buring, 19 May 1936, NAA: A461/9.
- 116 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 149, p. 759.
- 117 Moffat to Hull, 6 April 1936, *FRUS*, 1936, vol. I, p. 745.
- 118 Pearce had already discussed the issue of establishing full diplomatic representation in the United States with Moffat. The minister's feeling was that an independent legation would be expensive and, moreover, would act to dilute the principle of imperial unity.
- 119 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 150, p. 2732.
- 120 For a contemporary examination of the problem see Irving Friedman, 'Australia and Japan: Conflict in the Pacific', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 3, September 1937, pp. 392–406.
- 121 Memorandum, Considerations Which Led to the Adoption of the Trade Diversion Policy, c.1936, p. 6. NAA: A10455.
- 122 Memorandum by Cordell Hull, 26 August 1936, *FRUS*, 1936, vol. I, p. 767.
- 123 Moffat to Hull, 20 April 1936, Moffat Papers.
- 124 Ibid.

- 125 Memorandum, Results of the Trade Diversion Policy, c.1936, p. 1, NAA: A10455.
- 126 Diary, 3 October 1935, Moffat Papers.
- 127 Quoted in *Time*, 23 June 1930.
- 128 The British wanted to retain the ability to use aircraft tactically in order to bomb the more fractious tribal peoples of the Empire into submission, hence their insistence on clearly distinguishing the difference between the ‘strategic’ and ‘tactical’ use of air power.
- 129 Grew to Hull, 12 December 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, vol. III, p. 479.
- 130 Memorandum, Bruche to Pearce, 17 July 1934, NAA: SP 840/6.
- 131 Sir Maurice Hankey, ‘On Certain Aspects of Australian Defence’, 15 November 1934, NAA: A5954/69, Item 1016/2. Significantly, Hankey later reassured the British prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, that he had ‘made it clear that our government has taken no commitment to send the fleet to Singapore’.
- 132 *Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 1936.
- 133 *CPD*, H. of R., vol. 152, p. 1554ff.
- 134 *Ibid.*
- 135 See Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, vol. III: 1931–1963, p. 129.
- 136 See for example the extensive documentation assembled by Wynter in his defence in NAA: B 1535, Item 859/15/1457.
- 137 Both Wynter and Beavis were reinstated to key positions after Parkhill lost his seat in the 1937 federal election.
- 138 Memorandum, Secretary of the Naval Board to Shedden, 24 April 1936, NAA: 5654/69, Item 886/1.

4 *Diplomatic representation and war, 1937–1941*

- 1 Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945*, pp. 265–6.
- 2 Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War against Japan, 1941–1945*, p. 25; Waldo H. Heinrichs Jr, ‘The Role of the United States Navy’, in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto, *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese–American Relations, 1931–1941*, pp. 204, 214–15.
- 3 Heinrichs, ‘The Role of the U.S. Navy’, p. 204.
- 4 Frank Hardie, *The Abyssinian Crisis*.
- 5 Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, p. 31.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 29. See generally Walter La Feber, *The Clash: U.S.–Japanese Relations throughout History*, ch. 6.
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Since the age of sail, 'God Speed' has been a traditional farewell to sailors embarking on a voyage

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