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# ANZUS THE UNITED STATES AND PACIFIC SECURITY

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By Henry S. Albinski

The *Asian Agenda* program of The Asia Society seeks to . . .

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tionality, from New Zealand ports. Subsequently, the New Zealand government moved to implement this program. It was by no means inevitable that the New Zealand public should have elected a government with such a program, and to have expressed support for its desirability. But it was neither implausible nor surprising that it happened in New Zealand rather than in Australia.

Given America's security interests and the value the United States came to attach to ANZUS, the New Zealand Labour government's actions were inordinately distressing to Washington. The upshot was an intra-alliance crisis that has severely strained all three ANZUS partners. The crisis raised significant and far-reaching implications for the future of the alliance as such, and for American relations with Australia as well as New Zealand.

The present study examines what the ANZUS relationship has come to mean to the United States, why that relationship has become strained and how, why and with what foreseeable consequences the United States has responded.

## II. Why ANZUS?

By the beginning of the 1980s the value and implications of the ANZUS connection were being critically assessed in Australia and New Zealand, while the United States was investing greater and publicly expressed emphasis on the alliance's positive significance. It is ironic that originally it was the United States that was the skeptical, or at least not entirely enthusiastic, party to the prospect of entering such an alliance. The principal credit for the creation of ANZUS belonged not to American statesmen but to the imaginative diplomacy of the then Australian foreign minister, Percy Spender.

### The Genesis of ANZUS

The exigencies of the Second World War, including the collapse of British power in the Pacific and Japanese air strikes against northern Australian communities, drew Australia and New Zealand toward American protection. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, fought in early May 1942, American carrier and land-based aircraft prevented the Japanese from disembarking troops at Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea and thus effectively checked the Japanese offensive southward toward Australia. The Battle of the Coral Sea engendered a measure of mystique as a kind of Australian and, less directly, New Zealand deliverance made possible by Americans. General Douglas MacArthur conducted most of his Pacific operations from Australia. Well over a million American servicemen passed through or were based in Australia or New Zealand during the Pacific campaigns.

After the war, however, the United States appeared to contract its outer defense perimeter in the Pacific, omitting Korea, mainland Southeast Asia and Australia and New Zealand. The latter two were further unsettled by the growing strength of communist forces in China, and by the imponderables raised by nationalist impulses and the advent of decolonization throughout the region. Among the most palpable examples of conflict between indigenous and metropolitan national forces were those that occurred in Indochina and Indonesia. Finally, New Zealand and Australia harbored deep and genuine fears of a resurgence of Japan, the nation that during the Second World War had come so close to immobilizing them.

The Korean War changed all this. It enabled the worried and exposed southwestern Pacific powers (which both sent combat troops to the conflict) to revive the wartime relationship with the United States by promoting the idea of a formal security alliance. American alarm over the invasion of South Korea was accentuated by China's

entry into the conflict and the perceived Sino-Soviet military alliance. Korea also was a reminder of the inadequacy of American military resources and the value of coordination with and drawing upon the assets of friends and prospective allies. Events in Korea thus made the United States amenable to concluding such a treaty, which it conceptualized as one of the newly evolving, concentric series of alliances designed to shore up anticommunist defenses in Asia and the Pacific. This was to include security arrangements with a politically independent Japan and the Philippines.

A reconditioned, now much more "forward" U.S. strategy in the Pacific suggested that, side by side soldiering apart, suitably located allies could also be helpful in providing basing and other facilities, establishing a communications network and securing strategic sea lanes. It was recalled that during the Second World War, when much of the central Pacific was in Japanese hands or under their interdiction, considerable seaborne traffic was diverted through the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Australia and along Australia's southern coast. Foreign Minister Spender in particular was able to draw together the evolving American security perceptions with the U.S. need to legitimize a relatively "lenient" Japanese peace treaty.

For both Australia and New Zealand, but especially for the former, ANZUS was both an extension of and a departure from their security traditions. As small, isolated and vulnerable "European" countries on the rim of Asia, they cultivated the support of a powerful guarantor, Britain. Ties of sentiment aside, Australian and New Zealand military assistance to the Crown in faraway conflicts had been one way of upholding the guarantor's credit and power, and interest in the antipodes, so called because to the British, Australia and New Zealand seemed to be on the far side of the earth. Starting in the 1930s, however, Australia and New Zealand sought wider, collective forms of regional security arrangements, of which the most publicized was Australia's 1937 initiative on behalf of a nonaggression pact among Pacific countries. It was an objective that continued to occupy them in the late 1940s; before Korea, the Japanese treaty issue and other concerns raised the premiums. ANZUS in this sense was a culmination of such efforts, arguably the most significant geopolitical step taken by the two southwestern Pacific countries since the war had made them fully independent and involved international actors. Indeed, when he retired in 1966 after seventeen years as the Australian prime minister, Robert Menzies described ANZUS as the single greatest achievement of his period in office. ANZUS was also striking because Britain was now unmistakably replaced by the United States as Australia's and New Zealand's principal security guarantor. The

wartime alliance with the United States was thereby formalized in a treaty that was indefinite in duration.

#### ANZUS Alliance Provisions

The treaty itself spells out several basic principles. It stipulates that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the parties would be dangerous to each party's own peace and safety, and each in turn would "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." This language is not as unequivocal as that in the NATO treaty, which declares that an attack on one would be regarded as an attack on all, but in the eyes of the administration the ANZUS treaty language was at the time perceived to be to be tantamount in meaning. It is worth noting that in the early and mid-1950s the United States rebuffed Australian efforts to move toward more elaborate security cooperation such as cooperative and systematic military planning and the designation of national security units that might fall under ANZUS aegis and assignment, approaching the NATO model.

The ANZUS treaty enjoins the partners separately and jointly "by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid" to "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." The treaty provides for a council of foreign ministers or their deputies to convene periodically, and for consultation whenever in the opinion of any member "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific." Thus, Australia and New Zealand not only gained access to a respectably inscribed form of American interest and protection but were able to win what they saw as the invaluable objective of access to the highest American political and security echelons.