Chapter - I

Introduction
It is said that geography and chronology are the "two eyes" of history as a subject of study. Accordingly, a rapid look at the geographical features and an outline of the evolution of any country ought to precede the critical study of any aspect of its governmental policies.

Ignoring Antarctica, Australia is the marginal continent, the land at the edge of things. Since the realisation of the Australian situation seems to involve much difficulty, the use of a globe or an Atlas seems to be indispensable. The globe reading or a look at the map, besides showing Australia as a continent lying between east longitudes of 113° 9' and 153° 9' and south latitudes of 10° 4' and 43° 9', points out the proximity of Japan.¹ It also exposes the presence of Indian Ocean in the west, Coral Sea in the east and Tasman Sea of the South Pacific Ocean in the north of Australia. On the whole within the hemisphere, most of India and China, the entire Japan and the East Indies and Madagascar are seen lying on the edge.

In terms of physical features, Australia is mainly a plateau of old rock, slightly similar to Africa. But it is the flattest among the continents with an average elevation of less than 300 metres and its total area is 7,682,300 km and the circumferential coastline measures 36,835 km. The eastern heights are relatively near to the eastern coast and the middle low land from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the region of the mouth of Murray is mostly grass-land.

Climatically, the continent is marginal because the rainfall in general tends to be insufficient either on the whole or where needed most in the southeast during the crop growing season. To this uncertainty of climate is usually ascribed the fluctuations in the total yield for the area which grows wheat. The range of the climate is from the tropical to the temperate. While the north coast is hot with summer rains of a monsoon character, the extreme south coast is warm with winter rains and between them lies the arid desert fringed with scrub lands where cultivation and usefulness for pasture are marginal. The eastern littoral, though credited with southeast trade winds on share, is too wet in places to be useful.

For all the prophetic sketch of an unknown landmass in the known shores of the Indian Ocean attributed to the Greek mathematician Ptolemy of the second century who called it 'Terra Incognita', it was not until the 16th century that the European geographers began to suspect the existence of Australia. Early in the next century, the Dutch made the continent's existence known for a certainty. In 1688, its shores were first glimpsed by William Dampier, the first English seaman to reach it. Many navigators and explorers seem to have visited Australia but they left behind no lasting evidence of their presence. Thus, it was practically deserted until Captain Cook's arrival in 1770 when his "Endeavour" dropped anchor in Botany Bay and the territory comprising eastern parts of the continent where Cook hoisted the British flag, was formally annexed to the British Crown.

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Enough has been said by James Cook and the other explorers about the peculiar habits in all walks of life including food rituals and sex as well as the habitations of the native aborigines. These, as Cook saw them, had been there undoubtedly for ages as though Australia's first settlers since an undoubtedly remote past had lived their lives in which the centuries wrought little change, if any.\(^4\) However, the vast territories in Australia which were originally the home of a handful of these aborigines a century ago, have been settled by 19th century, evidently as an outcome of a few generations effecting a tremendous revolution. Still, the vast central Australian tableland, the continent's desert heart, remained unexplored till recently and despite the immigrations, the world's largest island remained sparsely peopled. Four-fifths of Europe in size, the continent houses less than a fiftieth of the population of Europe. That the Australians are less numerous than the Londoners, Belgians or Poles is a marginal fact.

In 1788, Great Britain entered into the possession of the new continent, Australia. But the first use to which the newly discovered and appropriated land was put was as a dumping ground for the criminal scum of the British society. Having lost its American colonies in the American War of Independence (1786), Britain was desperately in need of an adequate alternative settlement for its prisoners who constantly threatened to overcrowd its prisons. New South Wales was the name given to the territory where the first Australian convict settlement was made under a military governor Phillip.\(^5\) For many years the homeland's criminal sewage was emptied into the colony although from time to time a free farmer or trader was inspired to embark upon the voyage. Land was allotted to convicts when their term of punishment came to an end and to the soldiers in-charge when their term of office was over. In 1794, John Macarthur who had accompanied Captain Phillip from England, was given a commission in the

\(^4\text{Fact Sheet, n.1.}\)

\(^5\text{Ibid.}\)
colony's defence corps and 200 acres at Paramatta and began to experiment in the rearing of sheep which laid the foundation of what was soon to become Australia's greatest industry.

Still the emigration from Britain ran with a leaden pace and Australia continued to be Britain's cess-pool especially as each year witnessed the deposition on its soil of hundreds, oftentimes thousands of convicts.

A tremendous impulse was given to immigration from Great Britain after the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851, hosts of miners seeking their fortunes at Bellart and Bendigo and later at Ballarts of New South Wales as if to add industry to the agricultural interests of sheep farming and corn-growing. The chance discovery of gold thus entailed the first great influx of people comprising gold-seekers, a great rush of immigrants all eager to "get rich quick". People from various parts of the world were lured to settle in Australia in large numbers though for all this "Gold Rush", a steady decline in goldmining was noticed since 1910 as if gold in Australia had served its turn and Kalgoorlie, the centre of the richest gold mining area in Western Australia had passed its peak.

In 1842, a representative government was partially introduced into New South Wales which had begun with a purely military government and in 1850 this and other colonies with the exception of Western Australia, were granted virtually autonomous government on the same basis as Canada. Responsible government was extended to Western Australia in 1880. Thus, the settlement of Western Australia began in 1829 and within the next thirty years Victoria, South Australia and Queensland were carved out of New South Wales. The period being one of the most decided 'laissez-faire' in British colonial policy, the Home Government had little to do with the establishment of new colonies and allowed them to draft their own constitutions and to develop unbridled along their own lines. Moreover, the long distance between Britain and Australia seems to have impeded Britain from
entertaining the idea of establishing an effective control over Australia, and hence Britain's initial granting of self-rule to the six Australian colonies which formed their own legislatures and framed their own constitutions. However, to protect and promote their common interests the premiers of these self-governing states started holding conferences from 1863. Still, until the end of the 19th century, each of the new states was practically independent. Eventually, the appearance in the Pacific of the rival colonising powers seems to have induced these states to forget their aloofness and to form a union. The final union of Australian colonies as the Commonwealth of Australia, comprising New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, was proclaimed on January 1, 1901, when Australia came to be regarded as a British dominion with an individually national sense. In other words, the federation of Australian colonies significantly marked the fact that it was no mere collection of unrelated territories but an association of states bound together by close ties of common interests and that the confederation of Australia became complete.

By the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act of 1900, the Commonwealth of Australia began to be administered by a federal form of government and the Australian Federal Parliament was empowered to direct the country's foreign and defence affairs. The first Parliament of Commonwealth of Australia was convened by Earl of Hopetoun (subsequently King George V) the first Governor – General on April 29, 1901. Sir Edmund Barton, the former

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6 The six self-governing states were: New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. See for more details, Commonwealth of Australia, "Australia's System of Government", *Fact Sheet No.12*, The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (Canberra, August 1997).


9 Ibid.
speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and an ardent advocate and a leader of the movement that clamoured for Federation, emerged as the first Prime Minister. Melbourne served as the capital until the capital was shifted to Canberra in 1913. Thus, by early 20th century, Australia emerged as "an advanced, modern, industrial nation".

However, until 1914, Australia pursued independent policies in commercial and technical matters like postal conventions, while key departments like foreign affairs and defence were managed by the British government. Though Australia became a nation in 1901, its loyalty to and legal and cultural affiliations with Britain remained unchanged. Unlike the Asian countries which were colonised by Britain, Australia willingly participated in the wars in support of Britain. Various factors like Xenophobia, the proximity of Asia and the vastness of the territory to be defended, induced Australia to pursue "White Australia Policy". The chief incentive for the adoption of "White Australia Policy" was the civilization of Australia that emanated from Anglo-Saxon roots as well as the colony's desire of "reserving the continent as a place where the English race shall be spread from sea to sea unmixed with any lower caste". Therefore, despite its geographic proximity to the Orient, Australia remained part of the Occident. Looking upon itself as a "European Outpost", Australia passed the Immigration Restriction Bill in 1901. The chief aim of the bill which outlined the "White Australia Policy", was to close the doors of Australia for the Asians and the Pacific islanders. This policy was also aimed at protecting the jobs and conditions of white Australian workers. For Australians, Asia remained incomprehensible and a menacing mass and the Asians were dismissed as "Asiatics", "natives", "swarms", "horders".

10 Ibid.
"coolies" condescending to work for "cheap labour" till the forties. Because of the inadequate information about Asia and the traditional notion of the fear of the Asians that led an inherent contempt for them, Australians were constrained to perceive Asia as an enigmatic neighbour.

**Australian Foreign and Defence Policies upto 1945**

The evolution of Australia's foreign and defence policies since the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia would explain the intimacy between Australia and Britain. Australians invariably held Britain in high esteem and considered the latter as 'mother country'. Whenever Britain was at war, Australia found itself at war involuntarily as witnessed in its active participation in the Boer war (1899-1902) in South Africa. When Britain declared war against Germany in August 1914, Australian forces fought with distinction in Europe and the Middle East. By virtue of its being a Dominion of the British Empire, Australia enjoyed the privilege of direct representation at the Versailles Peace Conference and became a founder member of the League of Nations. In 1920, Britain granted Australia along with other Dominions, the right to appoint diplomatic representatives who were answerable only to Canberra.

The Second World War proved catalytic to Australia's foreign policy in the sense that Australia began to toe an independent line in foreign and defence matters. For the first time it was the Second World War that posed the real security threat to the Australian shores. Japan's sudden entry into the war on December 7, 1941 led to its devastating bombardment of Pearl Harbour with lightning speed and the bombing of Guam and Hong Kong. By May 1942, the Philippines, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, North Borneo, Indochina and Burma, were

13 Varma, n.11, p.10.
14 Chakravarthy, n.8, p.2.
occupied by the Japanese, in quick succession. The Australian soldiers serving in Malaya became prisoners of war all at once. Darwin port was bombarded in February 1942, and the Japanese submarines destroyed the coastal shipping of Australia. Sydney and New Castle were shelled and three Japanese underwater midget submarines entered Sydney harbour, an unprecedented first direct attack on Australian territory.\textsuperscript{16} The bewildered Australia turned to the US as a main source of succour, Britain itself being in dire straits. On February 17, 1942, the Australian Prime Minister John Curtin responded in the negative to the British request to deploy the 7\textsuperscript{th} Australian Division in Burma clear demonstration of Australia's independent approach to matters relating to the foreign and defence policies.

The geographical features of the Commonwealth of Australia, like its long coast-line, its location on the fringe of Asia, the deserts in-between its populated areas and above all, its unique feature of being a continent as well as a nation, made it vulnerable for attacks by any major power. Upto the Second World War, Britain had been safeguarding Australian shores and its external interests. Australian isolation in the region before 1940's was manifest in its "White Australia Policy", when it chose to deal mainly with the markets in Britain and did not realise for a moment that a potential outlet for its products was at a stone's throw in the nearby Asia.

Australia's security has been thus conditioned by its own geographical features and socio-economic disparities of Southeast Asia. Australia's continental landmass encompasses a huge area of 2.97 million square miles with a population of only 17 million when compared with the Southeast Asia's area of 1.73 million square miles and a large population of over 423 million.\textsuperscript{17} As Britain was fighting


\textsuperscript{17} K.S. Nathan, "Australia and Southeast Asia", \textit{The Round Table}, July 1991, p.335.
at once in Europe and in the Middle East it was beyond its reach to protect its colonies in Asia or its friends in the Pacific in 1941, and as a last resort, Australia had to turn to another major power which could come to its rescue in the hour of crisis. Time had come for Australia to emerge from its mother's apron and forge its own defence policy in a changed world scenario. With the dawn of the realisation that the Asian countries are going to play a significant role in determining the future of the Australians in the region, Australians had to veer from isolating themselves from Asia, to thinking favourably of the latter. Thus Asia, which was regarded as a source of threat to Australia, came to be perceived in due course as a crucial factor in Australia's economic security and defence considerations.

Having experienced direct threat to its security from the Japanese, Australia allowed its foreign policy vis-a-vis Southeast Asia, to be influenced utmost by its relationship with the United States after the Second World War. In the absence of any more help from Britain, the Prime Minister of Australia John Curtin made an impassioned plea to the US, thus:

The Australian government ... regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of democracies' fighting plan. Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free from any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces... But we know, too, that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on. We are, therefore, determined that Australia shall not go, and shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone which will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of the battle swings against the enemy.

18 Chakravarthy, n.8, p.3.
The US did not belie the Australian expectations. On May 7-8, 1942, when the Japanese began a naval and air battle over the Coral sea with a view to delinking Australia from Honolulu and the Asian Pacific coast, American planes frustrated the Japanese bid. The American help being timely, reinforced Australia's confidence in the US. Therefore, Britain's inability to commit itself militarily to defending Australia became responsible for drawing Australia closer to the United States. By 1945, Australia realised that the US was the only power capable of offering protective cover against all kinds of threats from Asia. Australians expressed their gratitude to the US in May 1946, through their celebration of the American victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea. The Second World War, for all its causing anxious moments, finally helped Australia to move closer to the US that had emerged as a super power. Australia's growing realisation of the importance of the US for its defence, found expression in the upgradation of the diplomatic ties from legation level to embassy level in 1946, though really worthwhile efforts were not made to expedite the development of the close relations with the US.

After the election of Robert Menzies as the Prime Minister of Australia in 1949, a remarkable shift in the attitude of Australia towards the United States was noticed. The main theme of Menzies election campaign had been the need for 'closer association' with the US. In his government, Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs, was pro-US and R.G. Casey, the president of Australian – American Association, also played a vital role in the growth of relations between the US and Australia. The changes in Australian foreign policy were noted by the American State Department in 1950: "The previous Labour government... tended to neglect the United States – Australian relations, or in any case subordinate them to a foreign policy which found its primary expression in the United Nations. The
government of Prime Minister Menzies, however, has made the achievement of close relations with the United States a cardinal point of Australian foreign policy".20

The ANZUS Treaty

Even though the Second World War ended in an ignominious defeat for Japan, the Japanese menace continued to lurk in the bosom of the Australians. In fact, Australia gave vent to this threat perception during the negotiations of a peace treaty with Japan, meant for enabling the latter to become independent and regain its strength.21 Australia affirmed that it would sign the treaty with Japan only "if the US promised support in the event of renewed Japanese aggression".22 But the US had cherished an altogether different view which was presented in a forthright manner by John Allison, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs:

The United States, on the other hand, believed that the only kind of a treaty which would have any hope of lasting was one which was not punitive, which was based on trust and a spirit of reconciliation, and that it was not possible to seek certainty about Japan's future actions by imposing restrictions in a treaty which would deny freedom to Japan while such restrictions might initially give an illusion of certainty, it was the belief of the United States that such an illusion would be quickly shattered.23

22 Ibid.
23 Department of State Bulletin, (DSB), April 21, 1952, p.656.
Australian soldiers who were fighting under the leadership of the United States for the defence of South Korea. The Australian statesmen did not view the "invasion of South Korea" by North Korea as the ultimate objective of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, but as a clear strategy to extend communism in Asia towards South.

On the diplomatic front, with the shift of the scene of cold war, the Korean war was a boon in disguise for Australia as it drew the attention of the United States to Asia and in particular to Southeast Asia. Australia was the first country to furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea when it responded to the UN Security Council Resolution of January 27, 1950, though that was chiefly intended to get the bond of friendship with the US strengthened further. Though modest, this gesture, did not go unrewarded. In fact, Spender, the Australian Foreign Minister, anticipated this when he sent a cable to Prime Minister Menzies who was in London on July 17, 1950, to the following effect:

I feel very strongly that we must give some immediate response to Lie's (UN Secretary-General) appeal. My appreciation of the military position in Korea is that the US, though not prepared to admit it, is in a very difficult, if not-desperate position. The response to Lie's appeal so far appears to be inconsequential. From Australia's long-term point of view any additional aid we can give to the US now, small, though it may be, will repay us in the future one hundred fold. My personal view is that we must scrape the bucket to see what we can give.  

Canberra's prompt support of the U.S. yielded the desired result when the United States, whose occupation of Japan was to end in 1950, responded positively to the Australian proposal for a Pacific Pact to ensure Australian security. For what deemed valid reasons like the fear of Asia and the lingering

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28 Pemberton, n.20, p.19.
threat of the revival of Japanese aggressive imperialism and the peril of the communist menace manifest in the Korean War, Australia was compelled to get its defence fortified and sought an asylum in the security pacts with major powers. But at the same time, Australia remained mindful of the strategic importance of Southeast Asia. Therefore, in 1949, Australia readily became a member of ANZAM, the other members of which being New Zealand and the British territories of Malaya and Borneo. The main objective of the ANZAM was "to co-ordinate defence planning" in the area covered by it. Britain's reluctance to involve itself militarily in Asia and the communist aggression against South Korea seemed to have convinced Australians of the need for entering into a security arrangement with the US which showed its determination to arrest the rising tide of communism in Asia during the Korean War. The Australian Foreign Minister Spender pointed out in his maiden speech in Parliament on March 14, 1950 that it was time for entering a regional pact with the US. Again on September 13, 1950, three months after the Korean War broke out, Spender renewed his call for a Pacific pact, during his visit to the US. Though initially reluctant to get involved in the Pacific region, the US began to respond positively to Australia's move after the establishment of the PRC and after the outbreak of the Korean war. On February 9, 1951, Dean Rusk, the American Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, observed:

If the nations of Asia and the Pacific conclude that the time has come to move closer together in arrangements to safeguard the security and well – being of the area as a whole, the United States will take a sympathetic interest in such a development.

29 Collective Defence in Southeast Asia, n.21, p.20.
30 Varma, n.11, p.127.
31 Ibid, p.128.
However, Australia's proposal for a regional security arrangement assumed concrete shape during the visit of John Foster Dulles, a special representative of President to Canberra, in February 1951. The result of the "four days of uninterrupted conference" in which New Zealand also participated, was the ANZUS pact signed at San Francisco on September 1, 1951.\(^{33}\)

The preamble of the ANZUS treaty which remained the bed rock of Australian defence strategy, declared "publicly and formally", the three parties' sense of unity, so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that any of them stand alone in the Pacific area". The treaty made a provision for consultations whenever any one's "territorial integrity, political independence or security" were threatened in the Pacific region. Each party recognised that "an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety". Should an "armed attack" take place, each party undertook "to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes". The treaty, which "shall remain in force indefinitely" would be "ratified by the parties" and the "instruments of ratification" would be deposited with the Government of Australia.

R.G. Casey, who succeeded Spender as Australian Foreign Minister in 1951, hailed the ANZUS treaty as an extension of the umbrella of American military power to protect Australia and New Zealand. He further said;

\(^{33}\) For text of the ANZUS treaty, see Appendix - I. Also see Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Department of Defence, (Canberra, 1997), pp.18-19.
ANZUS provides the means whereby we can consult government to government with the strongest nation in the Pacific, the United States of America – not only the strongest nation but also our firm and declared ally. ANZUS gives Australia access to the thinking and planning of the American Administration at the highest political and military level. Finally ANZUS ensures that our own interests both political and military are kept before the United States and this is of major importance when we consider the complexity of the issues facing the United States, and the many countries whose separate interests must be taken into account by the Americans in global planning and strategy.  

The ANZUS treaty propelled Australia's independent trends in its foreign policy for the first time, as this treaty was concluded with a foreign power certainly not the "imperial" Britain which was excluded at the instance of "an anticolonial United States".  

However, ANZUS treaty could not satisfy all sections of the Australian society. Though the conclusion of this treaty was claimed to be the most successful initiative taken by the Australian government in the field of foreign affairs since 1945, ANZUS faced a lot of criticism both inside and outside the Parliament. In the Parliament, Senator Hayden of Australian Labour Party said:

We know that it (ANZUS) is the pay-off to the Japanese peace treaty, and though we are grievously worried about the repercussions of that atrocious document, we accept this pact. But when we ask ourselves what is in it, we must be honest and admit that it does not give us anything that we have not already got, although it does make existing understandings more valid by putting them in writing... This pact has teeth, but they are irregular and are not a complete set... In my opinion, the agreement will impose more obligations on the Australian People than it will impose on the Americans.

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The ALP members of Parliament also damned ANZUS by comparing it unfavourably with what was alleged to be "the 'tighter' obligation undertaken by the parties to NATO". \textsuperscript{37} Outside the Parliament, Professor Norman Harper who presented a "balanced account" of the ANZUS treaty, could not restrain himself from saying that ANZUS formula "was a much more diluted obligation than the provision in the North Atlantic Pact".\textsuperscript{38} As if to nullify such a criticism, John Foster Dulles, the then special representative of the President, stated in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in January 1952:

There is really no doubt in any quarter that an armed attack upon Australia... would involve the United States... indeed, the interest of the United States will be served by making clear, in Monroe Doctrine language, our sense of common destiny, with the brave Pacific peoples who were with us in the Pacific War. It is highly appropriate that not only our friends, but our potential enemies, should learn that our concern with Europe, evidenced by the North Atlantic Treaty, and our concern with Japan in no sense imply any lack of concern for our Pacific allies of World War II, or lack of desire to preserve and deepen our solidarity with them for security treaties with these countries are a logical part of the effort not merely to liquidate the old war but to strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific against the hazard of new war.\textsuperscript{39}

Again referring to ANZUS ten years later, the Secretary of State Dean Rusk said on May 9, 1962: "No defensive alliance was ever more firmly anchored in the solid realities of common interest, common ideas and mutual confidence".\textsuperscript{40} Nixon reaffirmed the ANZUS treaty as "one of the fundamental pillars of our policy for peace in the Pacific".\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, p.10
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, pp.11-12.
\textsuperscript{39} DSB, February 4, 1952, p.191.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.158.
No doubt, as T.B. Millar has pointed out, the US stood to gain by way of Australia's "Commonwealth connection" in the region, besides being "a secure potential base" in the event of a major war in Asia. But Australia's benefits were also significant. The ANZUS pact provided Australia with the consultative relationship with no less a power than the US. Australia also could count on the American assistance in case it was attacked either by the communist powers or Japan or any other country. Making an objective assessment of ANZUS pact, T.B. Millar observed: "The alliance is thus by no means one-sided. No alliance ever is. As the weaker and more isolated of the two, Australia stands to gain more from it- or rather to lose more without it-but it is also in America's best interest".

Vietnam

Vietnam otherwise known as Southeast Asia's balcony on the Pacific, is bounded by China to the North, Laos and Cambodia to the West and South China Sea to the south and east. Southeast Asia is a meeting ground of two great cultures of Asia, namely, India and China, and almost all the Southeast Asian nations with the unique exception of Vietnam, followed the Indian cultural patterns including alphabetical basis. Indian culture exerted its utmost influence on Southeast Asia only through peaceful means but not by political pressures or military threats. Because of its proximity to China, Vietnam was influenced by Chinese cultural patterns. The Vietnamese social organisation was shaped by its struggle against nature and its prolonged conflict with China, its northern neighbour, Paradoxically, the Vietnamese who adopted and assimilated Chinese culture and ideographs, intensely opposed Chinese political hegemony and craved to retain their independence from China. As Joseph Buttinger puts it:

42 Long Range Weapons Establishment at Woomera in South Australia, an important base for space tracking operations, was offered to the US by Australia. See Millar, n.35, p.158.
43 Ibid.
The more they absorbed of the skills, customs, and ideas of the Chinese, the smaller grew the likelihood of their ever becoming part of the Chinese people. In fact, it was during the centuries of intensive efforts to turn them into Chinese that the Vietnamese came into their own as a separate people, with political and cultural aspirations of their own.  

The existence of the Vietnam Kingdom as early as 500 B.C. established the fact that Vietnam has a long history. The Vietnamese always resisted any foreign rule and 'nationalism' was the battle-cry of the Vietnamese. Conquered by China in 111 B.C., Vietnam remained a colony of China till 939 A.D and proclaimed its independence. Thousand years of Chinese rule witnessed many abortive though potent Vietnamese resistance movements. The Vietnamese subsequently extended their kingdom and gave the present shape to their country by the end of the eighteenth century. Eventhough Vietnamese regained their independence in 939 A.D, for "political expediency", they maintained "nominal links" with China by sending triennial tributes to the Chinese Emperor.

The French who came to Vietnam by the end of 17th Century, obtained commercial concessions from the Chinese Emperor in 1845. On June 6, 1884, the French converted Vietnam into its protectorate. According to the treaty of Tientsin of June 9, 1885, China surrendered its sovereign rights over Vietnam and recognised French protectorate over Vietnam. For administrative convenience, the French divided Vietnam into three 'kys' (Provinces) namely Annam, Tonkin and Cochín – China.

In 1884, the Young Emperor Ham Nghi of Vietnam led a guerilla warfare against the French, and was suppressed at an early stage. The resistance at this stage was an attempt to reinstate the dynasty and was confined to the Mandarins and scholars rather than a people's movement. The nineteenth century which witnessed many great nationalist movements the rising nationalism in China and the emergence of Japan as an Asian power following its remarkable victory over Russia in 1905, encouraged the Vietnamese to shirk themselves of the French colonial yoke. Through the Chinese nationalists, the Vietnamese learned the need for reforms and the revolutionary ways to achieve them. Canton became the centre for Vietnam nationalists. In 1927, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (Vietnam Quoc Dan Dong) was established. The two world wars increased the intensity of the Nationalist movements in the whole of Southeast Asia including Vietnam. The one person who galvanized the movement for independence in Vietnam was Nguyen Ai Quoc alias Ho Chi Minh. His singular contribution was that he gave to his countrymen an ideological direction, a tradition of internal unity and a sense of realism which led to the triumph over the adversary.47 Acquainting himself with the revolutionary literature and movements in France and Russia and associating himself with the founding of the French Communist Party in 1920 and the guiding of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement from Canton and elsewhere, Ho formed the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) in Hongkong in October 1930. In 1930s, he was subjected to "Stalinist discipline" in Moscow.48 In order to make the nationalist movement broad based, Vietnam Dac Lap Dong Minh Hoi (League for the independence of Vietnam), popularly known as Viet Minh, was founded in the Quang Zi (Guang xi) Province of China in the Spring of 1941, with Ho Chi Minh

as its General Secretary. Due to pressure from China, the Vietnam Quoc Dang (VNQDD), the Vietnamese Nationalist Party which was patterned after the Chinese Kuomintang and was founded in 1927,\(^49\) was allowed to get merged with the National Front.

The Japanese occupation of Vietnam along with other Southeast Asian countries during World War II, served as an incentive to the Vietnamese to launch an "anti-Japanese struggle" alongside of its anti-French struggle. Following the Japanese surrender on August 10, 1945, Ho Chi Minh established a provisional government on August 28, 1945 and subsequently proclaimed on September 2, 1945, the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), a coalition of communists and non-communists.

On this historic occasion, President Ho Chi Minh read out a Declaration of Independence before a huge gathering at Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi:

> Vietnam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence and in fact has become a free and independent country. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their freedom and independence.\(^50\)

Obviously, in order to get its claims strengthened as a popular government, the DRVN held the first general elections in January 1946, for the National Assembly which adopted a new constitution with a provision for a bill of rights, a President and a Cabinet responsible for a unicameral legislature to be elected by the universal suffrage. But the victorious Allies' intention to reinstate the French in Indochina hindered the independence of Vietnam once again. The Chinese were

\(^{49}\) **Collective Defence in Southeast Asia**, n.21, p.45.

entrusted with the responsibility of disarming the Japanese in North Vietnam while a similar job was entrusted to the British in South Vietnam. In the South, the British army under General Gracey, released all the French Soldiers who were imprisoned by the Japanese and rearmed them by way of sowing seeds of renewed conflict between the French and the Vietnamese.

The French manoeuvre to regain their control over Northern part of Vietnam, coincided with Ho Chi Minh's desire to get rid of the Chinese in the north. Bearing the age- old suspicions about the Chinese in mind, Ho felt that "it would be easier to oust a distant power like France than the closer traditionally dominant China".51 The result was the conclusion of a preliminary Franco-Vietnamese convention on March 6, 1946 by which the French recognised the DRVN "as a free state which has its government, its parliament, army, finances and is a part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union". The DRVN did not resist the French army which would drive out the Chinese troop and withdraw within five years.52

The main intention of the French in reaching agreement was to gain time to take military action against the DRVN and, therefore, they were not keen on implementing the agreement. The hostilities resumed with the French bombardment of Haiphong on November 23, 1946, in which thousands of Vietnamese were killed. On December 15, 1946, the Vietnamese retaliated by attacking the French forces in northern Vietnam. In order to neutralise Ho's popularity and discredit the communist dominated DRVN, the French set up "Central Provisional Vietnam Government" on May 20, 1948. At the instance of the French, the ex-emperor Bao Dai became the head of the new French Dominion

consisting of Cochin – China, Annam and Tongking on December 30, 1949. But the fact remained that in matters of popularity, Bao Dai proved to be no match to Ho Chi Minh.

The French determination to subdue the peninsula intensified the French military action in Indochina and the war in the region began to attract the attention of the world. The United States' policy towards Indochina in which the French saw major shifts since the Second World War deserves attention here. Remaining strictly anti-colonial, President F.D. Roosevelt proposed to place Indochina under international trusteeship. He also felt that the "French inability to defend Indochina destroyed its right to regain control of its colony".53 Ho Chi Minh was contacted by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), USA, when he was in China to receive supply of arms from July to September 1945.54

This confirmed the French doubts that the US was pursuing "anti – colonial" policy in Vietnam at the expense of the French interests. After the Second World War when insurgencies broke out in Vietnam, the US indicated to the French that it should consider the demands of the people at least to pacify them. Even at that time, the US attitude towards the Vietnamese struggle differed from that of the French. But the establishment of people's Republic of China in 1949, made all the difference to the US policy makers regarding Vietnam. They felt that the communist victory in China was a "proof" of the Soviet expansionism in Asia and the next victim would be, by all means, Vietnam. Therefore, the United States, recognised the Bao Dai regime on February 6, 1950 in retaliation to the recognition of the DRVN by the PRC and the Soviet Union and its European satellites in January 1950. Thus the Indochina crisis became embroiled in the cold war.

Meanwhile, the French were unable to fight in Indochina both politically and militarily. All the three states of Indochina were simmering with discontent and were determined to throw off the French colonial rule. The domestic pressure in France reached its peak as the young French soldiers were killed in distant colonial war. Despite the opposition from the domestic front, the Western powers supported France and wanted it to continue the fight against the communists in Indochina. The United States increased its contribution to the French war effort in Indochina when the French found their morale in the war at stake. The US growing concern about the prospects of Chinese intervention in Indochina added to the US determination to debilitate the communist expansion.

One month after recognising the Bao Dai government, two American war ships were anchored off Saigon. In May 1950, Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State, announced economic and military assistance to the French. The American aid began to flow into Indochina on an average of 500 million dollars per year. By early 1954, the US was meeting about 80% of the total French military expenditure in Indochina.55

Gravely concerned about the developing situation in Indochina, John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, began talks with the Ambassadors of Australia and New Zealand in Washington. He explained that the communist menace in Southeast Asia would pose a direct threat to the US allies in the Pacific unless a "new force" was brought in to fight the menace. Dulles felt that "united action" would be the best way to counter the red expansion in Southeast Asia. In a major policy speech before the overseas Press Club of America on March 29, 1954, the Secretary of State Dulles said:

Under the conditions of today the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of communist Russia and its Chinese communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free grave community. The United States feels that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now if we dare not be resolute today.  

Australia was rather hesitant in its response to the US idea of "united action" because of British opposition and also of the demands of the forthcoming Australian election. The Australian dilemma found expression in the observation of the Australian Minister for External Affairs, R.G. Casey that, "the desire to avoid any commitment conflicted with our desire to appear to the Americans to be dragging our feet when the Americans have asked to join with them in action to repel what is the obvious menace to us for future". Ultimately the 'united action' plan was abandoned when the French disliked to "internationalise" the war.

Dien bien Phu 1954

Meanwhile, the historic Dien bien Phu campaign began on March 13, 1954, when the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) launched a large scale attack on Dien bien Phu entrenched camp. For the Viet Minh, the siege of Dien bien Phu was vital because it perceived the battle as "the last opportunity before the Geneva Conference... to show its military strength, its determination to fight until victory". The American military authorities who watched the Dien bien Phu war with a strained attention "considered seriously dropping of atomic bombs on the Viet Minh" but the idea was abandoned finally because of opposition from Britain and other Commonwealth countries like Australia and the American Public.
Britain alone felt free to discuss and consider the proposals of the communist delegation. In the Conference, divergence of approach was conspicuous in the communist camp. While the North Vietnamese were "adamant", the Soviet Union was "not uncompromising". The USSR promised to help the French in attaining a positive settlement of Vietnam expecting return gestures from France in the form of its refusal of the proposal of European Defence Community which had been an important venture of the US in Europe. The Chinese were trying to convince the world that China was a non-aggressive country wedded to a policy of peaceful co-existence. The DRVN was determined to achieve complete independence and a united Vietnam.

The Geneva Conference which ended on July 21, 1954, produced an agreement which was a collection of several documents comprising, besides the Final Declaration, eight unilateral declarations and three cease-fire agreements. The Geneva agreement provided for a cease fire, the granting of independence by France to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, the creation of a machinery called International Supervisory Commission (ISC) with India as Chairman and Canada and Poland as members for the effective implementation of the cease fire and the temporary partition of Vietnam at the 17th parallel and the eventual reunification of Vietnam after elections in July 1956.

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65 For the text of the 'Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the problem of Restoring Peace in Indochina', July 1954, see Porter, n.52, pp.159-161.
The conflicting national perceptions at Geneva obfuscated the political solution. The Soviet Union's interests in Europe and PRC's desire to avoid an enlarged war (with the US), baffled the hopes of North Vietnam for the support from the two communist giants. Lack of support and interest of the American and South Vietnamese delegates sabotaged the very purpose of the accords. The unsigned treaty ended the eight year old Indochina war but this agreement contained the seeds of what came to be known later as one of the world's most disastrous wars. The partition of Vietnam was the product of great power politics rather than the real political problems prevailing in Vietnam. Due to pressure from the Soviet Union and China, the DRVN was obliged to make painful compromises regarding the division of Vietnam, the demarcation of demilitarized zone and the fixation of the date of the elections to be conducted. The Vietnamese quest for independence and unity in near future became a mirage.

**Australia and the Indochina Conflict**

Australia was acutely conscious of its geographical isolation, the power centres of the west being no guarantee for its national security, and the perceived aggressive threats emanating from its near north neighbours. Its confidence in national defence policies was shaken by the developments in Asia i.e., Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation (1950), Chinese involvement in the Korean war and the French debacle at Dien bien Phu (1954). All these factors influenced Australia to pay meticulous attention to its pursuit of foreign and defence policies towards Southeast Asia. Australia felt that fall of Indochina to communism would result in a chain reaction in the entire Southeast Asian region which by itself was a constant menace to the security of Australia. The Australian Defence Committee in its report, "A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy" which was approved by the Australian Cabinet on December 18, 1952, observed:
Indochina is the key to the defence of Southeast Asia... The loss of this area would greatly simplify continued communist expansion in Southeast Asia, which would probably lead to the collapse of Burma and Thailand and to a dangerous weakening of internal security in Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines.... While Indochina is held, defence in depth is provided for the Australia - New Zealand main support area.66

This report lent credence to the "forward defence" policy pursued by Australia. The 'forward defence' amounted to entering into alliances with its northern Asian neighbours and to the stationing of its troops in these countries. As Vincent Stove has pointed out, the rationale behind the theory of Australia's 'forward defence' was that "the safety of Australia would be defended offshore-helping to keep the peace in Asia and to prevent any conflict from spreading to present a threat to Australia".67 In tune with this philosophy of 'forward defence', that Australia participated in the five-nation consultative Defence Agreement (ANZAM) in Malaysia and Singapore and provided half of the force of 7000 foreign troops while Britain offered 2500 and New Zealand 1,150.68

It was in this background that Australia responded positively to the American initiative for "united action". On April 15, 1954, the Australian Defence Committee in its report on Military aspects of Indochina - United States' proposals for "united action" noted:

67 Stove, n.41.
68 Ibid.
With regard to direct ANZAM interests in the area, communist domination of Indochina would immeasurably increase the threat to Malaya and present plans for its external reinforcement would not be effective. Failing the use of unconventional weapons the increased threat could only be met by the deployment of greater forces in a shorter time than at present planned and by the situation of the requisite proportion of such forces permanently in Malaya.69

Canberra, therefore, was in full agreement with the American assessment of the concealed goals of the communists in Indochina, namely, to turn Southeast Asia 'red'. Explaining "why we are so concerned with the far-off southeast corner of Asia", President Eisenhower said in August 1953:

Now let us assume that we lose Indochina. If Indochina goes, several things happen right away. The Malayan Peninsula, the last little bit of the end hanging on down there, would be scarcely defensible - and tin and tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming. But all India would be outflanked. Burma would certainly, in its weakened position, be no defence. Now India is surrounded on that side by the Communist empire. Iran on its left is in a weakened condition.... All of that weakening position around there is very ominous for the United States, because finally if we lost that, how would the free world hold the rich empire of Indonesia? So ... somewhere along the line, this must be blocked. It must be blocked now. That is what the French are doing.70

In a similar vein, John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, explained the dire consequences of the fall of Southeast Asia to communism. Addressing the Overseas Press Club in New York on March 29, 1954, Dulles said;

69 The Australian Defence Committee Submission, n.66.
70 Public Papers of the President of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953, p.540 in Pemberton, n.20, p.38.
The area has great strategic value. Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases. Communist control of Southeast Asia would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand with whom we have treaties of mutual assistance. The entire Western Pacific area including the so-called off-shore island chain, would be strategically endangered.  

In Australia's view the French war efforts in Indochina were designed to contain communist aggression in the area. Foreign Minister Casey did not mince words when he said on the occasion of the visit of a member of the French Government to Canberra in early 1953: "France was fighting a great battle in Indochina on the outcome of which depended the security of many other countries including Australia".  

Australia, therefore, offered "a small amount of military equipment to the French Union Forces". This did not imply that Australia was unmindful of the ground realities of the Indochina situation. In a paper entitled "Indochina" which was circulated in a cabinet meeting on June 4, 1954, Foreign Minister Casey noted: "The local people were not enthusiastic supporters of the French and Asian opinion was strongly in favour of independence for all parts of Indochina". It was exactly this factor that inspired Australia to propose the granting of independence to the Indochina states.  

At the 9-nation Geneva Conference, Australia was "not directly represented" as the participation was strictly limited to the 'Big four' and five other parties that were directly involved in the Indochina conflict. However, Australia associated itself with the Geneva Conference in the capacity of an "observer". As

71 DSB, April 12, 1954, p.540.
72 Varma, n.11, p.151.
73 Decision No. 1026, Cabinet Minute (Canberra, June 4, 1954).
74 Ibid.
the Australian Foreign Minister Casey who associated himself with the Geneva parleys, said that Canberra sincerely wished that "every effort should be, at Geneva, to reach a negotiated settlement in Indochina on honourable and reasonable terms".³⁵

At Geneva, the Australian objectives, outlined by the Australian Cabinet which met on June 4, 1954 to discuss 'Indochina' exclusively, were as follows:

Delinking of the issues of Cambodia and Laos from that of Vietnam. Pulling the Viet Minh troops out of Laos and Cambodia. Not to reject possibility of partition of Vietnam as an acceptance settlement. Associating Asian nations like India and Burma with international guarantees "designed to support the national integrity" of Laos, Cambodia and Southern Part of Vietnam.³⁶

Casey held informal discussions with the participants at Geneva, particularly those representing France, Vietnam and China. Casey's diplomatic exercises did not go a waste as vindicated by the Geneva agreement on the grounds that some of its major aspects were nothing but a reflection of Australia's objectives. The independence of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was proclaimed. Each member of the conference undertook not only "to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and integrity" of the Indochina States "but also to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs". The partition of Vietnam catered to the wishes of Australia though the US was averse to "the idea of partition". Preferring partition to "continued fighting" or "military stalemate", the Australian Cabinet which met on June 4, 1954 noted that "there is already partition in effect in Vietnam for, in substantial areas the Viet Minh are in - charge".³⁷

³⁵ R.G. Casey's cablegram from Foreign Minister to the Australian Ambassador in Washington May 26, 1954.
³⁶ Decision No.1026, Cabinet Minute (Canberra, June 4, 1954).
³⁷ Ibid.
Australia insisted on securing the participation of Asian members of the Commonwealth, in particular India, to ensure the future well-being of Indochina. Therefore, Casey, while going to Geneva in June 1954, broke his journey and visited New Delhi to convince Jawaharlal Nehru. India was not inclined to guarantee the Indochina settlement as desired by Australia. However, there was no reason for Australia to get dejected because India and Canada, the two Commonwealth states, along with Poland, agreed to serve in the International Control Commission which was entrusted with the task of the implementation of Geneva accords. But, by and large, Australians did not feel happy about the Geneva settlement because of the fact that the US expressed its disapproval by refusing to be a party to the Geneva Accords. Australia suffered from the feeling of guilt because Canberra did not subscribe to the American move of 'internationalisation' of the Indochina War, in order to prevent the Viet Minh from winning the war and gaining a position of strength on the eve of the Geneva Conference. The Australian Cabinet which met on June 4, 1954 felt:

The consequences to Australia backing a United States decision to "internationalise the conflict" were exceedingly serious. It would mean that Australia would be taking part in a war from which all other members of the British Commonwealth, with the possible exception of New Zealand, would, on present indications, be standing aloof. It would be a war which appeared to us likely to require the use of forces greatly in excess of any numbers which have been mentioned so far and, moreover, a war which might well lead to the use of atomic weapons and even lead into a third world war.

Australia and the Formation of SEATO

The Geneva Agreement called as a "Curious Document", was neither respected nor implemented by the United States and South Vietnam. The Geneva

79 Cabinet Minute, n.76.
Conference brought provisional peace to Indochina, reduced tensions and averted perhaps the beginning of another world war. Though America was sullen, it did not entertain the idea of any use of force or threat to violate the agreement. The US viewed the Geneva Agreement as a victory to the communists. Hence, after 1954, the United States stepped up its efforts to organise a collective defence treaty for Southeast Asia to avoid further communist aggression in that region. Australia shared the US perceptions of the situation in Indochina. Though Australia supported Britain in opposing a joint military intervention in Indochina before the Geneva Conference, it felt drawn to the regional security pact proposed by Secretary Dulles after the Geneva Conference.

Britain felt that the American move was made at an inopportune time as such a move would marr the proceedings of the Geneva Conference which was in progress at that time. Further, Britain insisted on the inclusion of free Asian states into the proposed treaty which the US did not appreciate. Consequently, the relations between the US and Britain got strained, much to the distress of Australia. Australia and New Zealand were subjected to a dilemma but New Zealand came out of it to inform Washington that it would not join the Pact without Britain. However, Australia like Britain, maintained that the pact should be concluded only after the Geneva Conference. The row over the timing of the collective defence treaty was put an end to by the discussions between America and Britain.

Soon after the Geneva Conference, Australia geared its diplomacy to execute the task of formation of a regional security alliance which would not only prevent communist expansion but also serve as a forum for a continuous dialogue with its Asian neighbours. The preliminary reports of the working group set up to prepare the draft of the alliance for Southeast Asia, revealed the differences of opinion between the US and Britain regarding the pattern of the treaty. While Britain held that the pact should be non-military in character, America felt that the
pact should be on the model of NATO and ANZUS. On the other hand, Australia wanted the pact to be different from these two divergent views. Australia wanted that its scope should not be limited to the prevailing situation in Indochina but also should be extended to meet the security concerns of Australia as well as other nations of Southeast Asia. Foreign Minister Casey observed: "We have to steer between the UK and US. Ultimately to achieve what we want in SEATO we have to be with the US-but not against the UK".  

But, while Australia occupied an auxiliary position, the eventual pattern of the treaty was moulded predominantly by the views of Britain and America. Even then Canberra came forward to shoulder the burden of the military obligations of the treaty. Finally, the efforts of both Casey and Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, failed utterly to rope in Asian nations into the pact. The concept of 'importance to Asians' forfeited its charm when only Pakistan, besides Thailand and the Philippines from Southeast Asia, agreed to join the pact.

When the communist expansion into Indochina Peninsula could not be blocked despite the United States unflinching support to the French and Bao Dai in Vietnam, the US decided to take more active part in Southeast Asia. To frustrate the communist position in the Peninsula, the US involved itself in the political developments of the region and decided to draw a line of defence against China to prevent the 'creeping' of communism. All these objectives of America in Southeast Asia found their expression in formulating SEATO which was signed in Manila, by eight countries, namely, Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States.

Paragraph 1, Article IV of the SEATO treaty said that in the event of an armed attack or aggression against any one of the parties to the treaty, each party would deem it dangerous to its own peace and security and would "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process". According to

80 Pemberton, n.20, p.50.
paragraph 2, Article IV, the parties undertook to take necessary measures in case "any party in the treaty area" or any other state that might be designated" is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area". According to Article VIII, the treaty covered the "area of Southeast Asia, including the entire territories of the Asian parties to the treaty and the general area of the South – West Pacific below the line at 21.30 north latitude remaining to the South of Farmosa". In its 'understanding' appended to the treaty, the US clarified that in its view "armed attack" meant "communist aggression" only.

The Foreign Minister Casey, while introducing a bill to secure the ratification of SEATO by the House of Representatives on October 27, 1954, asserted that the Australian membership of SEATO was essential as the Geneva Conference was an evidence of the strengthened position of the communists in Southeast Asia.

Though Canberra viewed its participation in SEATO as an achievement of its foreign policy, SEATO occasioned an adverse criticism by the opposition party and various others. Evatt, the leader of the opposition Labour Party said that SEATO stressed the communist aggression alone but remained silent on Japanese threat. To quote him:

\[...\] Australia's obligation under this agreement is to act – including military action against Fascist or nationalist aggression as well as against communist aggression. Therefore, why does the preamble to the bill refer only to one class of aggression. If there were Japanese aggression in the treaty area and parties to the agreement were affected the United States, under this agreement would not be obliged to take action with regard to that aggression. That is the defect in the treaty and it is our duty to recognise it.\[82\]

Evatt also argued that as SEATO was directed solely against 'communist' aggression, it was not in conformity with the United Nations Charter. In support of his argument, he stated further that the regional arrangements must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter which concern themselves with the 'maintenance of international peace and security'.

Arthur Calwell, another leader of the Australian Labour Party, assailed SEATO saying that it failed to recognise the non-military means to meet communist challenge: "It is not equipped to combat communism by economic, social and political means which, in the long run, are and must be the only successful means that can meet the challenge of communism in Asia". John Burton, former Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, argued that Australia should not have joined SEATO when the Asian countries like India scrupulously kept aloof from it.

But the Australian government had valid grounds to defend its participation in the American sponsored military pact. First, SEATO was perceived as a promoter of national security. Second, Australia could not afford to displease the US on which it began to depend more and more especially as Britain's interests in Asia were diminishing after the World War II. Third, Australian government could not ignore the Australian Press which was critical of Canberra's initial hesitation to extend immediate and unconditional support to the American moves against communist threat in Southeast Asia. Reflecting the views of the Australian Press, the Sydney Morning Herald observed on June 15, 1954:

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85 Watt, n.82, p.136.
Mr Casey... has... given the impression that Australia's interest in 'firm defensive arrangement' is lukewarm and conditional, and might even evaporate altogether if there was a 'little compromise' on the part of the communists on Indo-china .... Meanwhile, there is evidence that the American interest in a Southeast Asian security pact which Mr. Casey applauded, is cooling fast. For this, Australia's failure to declare her support is partly responsible. If Canberra continues to shilly-shally, Australia may well prove the truth of the old adage 'he who will not when he nay, when he will he shall have nay'. It behoves Australia, in her own interest, to make her voice heard while there is still time to influence American policy.86

Fourth, Canberra firmly believed that the policy of isolation from its Asian neighbourhood was detrimental to the interests of its security. On October 27, 1954, R.G. Casey, Minister of Foreign Affairs, told the House of Representatives thus:

... The time has gone by when Australia could rest securely with in its own borders. Instead of living in a tranquil corner of the globe we are now on the verge of the most unsettled region of the world... It is no longer possible for any country to rely entirely for its security on its own strength in isolationism: it has to be sought through a sound system of collective defence... 87

Australia also stood to benefit by SEATO for various other reasons. The exclusion of Britain from ANZUS placed Australia in 'an uncomfortable dilemma' in so far as its relations with its two "great and powerful friends" were concerned. The British participation in SEATO freed Australia from the guilt of betraying Britain while concluding ANZUS treaty three years before that of the SEATO. The British association with SEATO also brought Malaya indirectly under the

86 Modelski, n.78, p.63.
87 Watt, n.82, p.155.
purview of SEATO and this was a welcoming feature for Australia which was a member of ANZAM that covered the defence of Malaya. Further, Australia had every reason to be gratified about SEATO because the American commitments under SEATO helped to strengthen the defence of Australian non-communist northern Asian neighbours.\(^{88}\) However, in some quarters in Australia it was claimed that "SEATO commits Australia more than it commits the United States, since there is no Australian protocol limiting its understanding of the treaty to 'communist' aggression".\(^{89}\) But viewed from Australian government's perspective, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

\(^{88}\) Millar, n.35, p.152.

\(^{89}\) Ibid.