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DISCUSSION PAPER

Discussion  
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## **FIGHTING FOR HER GATES AND WATERWAYS: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF NEW GUINEA IN AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE<sup>1</sup>**

From the changing perspective of their homeland as British colonies, Empire dominion and independent middle power, Australians have thought variously of eastern New Guinea as a place to be Christianised and civilised, a frontier that might be a state, well-watered lands where Australians could settle and flourish, a territory to be transformed into a nation, and a declining nation to be resurrected. And always they have thought that New Guinea was important to their own defence. In pursuit of their various policies – to have legal possession, to promote Australian settlement, to cut constitutional ties, to ‘enhance cooperation’ – they have been concerned about their own security. While defence has not always been the primary motive, it has always been important, and the basis of an argument most easily expressed and most likely to win support from Australians.

An essay on Australian defence and relations with New Guinea illuminates central issues in Australian history: Australia’s motives in the annexation of eastern New Guinea; the development of policies for the Australian Territory of Papua; participation in World War I and the Treaty of Versailles; White Australia and perceptions of the threat of Asian invasion; the Singapore strategy and ‘betrayal’; international communism, the falling dominoes and West

New Guinea; the granting of self-government to Papua New Guinea in 1973 and independence in 1975; and Australia’s current re-engagement with the islands to the north and northeast.

It is hoped that the essay will also:

- provide a more comprehensive survey of the full period of Australian government engagement with New Guinea than is available in the opening paragraphs of many reviews of foreign and defence policies;
- give a guide to the published and unpublished sources;
- draw attention to continuities and change in Australian policies;
- make critical assessments of Australia’s perception of and engagement with New Guinea and the islands to the north and east; and
- contribute to the sort of history that goes from past to present and is of some value to those involved with current issues.

Papua New Guinea is also central to Australians’ collective knowledge about their defence and national identity. ‘Kokoda’, one of the most recognised and evocative words in Australian history, is likely to increase in significance with the passing of the last of the survivors of the World War I and as Australians try to locate the formative experiences of their nationality in their own region. In less than

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twelve months in 2003 and 2004 over 2000 pages were published on Kokoda.<sup>2</sup> Australian leaders trying to claim a special relationship with Papua New Guinea are as likely to refer to Kokoda and the shared experiences of soldiers and Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels as to nearly 100 years of administrative responsibility. But Kokoda, and more broadly Papua New Guinea, as the place where Australians fought in defence of their homeland and exhibited those characteristics that they hope others will see in them, is largely outside the scope of this essay.<sup>3</sup>

## ANNEXATION AND THE EUROPEAN ENTANGLEMENT

For ten days in November and December 1883, elected and appointed representatives of New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and Fiji met in Sydney.<sup>4</sup> The 'gentlemen' in the Convention's debates and resolutions took the opportunity to make one of the first assertions by a representative group that Australasian defence and foreign policies should reflect Australasian interests. In the months before the Convention those interests had been expressed across the colonies in public meetings and newspapers concerned about the fate of Samoa, the New Hebrides, the Solomons and east New Guinea – those islands and part-islands not yet included in empires.<sup>5</sup>

The public had also debated the levels of deception and violence in the Pacific labour trade and whether cheap black labour was what was wanted in a white Australia. At a meeting in the Melbourne Town Hall in July 1883 Justice George Higinbotham told an appreciative audience that there were 'elements of the danger of slavery in the system', and just as there were people who argued that the slaves in the south of the United States were content, so those who saw a humane system in Queensland rationalised the evils of the labour traffic.<sup>6</sup> But, he said, stopping recruiters seizing women for the 'vilest of purposes', island chiefs selling men to recruiters, the landing of returned men on the wrong coasts and the elimination of violence and deception all required effective government in the islands.<sup>7</sup> The thoughtful democrat, Higinbotham, had tied white Australia to an extension of empire.

More frequently, citizens at public meetings – in Cooktown, Bowen, Roma, Charters Towers, Dalby, Ipswich and Ballarat – petitioned that their objections to the French sending repeat offender criminals to New Caledonia be laid before their

distant queen.<sup>8</sup> Soon, the Australians feared, the French would be sending their worst citizens to other islands, such as the New Hebrides. Already, the Australians said, these vilest of French scoundrels had escaped or served their time, landed on Australian shores and become a threat and a burden. Asked for evidence, the Australians said that in the last nine years the police had reported at least 247 expiries or escapees. And, the New South Wales Colonial Secretary, wrote:

Not more than about one-tenth are earning an honest livelihood; the others harbour with and live upon prostitutes, and about one half of them are, or have been, inmates of our gaols from time to time, thus forming a source of expense, annoyance and increased crime in the Colonies.<sup>9</sup>

The widespread and aggressively expressed opposition of the Australians to the few French recidivists (just thirty-three of them in Victoria) was partly because it reminded them of their earlier campaigns to stop Britain sending her convicts to Australia. Higinbotham had protested against the transportation of convicts to Western Australia. And it reminded some of them of who they, or their parents, had been, or what they feared others thought they had been.

The need to control or abolish the labour trade and exclude the contaminating French recidivists was used by the Australians to press Britain to annex the unclaimed islands to the north east. But when the members of the Convention came to word their resolutions, they said that the first reason why Britain should extend her empire in the Pacific was to secure the safety of Australasia.<sup>10</sup> That concern with defence may not have aroused the most emotional responses in the town halls of the eastern Australian colonies, but it was widespread. For the Australian colonists the argument was simple. As James Service the Victorian Premier argued, the occupation of any of the islands by another European power would be a 'standing menace and a source of common danger to all of the Australasian Colonies'. In the event of 'European complications', he wrote, an enemy of Britain operating from its island base might immediately 'destroy or seriously cripple the shipping trade and commerce of these Colonies'.<sup>11</sup> At the Melbourne Town Hall meeting in July 1883, the Reverend D. Jones Hamer warned that while Britain was then at peace 'with the whole world' there were '4,000,000 of armed men' in Europe 'and war may break out at any day'. His fellow clergyman, the reverend John Rentoul of the Presbyterian

church, pointed out that a recent article in the London *Spectator* had predicted that in fifty years time the Australian colonies might be one Australian nation, and unless Britain acted now to forestall 'any rapacious foreign power' that young nation would one day be 'fighting for her gates and her waterway at New Guinea and the New Hebrides'.<sup>12</sup>

The Australian colonies, led by Victoria and Queensland, continued their stream of unsolicited advice to push Britain to expand her Empire in the southwest Pacific. Where the Australian colonies were content with an extension of British authority over most islands sufficient to exclude other powers and prevent outrages, in New Guinea they wanted all that was not claimed by the Dutch to be part of the British Empire. Their anxiety increased as they learnt about German plans and German shipping moving in the area, and they seized the assurance of Lord Derby in May 1884 that no foreign power was contemplating claiming the New Guinea coast. When in December 1884 they learnt that the Germans had planted their flag on the north coast they reminded Britain of the resolutions passed at the Sydney Convention and asked Britain to reject German claims and extend British annexation.<sup>13</sup> After the Victorian Government had reliable information about German annexation it telegraphed its Agent-General in London:

At last the end has come ... The exasperation here is boundless. We protest in the name of the present and the future of Australia if England does not yet save us from the danger and the disgrace, as far at least as New Guinea is concerned, the bitterness of feeling towards her will not die out with this generation.<sup>14</sup>

On instruction from his home colony, the New South Wales' Agent-General asked whether the German claim to northern New Guinea had been made with Britain's prior knowledge and agreement.<sup>15</sup> The British government resented the suggestions that it had been beaten to the punch by the Germans or that it had deceived its own colonies. The Earl of Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies, explained that his government had always listened to the Australian Colonies, and because the north and the islands of New Guinea lay 'at a considerable distance', there was 'no foundation for the apprehension that great injury to British interests is likely to result from the German occupation'.<sup>16</sup> In that statement the Earl of Derby demonstrated the different perspectives of London and the Australian colonies. As far as the Australian

colonies were concerned the islands were close, the presence of another European power there meant that isolation and the British navy might no longer protect them in the event of conflict in Europe, and the islands were – in spite of the fact that the Australian nation was sixteen years from formation – a frontier for Australian influence, exploitation and possession. It was where an Australian nation would play its part in Empire and world affairs.

To demonstrate that their resolutions were not just rhetoric, the Australasian colonies at the Sydney Convention agreed that they would share the costs should the Imperial Government extend its control in the southwest Pacific. Most of the Australasian colonies quickly realised that they had few funds and New Guinea was indeed a long way away, and soon Sir William Macgregor, the first Lieutenant-Governor of British New Guinea, found that just three of the Australian colonies, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, were contributing the bulk of his revenue. For the Australian colonies, the expression of a permanent interest in New Guinea in 1883 turned out to be a permanent commitment to pay.

## AUSTRALIAN TERRITORY: AUSTRALIAN POLICY

Once the Australian colonies federated the new Australian nation was expected to fund and administer British New Guinea. At the first meetings of the federal parliament in Melbourne in 1901, the question of the future relations between Australia and New Guinea was just one issue that forced members to define Australia and Australians. With the passing of the Pacific Island Labourers Act and the Immigration Restriction Act and the protecting of local industries, parliament decided that Australia would be for white settlers, no coloured labour would be allowed in, or allowed to stay if already in, and protected by tariffs Australian industries would pay high wages to its white workers.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that these were the major issues: protection versus free trade helped define parties and Andrew Fisher, the member for Wide Bay and to be Prime Minister of a Labor Government in 1908, said that there had been no talk about New Guinea during the election campaign: 'In Queensland we had one big question only, and that was whether that State was to be the heritage of the white or coloured races'.<sup>18</sup>

Under the motion introduced by the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Edmund Barton, parliament was asked to accept British New Guinea 'as a territory of the Commonwealth' and provide 20,000 pounds a year for five years to pay for its administration. Although they had few funds for any national projects, the members decided unanimously that they would pay the money. They had little choice: Britain made it clear that where the 'tax-payer of the United Kingdom has so little direct commercial interest' there would be no subsidy from London even if that meant a lapse of imperial control.<sup>19</sup> The Australians had learnt a lesson: British New Guinea was to be an Australian cost or it would be neither British nor Australian. But the Australians were less certain about whether Australians alone should administer the area and what constitutional relationship should link British New Guinea to Australia.

In a major speech on 12 November 1901, Barton set out a plan and vision. Under section 122 of the Australian constitution, British New Guinea, Barton said, was to become a territory of the Commonwealth. That, as Barton explained, meant that the Australian parliament could eventually give the territory such representation as it saw fit in the Commonwealth parliament. New Guinea was not to be a 'precarious possession' but an area over which the Commonwealth had full 'legislative supremacy'; it was part of Australia's acceptance of its responsibility 'for the future of these seas'.<sup>20</sup> Asked whether New Guinea would be within the area controlled by Commonwealth tariffs, Barton said that would not automatically be the case but in the future Australia might move to ensure the free movement of all goods between the two areas. Barton told members that 'in view of the long centuries for which ... New Guinea is to be a territory or, perhaps, a State of this Commonwealth' there was plenty of time for Australians to work out details. For Barton, the acquisition of New Guinea was just the beginning of Australia's role in the region:

There are parts of the Empire in the seas surrounding us which may well become, as time goes on, subject to the legislative control of the Commonwealth, and this, I think, formed part of the hopes and aspirations of those who look forward to a creation of a federation in these seas.... I think that [this] can be best accomplished by our acquiring, not aggressively, not too rapidly, not with any undue haste, but as opportunity and reason might make it right and convenient, and without

disturbing the relations of the Empire to outside Powers, parts of the surroundings of the Commonwealth in these seas.<sup>21</sup>

Barton had expressed Australian aspirations in the region, but there could have been fewer calls for a new nation to build its empire so gently and gradually. Barton had also left one fundamental question unanswered: was New Guinea part of an overseas area that would be governed by Australia or was it an area that would eventually be incorporated within Australia? Others who spoke were equally uncertain whether they had within weeks of their first meeting violated that convenient founding slogan: 'a continent for a nation and a nation for a continent'.<sup>22</sup>

John Watson, leader of the twenty-two Labor members who generally supported Barton's Protectionists, expressed the misgivings of the 'Little Australians'. He could, he said, understand those who wanted an Australian 'Monroe doctrine', but when America had asserted its right to exclude external powers from its region it had the people, wealth and power to back its claim.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Watson argued,

We here in Australia are not such a power as America then was. We are a mere handful of people, with an immense territory within the confines of the continent to administer and develop; and it will call forth every resource we can lay our hands on to bring the settlement and occupation of these lands to a successful issue. If ... we ... are going to undertake the defence of all outlying territories ... then I want the taxpayers to consider where the policy is going to land them. I ask the Government whether they themselves have considered what provision will be required for the necessary defences of these outlying positions.<sup>24</sup>

Watson pointed out a basic deficiency in the argument of those who said that Australian possession of British New Guinea was to prevent foreign powers from establishing bases close to Australia: the Germans and the Dutch were already in New Guinea and the French were in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides.<sup>25</sup> Australia was joining them, not excluding them.

Watson's doubts about Australia's capacity to assert its authority overseas was shared by Staniforth Smith. Having entered public life as mayor of Kalgoorlie before being elected a Senator for Western Australia, Smith had, by travel, reading and the social conversations he enjoyed, made himself an expert on the tropics. In 1903 he gathered his confident judgments into

a pamphlet: *British New Guinea with a Preface on Australia's Policy in the Pacific*.<sup>26</sup> Like Watson, Smith thought that Australia's 'extraterritorial aggrandisement' was 'premature'. It was, he wrote, unwise for Australia to abandon its 'natural frontier' of the sea, and the acquisition of New Guinea had violated the foremost founding declaration, 'that our Commonwealth shall remain for all time an inheritance only FOR THE WHITE RACES of the world'.<sup>27</sup> Just in case his readers were unaware of the importance of what he was asserting, Smith had 'FOR THE WHITE RACES' in capitals. In parliament, others had pointed to the contradiction of the white Commonwealth adding a territory that was home to several thousand black residents, but that did not lead members to reject New Guinea and it did not deter members from claiming that Australians would be more concerned for the welfare of New Guineans than other present or possible colonial powers.<sup>28</sup> In spite of Australia's lack of power to project its authority beyond the continent, the loss of convenient sea borders and a confusion of policies on race, Smith still wanted Australia to possess British New Guinea. And England was to be persuaded to gain control by 'friendly negotiation' of those other islands now in foreign possession. Australia, he said, had to have the 'buffer states' of islands. For Smith, the islands were Australia's defence from attack from the north: 'The comatose millions of Asia ... are being galvanised into life and [Smith again resorted to capitals] the PERIOD OF LETHARGY is being succeeded by a restless energy'.<sup>29</sup> Smith's fellow members of parliament, either because they thought it fulfilled an aspiration of a young nation or was regrettable but inescapable, agreed without a division to accept British New Guinea as a territory.

The Australian parliament still had to pass an act formally making British New Guinea a territory. The legislation changed the name of British New Guinea to Papua, set down the way the new territory was to be administered, and established some broad administrative aims. Most important among these was a determination to continue the British recognition of Papuan land rights. Long delayed in the parliament because of the aggressive advocates of temperance, state land ownership and land taxes, the Papua Act did not pass both houses until 1905 and it was not proclaimed in Port Moresby until 1906. The prolonged debates on the Papua Act, the hope of a new Australian nation to demonstrate it was different from Britain, and rumours of incompetent and violent officials in British New Guinea, all gave Australians the chance and

the desire to introduce new policies in their Papua. Atlee Hunt, head of the newly formed Department of External Territories, set out the options. One was to do nothing – simply 'remain content with the fact that foreign nations may not use the territory as a base from which operations against Australia might be organised'. But, Hunt pointed out, Australia had a responsibility to the 'inhabitants which cannot be evaded by any civilized nation'.<sup>30</sup> Hunt recommended that Australia:

Encourage the development of the country under European auspices by the employment of imported capital to be expended under European direction, employing native labour, and at the same time extend the influence of the Government until the whole Possession is brought under control.<sup>31</sup>

Hunt assumed that economic development might be slow, but the Royal Commissioners who visited Papua after Hunt were far more optimistic.

The three royal commissioners, Kenneth Mackay (chairman), William Parry-Okeden and Charles Herbert, saw land 'rich, virgin and fertile', streams 'ever flowing and pure as the sources from which they come', and climate that offered 'no serious risk' to the health of white settlers, and in any case everywhere was close to points suitable for restful hill stations.<sup>32</sup> Now, the Commissioners said, 'the hour has struck for the commencement of a vigorous forward policy'. And the coming of white settlers was going to be good for Papuans: they were to be woken from their 'lotus-eaters' dream' and the idleness that came from the change from stone to steel and from war to peace. Working for the white settlers would save Papuans from their 'indolent, apathetic state'.<sup>33</sup>

Kenneth Mackay, a keen volunteer soldier who had gone to fight in the Boer War in command of the New South Wales 6<sup>th</sup> Imperial Bushmen's Contingent and retained the rank of Colonel, had modest expectations for the people of Papua. At the Kwato mission he saw that Charles Abel had trained men to work as skilled craftsmen, but Mackay thought only a few Papuans could aspire to such heights. It was for the Papuan to do the unskilled work and to render the 'higher race' an 'affectionate respect', and in the conveniently complementary world that Mackay foresaw, the obligation on the white race was to deserve respect. But as he travelled across Papua, Mackay praised Papuans for one virtue. He had seen the Papuan police quickly throw a log bridge across a

creek and he had 'realised how useful such self-reliant, natural engineers they might be from a soldier's standpoint'.<sup>34</sup> After hearing a story of the bravery of the police at Tamata on the Mambare he wrote that there was no doubt that in Papua, Australia had 'splendid material for soldiers', and then added 'if led by men they respect and love'.<sup>35</sup> In their final report the commissioners said that Australia would be best able to defend Papua if it filled 'its at present empty acres with a white population'.<sup>36</sup> But, as it was unlikely that Australia would be left in 'undisturbed possession' of the Territory and the Australian settlers would be too few to defend their lands for some years, they would need help. How fortunate they were to have that help right there in the Territory:

Your Commissioners, having seen the splendid physique of the Berindere, Kiwai, and mountain tribes, their quickness to conform to the requirements of drill (as exemplified of the case of the Armed Native Constabulary) their splendid capabilities as transport carriers (as shown by the fact that two men can carry 50 to 70 lbs, slung on a pole, resting on their shoulders, over practically trackless ... mountains...), all in their opinion point to the fact that, if required, Papua can produce from 20,000 to 30,000 black troops equal to any at present serving in the Imperial Army.<sup>37</sup>

In support of their argument, the Commissioners pointed out that the Germans had already sent 150 New Guineans to fight for German imperialism in Africa. But, the Commissioners stressed, they did not want Papuans used overseas: they were to be called upon by Australia 'to defend herself against Eastern aggression'.<sup>38</sup> Again the commissioners had found that what they thought were the natural abilities of the Papuans were just what white settlers needed. And the flourishing of both black and white citizens was important, the commissioners said, because the Commonwealth had to demonstrate its fitness to rule before it could take over other areas from Britain and realise its 'true destiny ... [as] the paramount power in the Southern Seas'.<sup>39</sup>

By the time Papua was proclaimed a Territory of the Commonwealth on 1 September 1906 and Hubert Murray began his long occupation of Government House ('a most unpretentious bungalow') in 1907, Australia had radically changed its assessment of the place of New Guinea in Australia's defence. Where in 1884 the Australian colonies had feared the presence of a European power and in the event of war in Europe

they would have an enemy at the gate, now the new Australian nation feared a predatory Asian nation looking for space and wealth. Where in 1884 they had looked to Britain and British naval power, now the Australians themselves were accepting complete responsibility for the administration and some responsibility for the defence of Papua. Australians knew that they then had little capacity to project their power beyond the continent, but they also wanted to assert that assuming authority in Papua was just the first step in the realisation of an Australian destiny in the region. In accepting Papua as a Territory, Australia had raised fundamental questions about Australian identity: Would Australia one day include Papua as a state and if it did would the shape of the map of political Australia be forever in conflict with geographical Australia? If the defence of Papua was to be secured by Australian settlers who employed black labourers did that mean that in one Australian territory there was to be an economic and social order within a white Australia that had rejected Asian and Island labourers? Through much of the debate of the early twentieth century there was a consciousness of race: white Australia now saw a threat coming from Asia; white Australia had taken over a territory home to over 300,000 blacks; and white Australians would command black troops in defence of Australian territory against Asian invaders.

It is not surprising that the commissioners had warned of an 'Eastern' invader. In 1895 Kenneth Mackay had written one of the first Asian invasion novels: *The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia*. Mackay's novel, set in 1954, had the Chinese as the aggressors, and so did other fantasies of invasion written at the end of the nineteenth century, but as the Australians debated their policies for Papua they were reminded of changes to the north.<sup>40</sup> In both 1903 and 1906 a Japanese naval squadron visited Australian ports, and thousands had inspected their ships and watched them march through the streets. In between those visits the Japanese had destroyed the Russian fleet and inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Russians. In 1903, just before he left for his first appointment in British New Guinea, Murray wrote of the strange contradiction in his fellow Sydney-siders: they favoured the Japanese over the Russians, but they would not let the Japanese settle in Australia. Murray predicted that should Japan continue its rise as an international power, Australia would have 'endless trouble'.<sup>41</sup> The events described in the novels exploiting fear of an exotic enemy had now to be considered a possibility by Australian

defence planners. In 1913 an ambitious young army officer, Thomas Blamey, the first Australian to win entry to the British Staff College at Quetta in India, wrote his 10,000 word essay on Australia's basic strategic weakness: in the event of Britain being engaged in war in Europe, then Australia was vulnerable to an opportunistic power in the Pacific taking advantage of the absence of the British navy and attack.<sup>42</sup> As commander of the Australian Imperial Force and then as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces Blamey was to face just that situation in 1941 and 1942.

Blamey's 1913 outline of the danger of Japan was only one of several statements by military experts at that time. In a broad review of defence policy, Brigadier-General J.M.Gordon, Chief of the General Staff, gave the same warning about Australia's vulnerability should Britain be unable to come to Australia's aid. Colonel J.G.Legge, who was himself soon to be Chief of the General Staff did his sums: given the distance of Yokohama from Sydney, a Japanese fleet steaming at 12 knots would be there in 14.5 days.<sup>43</sup>

In response to Gordon, in 1913 Murray wrote a twelve page report on the defences of Papua. He pointed out the obvious: Papua was thought to be essential to the defence of Australia but it had no military forces or fortifications. If oil were found in Papua – and there were then hopes of exploiting oil reserves in the Papuan Gulf – then the significance of Papua in Commonwealth and Empire security would change, but whatever the case Murray wanted to raise a force of around 250 Papuans to serve under white officers. He dismissed prejudiced statements that the Papuans lacked courage by giving examples from the police and, while conceding that the Papuan might not make an engineer or artilleryman, he claimed that was simply because he had no experience in those fields. Murray completed his report with a comment on the Papuan policeman Corporal Sedu who had chosen to die with his Australian officer, John Green, rather than attempt to save himself: 'There are not many Sedus in any force whether black or white; but there are just as many in Papua as anywhere else'.<sup>44</sup> Nothing came of Murray's report, and Murray thought he might publish it, but that does not seem to have happened either.

## WORLD WAR I

On 8 August 1914, Murray responded to a radio message and issued a *Government Gazette Extraordinary* to tell the people of Papua

that a 'state of war exists between the United Kingdom and the German Empire'.<sup>45</sup> The very circumstances that the Australian colonists had feared in 1884 were a reality. Britain was at war in Europe and Australia shared a land border with the enemy, and that enemy had deep water ports, coaling facilities and a wireless station in New Guinea and a 'formidable' fleet somewhere in the Pacific.<sup>46</sup> Fearing that the Germans might attack the newly opened Port Moresby wireless station, Murray asked Melbourne whether he was to continue to resist 'at the risk of bombardment of Port Moresby'. Told to fight, Murray called upon volunteers among the Europeans to form a company of Armed Constabulary and the volunteers fortified the wireless station and had a few practices before Murray's instructions were changed: in the event of attack he, the Armed Native Constabulary, the new European Constabulary and any officials likely to be taken prisoner were to withdraw inland. They were not to use force except in their own immediate self-defence.<sup>47</sup> Australia accepted that it had done nothing to prepare Papuan defences and had little that it could deploy immediately. There were fewer than 300 in the Native Armed Constabulary and they were spread through ten administrative divisions; and the white settlers that were supposed to fill Papua's empty lands had not arrived. By mid 1914 there were just 1,186 European residents on Papua, half of them in the Central Division.<sup>48</sup> The enthusiasm stimulated by the change in administration and the optimism of the commissioners and others had petered out. By 1912, the area of leased land being forfeited was greater than the area of new leases being taken up, and Murray warned that the white population 'will probably never be large'.<sup>49</sup> The Australians had no white troops; and none of the potential force of 30,000 men of 'splendid physique' identified by the commissioners had been trained as soldiers.

The common border with German New Guinea was the site of one brief moment of anxiety in a world war. In October 1914 Frederick Chisholm, one of the two Australian government officers at Nepa, the station on the declining Lakekamu goldfield, discovered a German patrol just two days walk to the north. He sent a note telling the Germans that war had broken out, German possessions in the Pacific had been captured, and he invited them to come in and surrender. The Germans left quickly, three policemen staying to look after sick carriers. The Australian government officers and a few volunteer miners made a brief pursuit, captured the German police and two carriers and sent

them to Port Moresby as prisoners, and there Murray had no idea of their status. They could scarcely be prisoners of war as German New Guinea was already occupied by Australia.<sup>50</sup>

## VERSAILLES: A WIN AND A LOSS

On 10 September 1919, the Prime Minister, William (Billy) Hughes, rose to begin a two and a half hour speech to persuade members to approve the recently signed Treaty of Versailles.<sup>51</sup> Hughes had just returned from Paris to a hero's welcome for his aggressive presentation of Australian interests. He had rejected having Britain represent Australia or having Australia just being one member of a British panel, and when Australia was given 'separate and direct representation' that was, he claimed, when Australia was recognised as a nation. He had annoyed the sombre American President, Woodrow Wilson, with his opinionated irreverence but delighted representatives of smaller nations who circulated exaggerated stories about the 'Little Digger'.<sup>52</sup> Before the Parliament, Hughes was parading his own achievements as well as ensuring Australian endorsement of the treaty.

The Treaty of Versailles was, Hughes told the House, as long as Charles Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*, but 'not nearly as interesting'.<sup>53</sup> But it was also the 'charter of a new world', a world that could hope for peace. Within that charter, Hughes claimed, Australia had been able to 'maintain those ideals which we have nailed to the very topmost of our flagpole', and the one ideal that he nominated was 'White Australia'. To the Japanese who were most sensitive to Australia's rejection of the 'open door', Hughes said that Australians would 'say ... who shall enter and who shall not'.<sup>54</sup> It was almost the same choice of words used over eighty years later by the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, in the election following the rejection of the illegal immigrants and refugees on the *Tampa*. The preservation of White Australia was, Hughes 'ventured to say', his greatest achievement at the conference. Also, he said he had difficulty making the great powers understand that it was 'necessary for the great rampart of islands stretching around the north-east of Australia' to be held by Australia or by a country in which the Australians had 'absolute confidence'. Hughes fought for the right to annex ex-German colonies, and when that was denied, he argued for minimum restrictions on Australian control. He was most assertive about the need for Australia to be able to determine tariffs and immigration – New Guinea was to be no backdoor

to those wanting to undermine Australia's racial or economic policies. In the end, Hughes had accepted New Guinea as a C Class mandate from the League of Nations and this gave Australia the same right to make laws for New Guinea as it did for the mainland. The few reservations were, Hughes said, of no consequence. They included no sale of arms or alcohol to New Guineans, the prevention of slavery, no building of fortifications or raising of armies except in the immediate defence of the territory, and providing an annual report to the League.<sup>55</sup> As a result of the war and the negotiations, Australia, Hughes said, was 'safe'.

The Australians had thought that German New Guinea should have been theirs in 1884, and would have been theirs but for the hesitation and miscalculation of the British.<sup>56</sup> They thought it was part of the destiny of a young nation to assert its influence in the nearby islands. And now they could claim German New Guinea by right of conquest. On 11 September the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force had landed east of Rabaul, and in brief skirmishes before the Australians captured the wireless station and forced the surrender of all armed resistance on German New Guinea, six Australians, one German and thirty New Guinean police fighting for the Germans had died.<sup>57</sup> The Australians had carried out an 'urgent Imperial service' and had raised the union jack in Rabaul, but they had no doubt that they had taken and occupied German New Guinea for Australia.<sup>58</sup> The Australians could also press a moral claim on the Allies for the 60,000 Australians who had died in Europe and a claim for reparations from Germany for Australia's expenditure in cash and blood. If that case of might and right was inadequate the Australians thought they could appeal to necessity: the rest of the world should accept that the defence of their continent was dependent on control of the islands.

Once the Mandate had been officially received and the military administration transformed to civilian in May 1921, the Australians cleaned the map of many German names, dispossessed and repatriated German planters and traders, and allowed German missionaries – after a late reprieve – to stay. In the public service and in the sale of German plantations, Australian ex-servicemen were given preference: they deserved a nation's reward and they were the sort of men who were most likely to 'Australianise' the place and be able to defend it in time of emergency.<sup>59</sup> In spite of their confident actions, assertions of their right to possess German New Guinea, and Hughes' claims that the mandate had given

them all that they wanted, the Australians did not own northeast New Guinea. This was clear in Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles that set out the principles of the mandate system. The countries holding the mandates were fulfilling commitments 'on behalf of the League' of Nations; the 'development' of people 'not yet able to stand by themselves' was a 'sacred trust'; and it was the 'tutelage' of the indigenous people that was being 'entrusted' to the governing power. All those terms – 'on behalf of', 'trust' and 'not yet' indicated something less than outright possession and with a time limit. The references to 'development' and 'tutelage' of the local population put pressure on the policies of the nation holding the mandate.<sup>60</sup>

The reverend John Burton, soon to be general secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia with its stations in the New Guinea islands, warned that Australia was not the 'owner' of New Guinea, but a 'Trustee' and its officers were 'stewards of an estate belonging to others'.<sup>61</sup> P.D. Phillips, lecturer in politics at the University of Melbourne, said that the mandate system was so fraught with ambiguities it was possible that the 'equivocation' was deliberate. It was not just that Australia did not possess New Guinea, but that the number of possible claimants for sovereignty could fill an international courtroom. The claimants could be the Allied powers who had received the territories from Germany, the Council of the League of Nations, His Britannic Majesty who had accepted the mandate on behalf of the Commonwealth, Australia who exercised the mandate, or the mandated territory itself.<sup>62</sup> But what most disturbed many Australians was not a question of legality: it was the transformation of the Japanese from distant threat to greater threat and neighbour.

From its headquarters in Rabaul, the German administration had governed the Island Territory of the Caroline, Marshall and Mariana Islands. The British had asked the Australians to occupy these Micronesian islands as well as New Guinea, and the German Governor in Rabaul had, the Australians thought, surrendered all islands to them. But by the time the Australians had recruited a force to take German Micronesia (and even printed the postage stamps) the Japanese were there. Initially, the Japanese on Yap were prepared to hand over control to the Australians, but as they waited the Japanese, influenced by expansionists in the navy and popular pressure at home, decided to stay. Exploiting Britain's need for support from the Japanese navy, the Japanese soon had agreement that the islands were theirs until the end of the war, and by 1917 Britain

had further agreed to support Japan's claim to the islands at any peace conference. In spite of pressure from Hughes, at Versailles Britain kept to its agreement. Hughes, in making his strong arguments for annexation and then declaring that a C Class Mandate gave virtually all the rights of annexation, had guaranteed Japan those same rights when it received its mandate over the Caroline, Marshall and Mariana Islands. Suddenly the Japanese had advanced to the equator. The southern Caroline atolls of Kapingamarangi were just 400 miles from Kavieng in New Ireland. Where once Australians could have thought that the Americans in the Philippines and the British in Singapore might protect them, now Japan, the one Asian nation with the capacity to project its power overseas, was just beyond the horizon.<sup>63</sup>

Australian fears of Asian aggression were no longer just irrational projections of their own self-created fears. The Americans were also disturbed by Japanese strength and expansion in the Pacific, and in 1920 Australia's senior military officers told the government that Japan was the 'only potential and probable enemy'.<sup>64</sup> The Australian public needed no warning: they were already reporting Japanese spies photographing and sketching Sydney's foreshores – perhaps these Australians were yet to learn of the propensity of the Japanese traveller to record everything.<sup>65</sup> To curb the Japanese, the Australian government invested in its own defence (a surprising policy for a country emerging from an exhausting war); took comfort from, but had little influence on, the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 which limited Japanese, British and American naval power; and supported the British decision to build a major naval base at Singapore. None of these were adequate or sustained. The Australians did not maintain their expenditure on defence and anyway little of it went to the north of the continent let alone to the islands beyond; the Washington agreement gave America and Britain a total dominance in naval supremacy but in the western Pacific the Japanese were the major power, and the British delayed work on Singapore. In 1928 a naval and a military expert, both of whom chose not to have their names published, assessed the place of New Guinea in Australia's defence. They pointed out that Japan resented the White Australia policy, but it was, said the naval expert, 'vital' to Australia; the Japanese had a growing population and seemed to be in urgent need of space; and the Caroline Islands were the 'stepping stones' for an advance to the south.<sup>66</sup> For any attacking force the great asset in New Guinea was its many harbours, all necessary for an enemy attempting submarine or naval raids

or a major assault. Even if the League of Nations placed no restrictions on building bases in New Guinea and Australia was prepared to invest more in defence, Australia would probably be better off if it directed resources to Australia itself. A policy of defending just selected harbours in New Guinea was pointless as a potential enemy had alternatives. If the enemy occupied a New Guinea port, Australia could not do much about it until the Japanese fleet had been defeated and the threat to the Australian mainland had ended. The defeat of the Japanese fleet would depend on the British deploying major forces in the area. If the British were entangled in Europe and the Singapore base rendered ineffective then the

Commonwealth itself would be liable to attack ... And in such circumstances it would be most unwise to utilise any substantial portion of our forces in a vain attempt to provide for the local security of the large number of scattered islands and harbours which exist in the Territory.<sup>67</sup>

A matter-of-fact assessment, it nominated a threat and the circumstances in which it might be reality. The islands that Australians said that they had to possess to secure their own defence were beyond the capacity of Australians to defend. Australia's 'barrier', 'ramparts' and 'sentinel' islands were also an enemy's stepping stones. One question divided Australians: was an attack a distant possibility or a probability?

Australia had one outstanding expert on Australian defence and Japan, Edmund Piesse, graduate in science and law from the University of Tasmania and maths student at Cambridge. Appointed to the newly created Australian Intelligence Corps in 1909, he was immediately involved in assessing the Japanese threat. He continued to be worried about Japanese intentions through World War I, learnt Japanese so that he could read Japanese newspapers, and as Director of Military Intelligence wrote detailed studies of Japanese imperial ambitions. Piesse was a strong advocate of Australia having its own sources of information on which to base its foreign policy and in 1919 he himself was appointed head of the new Pacific Branch in the Prime Minister's Department. But from 1919 he began to change his views, suggesting that Australia modify its White Australia Policy so that it did not fuel Japanese resentment, and after visiting Japan he decided that Australia was of marginal interest to the Japanese. Having little impact on government policy, Piesse resigned at the end of 1923. Of those informed about Japan, Piesse had made the strongest statement about the benign aims of the Japanese, but others in government

and in the military believed that the Japanese fleet was then a distant rather than immediate threat.<sup>68</sup>

## THE SINGAPORE STRATEGY

As the Australians prepared their delegation for the 1937 Imperial Conference in London, they reassessed their increasingly dangerous world.<sup>69</sup> The United States, having announced that it would give independence to the Philippines, had signalled a change to the map to the north. Although the transfer of power might not take place for another eight years, Australians had to accept that the American barrier between themselves and Asia was to be diminished. Even if the United States retained Guam and Wake, those islands were lightly defended and isolated, and the Australians could not know if and in what circumstances the United States would guarantee the defence of an independent Philippines. Japan had demonstrated that it would use force to expand by attacking Manchuria in 1931; it had withdrawn from the agreements limiting its navy and refused to answer questions about whether it was building fortifications in its Mandated Islands; its government was increasingly under the control of the militarists and fascists; some Japanese openly advocated a 'southward advance'; and Japan and Germany had signed a pact, 'allegedly against Communism'.<sup>70</sup> Piesse, still out of government, wrote warnings that the Japanese government and its policies had changed, making Japan an immediate threat, and that Australia should look to its own resources for its defence.<sup>71</sup> At the same time Germany had proclaimed Hitler as Fuhrer, retaken the Rhineland, 'was rearming at full speed', and – of particular concern to the Australians – was talking about reclaiming lost colonies. In making the case to keep New Guinea, Sir George Pearce, the Minister for External Affairs, went back to 1883, pointed out the Australian forces had got rid of the 'menace' in 1914, and if the Germans returned there would be the added dangers to Australia because of the development of aircraft.<sup>72</sup> In the Senate, Pearce was explicit: the 'inviolability and integrity of our Australian territories is as much one of the cardinal aims of our people as is the White Australia policy'.<sup>73</sup> In 1935 in an unusually prolonged tactical exercise, Australian army officers gathered and committed their forces against an imagined major attack by 'Northland' on the east coast; the Australian troops with few and obsolete arms and supplied by horse-drawn carts were found inadequate.<sup>74</sup>

In spite of a resurgent Germany and an aggressive Japan, the Australians were not as alarmed as over forty years of self-warning should have made them. But they did go to the Imperial Conference with questions that they wanted answered: these concerned the aims of the British Empire in the event of war with both Japan and another 'first-class power', the security of the Singapore base, the chances of Japan being able to mount a major assault before Singapore was completed in 1942, and the 'validity of the assumption' that in the event of war in the Far East the British Main Fleet would arrive at Singapore within forty-two days.<sup>75</sup> The Australians were not going to London to meet the British as equals. They conceded that the British with their diplomatic and intelligence services had more sources of information, and they almost acknowledged the more doubtful proposition that British senior officers knew more about conducting a modern war; but the Australians had their interests to pursue and they did not necessarily coincide with British interests.

Before a sub-committee of British ministers and the British heads of the armed services, Sir Archdale Parkhill, Australian Minister for Defence, pressed his questions. He particularly wanted to know how long Singapore could hold out against a 'full scale frontal attack by the Japanese'. In the face of general assurances, he asked for a definite period. He pointed out that if Singapore could not hold out for more than seventy days then Australia would have to change its defence policy and concentrate on the development of those services most able to defend the continent. He also wanted precise answers on whether there were any circumstances in which an inadequate British Fleet would be sent to support Singapore. He was told that Singapore had the stores and the military strength to hold on and the fleet would arrive in time. Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Chatfield, gave his confident summary:

Singapore could be regarded as a first-class insurance for the security of Australia. If, however, he were to be asked whether Singapore was 100 per cent. secure or only 99.1 per cent. it would be impossible to give a categorical answer.<sup>76</sup>

Parkhill continued his persistent search for assurance and Sir Cyril Deverell, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, supported his naval colleague with the assertion that 'all our plans were based upon the fortress holding out'. Parkhill said he was 'satisfied' and the sub-committee ended its

meeting with a statement from the British that all the planned improvements to the defences of Singapore would be finished by 1940.<sup>77</sup>

As war came closer, Australian actions were based largely on the assumption that Singapore by its very existence would deter the Japanese, and if it was attacked, it could hold until sufficient of the British fleet arrived to turn the tide. Australia did not direct resources to the defence of Australia and its territories, and after war broke out in Europe in 1939 it committed most of its trained forces to Europe and the Middle East. But many Australian military officers, politicians and public servants had doubts about Singapore's strength and Britain's capacity to reinforce the island in all contingencies. Churchill gave Menzies what appeared to be his strongest guarantee of Australian security in the often quoted cablegram of 12 August 1940:

If, however, contrary to prudence and self-interest, Japan set about invading Australia or New Zealand on a large scale, I have explicit authority of Cabinet to assure you that we should then cut our losses in the Mediterranean and proceed to your aid, sacrificing every interest except only the defence position of this island on which all depends.<sup>78</sup>

Soon after, Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Commander-in-Chief of the Far East, was in Australia giving a completely false assessment of British strength in Singapore. The Japanese fighter aircraft, he said, were not as good as the Buffalo Brewster and the Japanese pilots not as well trained as the British. He repeated what he said was Churchill's assertion: 'We will not let Singapore fall'.<sup>79</sup> The Australians remained sceptical. Singapore had not been built, equipped or manned as they had hoped, and a British promise to come to the aid of Australia in the event of a 'large scale' invasion was of little value. An enemy would only be in a position to make such an invasion after it had secured all the islands and seaways to the north. It was a promise to help when it was too late. In London in April 1941, Frederick Shedden, the Secretary of the Defence Department, told Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, that for too long the Australians had accepted the 'general assurances' and that the claims about being able to relieve Singapore did 'not look very assuring'.<sup>80</sup>

While those charged with the defence of Australia committed themselves without faith to the Singapore shield, those Australians in Papua and New Guinea had no doubt they were at risk. In Port Moresby, Hubert Murray repeated his

predictions of a Japanese attack. During World War I he reported Australian concerns about growing Japanese strength, Japanese resentment of the White Australia policy and Britain's failure to support Australian interests.<sup>81</sup> At the end of 1919 he wrote to his brother with characteristic cynicism and pessimism from Port Moresby:

Our trouble here is the approaching war with Japan, which is to take place in 1921. Some think Great Britain will not help us, in which case I trust that we may go down fighting – but of course we can not win.... The naval people seem to think it very doubtful if we can win even with the British fleet.<sup>82</sup>

In his private correspondence with his family he kept reminding them that Japan was a 'constant nightmare', it would make 'short work of Australia', his 'fear of Japan swallows up any other anxiety', Britain would not fight Japan over Papua, and in 1939 on the eve of war with Germany he was up to his 'neck' preparing for a 'Japanese invasion'.<sup>83</sup>

In New Guinea the Administrator, Sir Walter McNicoll, guided an ordinance through the Legislative Council so that the administration could prevent the Japanese from setting up a new shipping line linking several New Guinea ports to Japan.<sup>84</sup> From 1937 government officers reported that the Japanese ships, *Caroline Maru* and *Takachiko Maru*, carried little cargo, called at ports where they neither loaded nor unloaded, and the crews were seen taking photographs, measuring depths, visiting aerodromes and buying maps and handbooks. In Rabaul, the Australians thought they saw Japanese naval officers, pretending to be merchant seamen and gathering intelligence.<sup>85</sup> The Government Secretary, Harold Page, when acting as administrator, warned that there were thirty-six Japanese then living in New Guinea and every one was a 'potential intelligence officer for Japan'.<sup>86</sup>

What was happening – or suspected to be happening – just over the horizon from Manus and New Ireland added to Australian worries. The Japanese population in Micronesia had increased from 3670 in 1920 to 60,000 in 1938, the islands were being 'Japanised' by promoting the Japanese language and excluding all foreigners from trade, and after withdrawing from the League of Nations, Japan had further 'jealously closed' the islands.<sup>87</sup> The Australians knew that Truk was being developed as a military base, but to what extent they were uncertain, and in 1938 Major-General John Lavarack, Chief of the General Staff, told the government that the Japanese

appeared to be developing offensive bases in the Carolines, including one at Kapingamarangi where there were said to be military personnel, a wireless station, and a coal dump.<sup>88</sup>

Australians not holding government office expressed their fears with more force and prejudice. E. George Marks in his 1933 paperback wrote that Australia, 'lonely sentinel in the Pacific, the envy of Asia's seething millions' would face a 'race war'.<sup>89</sup> The title of his book, *Pacific Peril* or 'Menace of Japan's Mandated Islands', and its cover with the rays of Japan's rising sun shining on Australia, was indicative of its content. The *Rabaul Times* warned its readers of Japan's plans to expand south and the magazine of the island planters and traders, the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, was blunt and frequent in its claims of Japan's territorial ambitions. In 1936, it said that soon the Japanese would extricate themselves from the war in China and 'turn south into the Pacific'. The west then had three options in its policies towards Japan: remain constantly armed and on guard, help the Japanese solve their trade and population problems, or go to war and 'exterminate the Japanese'.<sup>90</sup> In February 1942, after the Japanese were already in Rabaul, *Pacific Islands Monthly* claimed rightly and righteously that it was ten years since it 'foresaw this imminent Asiatic swarming and southwards thrust', and it continued to see the war – as it saw much of the island world – in terms of race. The Japanese, it said, were 'imbued with a quenchless hatred of our white skins and European culture'.<sup>91</sup> (The peoples of Manchuria, occupied in 1931, and China, attacked in 1937, may have found these references to 'Asiatic', and Japan's peculiar venom towards whites as hard to justify.)

By the end of the 1930s, the Australians in Rabaul were divided about whether Japan or Germany was the immediate threat. Perhaps it was the fact that so many of them occupied houses, places of business and offices that were recently built and used by Germans that made them sensitive to the claims of the strident but distant German nationalists. They feared that appeasers in Westminster or Geneva might force a compliant Australian government to placate Germany by agreeing to return New Guinea to its previous masters. They applauded the statements by Sir George Pearce that New Guinea was an integral part of Australia, and in 1938 they were reassured by the populist statements of Billy Hughes, then Minister for External Affairs, who said that handing colonies to Germany would be 'like giving a snack of sandwiches to a hungry tiger', and in Rabaul in the shadow of the smoking cone of Matupit volcano he proclaimed,

'On this rock we have got our Mandate ... and all hell is not going to take it away from us ... what we have we hold'.<sup>92</sup> Prime Minister Joseph Lyons might not have been pleased with Hughes' language or timing (it was just after Neville Chamberlain thought he might have obtained peace in our time), but he wrote to Dr R. Asmis, the German Consul-General in Sydney, assuring him that the 'principle underlying' the Minister's statement was in accord with government policy.<sup>93</sup> Still the citizens of Rabaul needed assurance. At a public meeting, 300 white residents supported petitioning the King and the Australian and British parliaments to prevent the return of New Guinea to Germany. They had no doubt where sovereignty lay: the Germans, they argued, had ceded the colonies to the victors and the League had 'nothing whatever' to do with it.<sup>94</sup>

The Australians in Rabaul were right to be worried about Australia's legal right and military capacity to hold New Guinea. In 1939 a committee chaired by Sir Fred Eggleston visited the territories as part of its enquiry into whether Papua and New Guinea should be amalgamated. In its report to parliament it said that 'when the inhabitants of New Guinea are fit for independence, the Commonwealth must be prepared to give it to them'.<sup>95</sup> They went further and said that when New Guinea was ready for independence the people of Papua would be equally ready and 'if independence is given to one it cannot be denied to the other'.<sup>96</sup> Murray disagreed, saying that in Papua the 'ultimate fate of the natives is as part of an Australian state'.<sup>97</sup> As war with Germany was declared in September 1939 the constitutional destiny of the Australian territories was still uncertain: Papua might or might not be on its way to becoming an Australian state, and New Guinea was still thought by some to be forever Australian and by others to be on the road to independence. In 1939 that road was so long that few then alive thought they would see its end. Murray agreed that it might seem 'ridiculous' that New Guinea would ever be ready for independence but he pointed out that 'we contemplate the independence of the Philippines, and in a hundred years the New Guinea natives might easily be the equal of the Philipinos of to-day'.<sup>98</sup>

By September 1940, the war in Europe had gone from phoney to Blitzkrieg, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the London Blitz. Britain was fighting desperately for survival, and sea, land and air battles were developing in the Mediterranean. Japan's government was fascist, dominated by the military, ready and equipped for bold, aggressive expansion, and it was taking

advantage of the collapse of the French to move further south into Indo-China. For Australia this was the realisation of their worst fears, fears they had expressed for over thirty years. The Singapore base was not as strong as planned, Britain was unable to provide more than token reinforcements, and Australia's defence strategy depended on a commitment to Britain, and Britain being able to respond should Australia itself be under threat. It was not merely a case of an Asian nation taking opportunistic advantage of conflict in Europe: from September 1940 the Japanese had joined Germany and Italy in the Tripartite Pact, committing Germany and Italy to support Japan's leadership of the 'new order' in East Asia.<sup>99</sup> And in New Guinea there was still a real German presence, and it was exaggerated by the suspicious Australians. In mid 1939 there were 1000 Germans and Austrians in Australian New Guinea, easily the most numerous group after the 3,500 British (Australians, New Zealanders and Britains) and 1700 Chinese. Among the 689 missionaries working in New Guinea, 438 were German or Austrian.<sup>100</sup> The Australians knew that some of the Germans in New Guinea were Nazis supporters, suspected that in Lutheran and Catholic mission areas they were telling New Guineans the Australians would soon be gone, and thought that in the event of an attack the enemy would have ready access to guides and interpreters.<sup>101</sup> McNicoll also sent reports to Canberra that German missionaries might be sending weather reports to the German navy, receiving mysterious boxes that could contain arms, and building airstrips where they not needed to serve the mission.<sup>102</sup>

The extent to which the Australians had acted contrary to self-interest by committing themselves to the Singapore strategy was obvious. By the end of 1941 they had over 100,000 fully trained and equipped servicemen overseas and almost none at home. They had almost no frontline bombers or fighters in Australia, and if they were to use what ships and troops they could muster for defence of the homeland, they would operate largely without air support. On the evidence of what had so far happened in World War II that was going to make success – or survival – on land or water very difficult. Little had been done to deploy troops or build fixed defences in north Australia. In Darwin in 1936 there was a garrison of eighty-eight men and 4 six-inch guns – a greater calibre was required. Early in 1939, the 231 strong Darwin Mobile Force arrived and just as war broke out in Europe a RAAF squadron equipped with obsolete aircraft began operating from the civil airport. No significant fighting

ships were stationed in Darwin and facilities were limited.<sup>103</sup> There was slight change in the Darwin defences in the first year of the war. Less had been done in Port Moresby and Rabaul. In February 1939 Major Kenneth Chalmers arrived in Port Moresby and by March he had about forty men of the 13<sup>th</sup> Heavy Battery erecting two six inch guns on Paga Point. After four months they had their guns in place, and by then the artillery had entered a cricket team in the local competition, bringing the total of competing teams to four.<sup>104</sup> After fifty-five years of British and Australian control of a territory said to be essential to their defence, the Australians had deployed their first unit to Papua.

Major Chalmers and Captain K. Travers almost immediately asked to be able to recruit Papuans into the Heavy Battery. Murray, who in 1913 had suggested establishing a Papuan unit, supported the gunners. At the end of 1939, the first Papuans – at lower rates of pay – were enlisted into an Australian army unit. That decision led directly to the formation of the first company of the Papuan Infantry Battalion in mid-1940. At the end of 1940, the PIB had a strength of 6 white officers and NCOs and about 130 Papuans.<sup>105</sup> There was some development of the Seven Mile airfield (later Jackson's) and flying boat and naval facilities in the Harbour, but until the arrival of a company of the poorly trained 49<sup>th</sup> battalion in July 1940 and the rest of the battalion in March 1941, the battery, the PIB, the Royal Papuan Armed Constabulary (380 men spread through the Territory) and what white volunteers could be mustered were Port Moresby's only defenders. At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour there were about 1000 lightly equipped and under-trained Australian servicemen in Papua.

In Rabaul there were plans but little implementation. The 1937 'Blue Book' plan and the 'Z' scheme drafted by Colonel John Walstab, superintendent of police, were designed to draw on New Guinea's own resources and included a New Guinea Native Infantry Regiment with an establishment of over 3000, the raising of labour units, the deployment of the police and the calling up of white citizen forces.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to Papua, in New Guinea the Australians could not bring themselves to arm New Guineans. The Australians were inhibited by the terms of the Mandate, and even when the League was obviously of no relevance, they were still unwilling to train and arm large numbers of New Guineans for war. As the Japanese landed in Rabaul, one of the last acts of some Australian field officers was to disarm their police – others

took independent action to continue to work alongside their armed police.

The first Australian troops arrived in Rabaul in March and April 1941, and Rabaul, too, got its 2 six-inch guns. By the end of 1941, there were around 1,400 Australian troops in and around Rabaul, small numbers of Independent troops on Manus, New Ireland and Bougainville and an RAAF squadron with ten aircraft (six Wirraways and four Hudsons) of slight offensive capacity at the Lakunai and Vunakanau airfields on the Gazelle Peninsula. Of the plans for local defence, all that existed was the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, numbering about eighty men at Rabaul and several hundred in the Morobe District, and the coastwatching service.<sup>107</sup>

When the decision was made to put the six inch guns on Rabaul's Praed Point, they were intended to protect the town from a German raider. At the end of 1939, the immediate threat to Rabaul was thought to be an attack by a ship or ships, perhaps carrying a reconnaissance aircraft and supporting a landing party of 200-600. All would be gone inside forty-eight hours. To meet the marauding ships, the Australians could then marshall the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and nearly 400 police (including bandsmen and recruits) equipped with rifles and two maxim guns which on the sounding of an alarm were to be mounted on a utility.<sup>108</sup> The possibility of German raider bombarding or briefly occupying the town was not unreasonable. At the end of 1940 the *Komet*, *Orion* and the supply ship *Kumerland*, had sunk ships off New Zealand, fired on Nauru and landed over 500 captured crew members and passengers on Emirau off New Ireland.<sup>109</sup> But even before the guns had arrived at Rabaul, the Australians knew that the Japanese were likely to mount a much greater attack. In August 1940 the Australian assessment from its Northern Command was that if Japan entered the war Rabaul could expect the 'heaviest scale of attack'.<sup>110</sup> In an appreciation made in February 1941 the Commandant of the 8<sup>th</sup> Military District (including Papua and New Guinea) speculated whether the 'potential enemy, JAPAN,' would launch isolated raids by cruisers of disguised merchantmen or attack main centres as a preliminary to holding all of Papua and New Guinea. But decided that Japan was most likely to make an 'attack by all arms on suitable ports which could be used as bases for operations against AUSTRALIA'.<sup>111</sup> In April 1941, three weeks after he landed in Rabaul and before most of his troops had arrived, Howard Carr, commander of the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> battalion, wrote that there was still a chance of a raider shelling

the town, but if Japan entered the war he would face a force 'vastly superior in strength to [his] own'.<sup>112</sup> In May, Northern Command warned of the speed and efficiency of Japanese landings in China – an observation that had already appeared in other appreciations – and said that by establishing bases in the islands Japan might attempt to isolate Australia. The predictions about the strength and intent of the Japanese forces were becoming more precise – and more accurate.<sup>113</sup>

Australia had moved to enlist the United States in its defence of New Guinea before Prime Minister John Curtin made his New Year statement that 'Without any inhibitions of any kind I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'.<sup>114</sup> In October 1941, Curtin as Minister for Defence Co-ordination had taken a proposal to cabinet. The previous government, he said, had considered plans for the United States to contribute to the development of Rabaul by supplying more coastal, anti-aircraft and machine guns. For its part Australia was to provide another 1600 men, doubling their commitment to Rabaul, and both nations were to build Rabaul as a base from which the United States could operate 'against the Caroline Islands and Japanese lines of communication'.<sup>115</sup> The initial plans had been delayed while Rabaul's security against the smouldering Mautipit volcano was assessed. Now it was decided to go ahead. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, the Australian naval board reconsidered the proposal and decided that Rabaul was 'too exposed for our slender resources' and the ships already at sea carrying equipment were diverted.<sup>116</sup> The attempt to build an alliance between Australians and Americans in New Guinea had come to nothing: Rabaul was to be the strongest of the Japanese bases in the southwest Pacific.

After the Hudsons and Wirraways of 24 Squadron arrived at Rabaul in December 1941 the purpose of the force at Rabaul was to protect an 'advanced observation line'.<sup>117</sup> On 18 December a Hudson from the 'upper drome' (Vunaknau) left on a bombing and reconnaissance flight of Kapingamaringi and on the same day two Japanese aircraft flew a reconnaissance flight over Rabaul. Other demanding long-range flights left – or staged through – Rabaul, but when the Japanese increased their bomber and fighter raids in January, the out-numbered and out-moded Australian aircraft were, as Squadron Leader W.D. Brookes reported, 'wiped out for all practical purposes'. Just three aircraft were in a condition

to be flown out on the 21 and 22 January 1942, and most of the airmen were lifted off the east coast of New Britain by flying boat or ship.<sup>118</sup>

In one year the plan for the defence of Rabaul had gone through several sharp changes. It had started with local New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, the armed police and maxim guns on utilities prepared to meet a landing party from a raider; the 2 six-inch guns and garrison had strengthened the force against raiders but from arrival had to deploy to meet an overwhelming Japanese assault; the proposal to develop a base to be used by the American navy meant the land force was to be doubled and committed to the defence of the harbour; after the arrival of 24 Squadron the troops were to defend the airfields of the 'forward air observation line'; and when the airmen withdrew, the 1400 men of Lark Force faced the Japanese landing simply as, the Australian government brutally conceded, 'hostages to fortune'.<sup>119</sup> The Australians had no capacity to reinforce, supply or withdraw them, or rescue those who survived the overwhelming Japanese assault on 23 January 1942.

The Australians had three decades of warning about the possible inability of Britain hard-pressed in Europe to send a major naval force to the Pacific, the chances of an opportunistic Japan advancing south, and the possible ineffectiveness of the Singapore base to deter the Japanese. In the event, it was not just that the Japanese took Singapore in a week after their landing on the north of the island, but that Singapore was almost irrelevant. The Japanese captured Rabaul on 23 January, before the Japanese had even reached the south of the Malay Peninsula and over three weeks before the fall of Singapore. By its location, a strong Singapore might have been an excellent base to stop the Japanese advancing into the Indian Ocean and attacking British interests in Burma, India and Ceylon. But it was simply not a barrier between the Australian and Japanese mandated territories. For Singapore to have been effective in the defence of Australia it had to be known to be strong, able to withstand the reality of an assault, and service a combined air and sea force that could operate many miles to the east. Singapore was none of these.

By January 1942 the Australians had a defence strategy that they knew was ineffective. Their trained forces were in Europe and the Middle East; they were dependent on a Britain that could not help; they had begun to turn to an America that was not yet ready to help; they had not developed forces appropriate to home defence; and they had distributed over 27,000 men and women to the north, many in small forces

on Ambon, Timor, Papua and New Guinea, and all beyond Australia's capacity to support or relieve. Of those men and women, 23,000 became prisoners and over 2000 were killed in losing battles.<sup>120</sup> While white women (other than missionaries and nurses) and children were evacuated from Papua and New Guinea, some 500 foreign civilians died in Papua and New Guinea. About 250 of them were missionaries, and the Australian government officers also suffered high losses. In New Guinea six heads of government departments and eight of the fifteen members of the legislative council died.<sup>121</sup> Only on Timor and Bougainville and inland from Lae and Salamauw did the Australians fight the sort of war that their own experts (and many civilians with common sense) told them they should fight: make a brief stand against the landing force, withdraw, observe, report, and mount the occasional guerrilla attack. In January 1942 the Australians were unprepared; they were certainly not surprised.

On 23 January 1942, the day that the Japanese occupied Rabaul, Dr H.V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, in the absence of Curtin, inserted in a cable to Churchill that 'after all the assurances' Australia had been given a decision not to reinforce but to evacuate Singapore would be seen as an 'inexcusable betrayal'.<sup>122</sup> As Earle Page, the Australian representative in London, reported, Churchill 'went off the deep end'; and since then there has been debate about whether Australia was 'betrayed' over Singapore. There are two parts to the debate that are sometimes confused. The first is the immediate question whether Evatt at that time and in those circumstances should have chosen those words. With the limited information that he had, the few people consulted and the likely response to his language, Evatt should have spoken less aggressively. The second is the broader issue of whether Australia was betrayed by the British over the Singapore strategy. Australia was certainly misled. Given the wording of some of the British communications and the positions held by the authors, it is also difficult to believe that the Australians were not deliberately misled. At the same time it has to be said that the British were fighting desperately for their own survival, and the fact that they diverted any resources to Singapore was remarkable. The Australians should have had more confidence in their own assessments, and their late demands for the reinforcement of Singapore only forced the surrender and suffering of more troops. It could be argued that the Australians were complicit in their own betrayal, but they were betrayed.<sup>123</sup>

## THE LAST DOMINO

By 1945 Australians believed that the battles of a world war had confirmed the importance of New Guinea in the defence of Australia: the Japanese had established their bases in New Guinea; the southward advance of the Japanese had been stopped in the land, sea and air battles of New Guinea and the Solomons; and Australians and Papuans and New Guineans had formed a new relationship, manifest in the images of the Fuzzy Wuzzy angels and the Pacific Islands Regiment.<sup>124</sup> The immediate assumption was that Australians would commit more of their defence effort to New Guinea. Thomas White, who had served Australia in two wars and been a minister in the Lyons Government, told the House of Representatives:

New Guinea will always be an important place from a strategic point of view, and no doubt after the war we shall have to garrison it with troops, lay down air-fields and make other provision which will enable the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force to operate from that region instead of being wholly based in Australia.<sup>125</sup>

It was as though Australia had to make up for the inadequacies of 1942, and Australia was not now inhibited by the conditions of the League of Nations mandate. Under the trusteeship agreement with the United Nations, Australia had the same power to legislate for the defence of New Guinea as it did for mainland.<sup>126</sup> But in the postwar Australia did not direct men or materiel to Papua and New Guinea, and much of the infrastructure of war soon deteriorated or was recycled into the makeshift postwar buildings of Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul and other centres. For the next thirty years the metal strips of Marsden matting that had once converted grass airstrips into all-weather airfields reappeared in fencing, guards on road bends, and buildings.

The strategic importance of Papua New Guinea remained fixed in Australian minds, but the immediate threat of invasion from the north had declined sharply. In the Pacific, the United States was dominant at sea and in the air, and it had taken over the Micronesian Territories of Japan. With Micronesia designated a strategic area, the Americans were given authority to fortify the islands and the United Nations could not end or change American authority under the trusteeship agreement. Across the horizon from New Guinea were now the protective bases of an ally and superpower, not the bases of a potential enemy. Briefly, the Australians thought American

power might extend south of the equator. As the Australian postwar civil administration gradually took control from the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, its field officers encountered some 2000 Americans still stationed on the vast naval base on Manus. Eighteen months earlier Seeadler Harbour had been one of the biggest bases in the Pacific, rivalling Pearl Harbour, and the assembly point for much of the push north to the Philippines.<sup>127</sup> The Americans on the base resisted coming under Australian control, and at the same time the American government asked that their forces might retain use of the base. The Australian Department of Defence supported allowing the Americans to stay, but the conditions imposed by the Americans who wanted exclusive use of the base whenever they wanted it but for the Australians to maintain it at other times, were not acceptable to the Australians. Also, American interest in the base may have been declining as fast as the climate and salvage teams were degrading the rapidly built facilities: the Americans decided they had enough bases north of the equator.<sup>128</sup> Later, the Liberal Party opposition would berate the Chifley government for failing to keep the Americans in Manus, but John Dedman, a minister in the Curtin government and Minister for Defence 1946-49, has argued that the Americans' terms would have been equally unacceptable to the Liberals, and American budget cuts made it unlikely that they would have stayed. They did not retain rights to bases in British Guadalcanal, New Zealand Samoa or French Noumea.<sup>129</sup> Evatt had hoped to bind the United States to the southwest Pacific through a Pacific pact, but it was his successor, Percy Spender, Minister for External Affairs in the Menzies Government, who successfully negotiated the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. This, Australia hoped, meant that in the event of an armed attack on one nation 'or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific' then the others 'would act to meet the common danger'.<sup>130</sup>

As Australians looked north in the immediate postwar, they could reasonably believe that they had obtained security for at least a generation. Germany was no longer a threat and Japan's military might was destroyed and its rebuilding curtailed by the Japanese constitution and, more significantly, by the Japanese acceptance, even embrace, of pacifism. No Asian nation had the capacity to transport the land strength of its armies across oceans, and in any case the United States naval and air forces were dominant in the Pacific and had a secure hold over the islands and the island military bases to the immediate

north of New Guinea. Although conscious of their dependence on the United States, the Australians were still committed to Britain. In 1950 Spender in a major review of Australian foreign policy said, 'the head and corner stone of the British Commonwealth is the United Kingdom, and ... our security is to a large extent dependent upon its strength and influence in world affairs'.<sup>131</sup> The British connection was then based on both sentiment and reality: the British were then still in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo to the northwest, and in the Solomons, New Hebrides and Fiji on the east. The formal commitment of the United States and Britain to the security of the region was realised in 1954 with the formation of the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO).<sup>132</sup>

In the postwar, it was when the Australians looked west from Port Moresby or Wewak that they saw danger. The threat was global and local. Spender explained that the 'ultimate objective' of the Soviet Union was a 'universal form of Communism with Moscow as the controlling centre'.<sup>133</sup> China was Communist, and while it was uncertain how China would behave, it could 'foment disaffection and disorder' beyond its borders through the many Chinese living overseas and the strong Communist parties and unrest in Southeast Asia. Spender warned:

Should the forces of communism prevail and Vietnam come under the heel of Communist China, Malaya is in danger of being outflanked and it together with Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, will become the next direct object of further Communist activities.<sup>134</sup>

In simplistic terms, this was unified Communism on a world mission and the countries of Southeast Asia were in danger of falling like dominoes.

When he came to consider New Guinea, Spender repeated long held beliefs that were thought to have been confirmed in the recent war: the islands were the 'last ring of defence against aggression' and New Guinea was an 'absolutely essential link in the chain of Australian defence'. Spender asserted that Australia had an interest in events in all of the island of New Guinea, and should any change take place in the west, Australia might not 'adopt a purely passive role'. Although guarded in what he said, there was no doubting Spender's meaning. The Republic of the United States of Indonesia had been proclaimed in December 1949, but the Netherlands had retained control of West New Guinea, its fate to be determined by negotiations between the

Netherlands and Indonesia. Spender was making it clear that Australia had a direct interest in what happened in West New Guinea, and he implied what he had already said in Cabinet: Australia opposed the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia. Spender also suggested to his cabinet colleagues that Australia might try to join the Dutch in a joint administration, perhaps as joint trustees.<sup>135</sup> As Spender and many other Australians saw the world, if Indonesia held West New Guinea Australia would share a long land border with a new, turbulent, unpredictable nation of 70,000,000, and if the Indonesian domino fell then international Communism and the Cold War had reached that porous border.

Acting on the assumption that Australia had a right to a voice in the negotiations between Indonesia and the Dutch over West New Guinea, Spender told the Dutch, British and Americans of Australia's 'vital interest' and that it was ready to play a 'more positive role'.<sup>136</sup> When in April 1950 it looked as though the Dutch were likely to leave West New Guinea, Spender went further saying clearly that Australia could not accept Indonesian control and if the Dutch thought they should leave then it was better they hand authority to Australia to administer West New Guinea 'along with the Territory of Papua and the trust Territory of New Guinea'.<sup>137</sup> The Americans and the British quickly told the Australians to leave negotiations to the Dutch and the Indonesians, and that any direct Australian intervention was likely to make the issue more complicated.<sup>138</sup> The Dutch decided to stay in West New Guinea, making Australia's strong stand irrelevant. Through most of the rest of the 1950s the Australians encouraged the Dutch to stay, argued against the Indonesian claims at international meetings, supported the idea of keeping the dispute in 'cold storage' so that the status quo might endure, and attempted to isolate the West New Guinea issue from the rest of their relationship with Indonesia.<sup>139</sup>

Strangely, the thought that they might share a long land border with a turbulent nation, and even that international communism might reach the border, did not persuade Australians to build substantial bases or fortifications in the east. The Pacific Islands Regiment was reactivated in 1951, again as a unit of the Australian army with Australian officers and specialist servicemen, but ten years later there were still fewer than 700 Papua New Guineans in the unit.

## THE INDONESIAN BORDER

By 1960 Australian policy towards, and perception of, West New Guinea had changed. Indonesia's armed forces had increased in strength and possessed advanced equipment (their Soviet-supplied aircraft and ships were superior to Australia's); and the power of the PKI, the Indonesian Communist party, had grown, and in Laos and Vietnam the Communists were advancing. Australia no longer felt able to make dogmatic statements and no longer demanded a voice in any settlement. The Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, personally less belligerent than Spender, assured the Indonesians that Australia would accept an agreement reached freely and peacefully by the Indonesians and the Dutch.<sup>140</sup> In a long paper prepared while Casey was Minister but presented to Cabinet after he resigned, the Department of External Affairs set out what it thought Australia should do.<sup>141</sup> It should encourage the Dutch to stay in West New Guinea and use all means short of force to stop Indonesia gaining control. But neither of these policies were to be pursued if they prejudiced relationships with the United States and Britain, and an earlier Cabinet note of January 1959 had to be kept in mind: 'the strategic importance of Indonesia is of greater importance to the United States and to Australia than Netherlands New Guinea'.<sup>142</sup> West New Guinea was important to Australian security, but not the most important. If the Dutch stayed then Australia should 'envisage, facilitate and encourage ultimate voluntary political association of the East and West New Guinea people'. If the Dutch decided to leave then Australia should 'seek a maximum voice' in the administration of the West and 'keep open the possibility of ultimate unification of New Guinea'.

Among the many problems faced by the Australians should they adopt the policy proposed by the Department of External Affairs was the fact that they could not publicly announce what they wanted. To advocate the union of New Guinea would have antagonised the Indonesians and any suggestion of Australia extending its control west would have raised the suspicions of the ex-colonial powers in the United Nations. All the Australians could have done was keep asserting that the people of West New Guinea should have the right to self-determination, and that there should be increased cooperation between the Dutch and the Australian administrations. The Department of External Affairs paper thought Australia might – at best – have fifteen or so

years of Dutch rule to gradually 'promote a popular sense of geographic and racial unity'.

Cabinet was not persuaded to pursue the vision of a united New Guinea. Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, was unenthusiastic, and thought that if there was to be Melanesian unity then it should start by bringing the Australian territories and the British Solomons together.<sup>143</sup> Cabinet reaffirmed its policy: Australia would accept a settlement negotiated between Holland and Indonesia, it would not use force to assist the Dutch, and relations with Indonesia, the USA and Britain were all of greater strategic importance than the fate of West New Guinea. And those priorities were quickly put to the test with Sukarno making increasingly bellicose threats, and infiltrators and paratroopers landing on West New Guinea. Without allies, the Dutch had no choice but to accept the conditions of the New York Agreement; and West New Guinea passed to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority, then rapidly to the Indonesians in 1963 with the face-saving proviso of an act of free-choice for the West New Guineans – by then West Irianese – in 1969.

The border between west and east New Guinea that had been indistinctly marked and little patrolled, now became one of the significant arbitrary land borders in the world. It was where Indonesia and Southeast Asia ended and the Australian territories and Oceania began; the border that had once divided people of a common culture was becoming increasingly a dividing line between cultures – lingua francas, religions, and government and bureaucratic styles. Almost every year from 1969 there have been incidents – refugees crossing the border or being repatriated, and Indonesian troops pursuing or firing at alleged guerrillas or accidentally crossing the border. As Indonesian strengths and policies were – in Australian eyes – less predictable than the Dutch, Australia could be less confident that a potential enemy would not obtain a base in the west of New Guinea. If that was true, then Australia's argument for holding the east of the island had weakened.

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S INDEPENDENCE: AUSTRALIA'S SECURITY**

During the 1960s Australia was obviously increasing the pace of political development in Papua New Guinea, but it was not until 1968 that Australia made it clear that Papua and New

Guinea were to be treated as one. Both were on the road to self-government, and while some 'special relationship' with Australia might be worked out in future, Papua New Guinea was not going to be a state of the Commonwealth. By 1971 Australia's stated goal was independence and the timetable for full internal self-government had shortened. Whichever party was in government in Australia, power was to be transferred sometime in the life of the House of Assembly elected early in 1972.<sup>144</sup> While there were Papua New Guineans who advocated self-government and 'home rule' had been a central plank of the Pangu Pati, independence had not been an issue at the 1968 or 1972 elections: much of the initiative to establish the independent nation of Papua New Guinea had come from Australia. The island 'ramparts', the area that had been proclaimed 'vital' to Australian defence through ninety years, were to be set free.

Australia's readiness to abandon a basic assumption about its own security came from a general review of defence policies and from particular developments within Papua New Guinea. This was a time of the withdrawal of the troops from Vietnam, already underway before Gough Whitlam came to power in 1972; a reduction in Australian forces in Singapore and Malaya and an indication that even more would be coming home; and for the first time since the Australians went into action in Korea in 1950 it looked likely that no Australians would be deployed in operations to the north. This was a time of no major threat for ten – even fifteen – years. With the fading of the menace of Germany, Japan and international communism, this was the first time since the Empire had announced the acquisition of British New Guinea that Australia had no identifiable enemies with the capacity to endanger the continent. Even in the remote possibility of a major conflict, inter-continental missiles and submarine launch pads reduced the utility of island harbours. Australian defence planners began to talk of increased self-reliance, of ensuring the defence forces were designed to act in Australian interests, and policy was not to be based on the assumption that Australian forces were to be 'sent abroad to fight as part of some other nation's forces'.<sup>145</sup> Reduced to slogans, this was the change from 'forward' to 'continental' defence. The vocabulary used by Australians about the place of Papua New Guinea in their defence changed from 'vital' and 'essential' to 'abiding' and then linked Papua New Guinea with other neighbouring countries that were of 'close concern'.<sup>146</sup> In Australia's broad planning, there was as much concern about

obligations to defend Papua New Guinea before and immediately after independence as there was about the place of Papua New Guinea in the defence of Australia.<sup>147</sup>

Australia's broad strategic assessment allowed it to leave Papua New Guinea: developments within Papua New Guinea told those Australians concerned with defence that they should go. In 1972 there was still a high dependence on Australians in Papua New Guinea's armed services. In the police there were seventy-seven Papua New Guineans and 171 overseas commissioned officers. Of the forty-eight police stations spread through Papua New Guinea just eleven were commanded by Papua New Guineans, and at police headquarters there were fifty-two overseas officers and eleven Papua New Guineans.<sup>148</sup> In the army, soon to be part of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, there were over 600 Australians in a total force of 3,436, the Australians being most significant as officers and in positions requiring specialist skills.<sup>149</sup> If the armed services were to use force within Papua New Guinea then the civilian authorities and most senior commanders would be Australian – that was inescapable until Australia discharged its obligations to the United Nations for its New Guinea trusteeship – but so would many of the support and field officers. For an Australian commanded force to shoot down significant numbers of Papua New Guineans in the international climate of the early 1970s would have resulted in a wave of public revulsion within Australia and opprobrium across the globe. It would have been extremely damaging to Australia's standing in the region, especially among the numerous ex-colonies; it would have diminished Australia's capacity to ensure a peaceful transition of Papua New Guinea from territories to nation; and it might have led to reaction and increasing entanglement.

In the early 1970s there was every chance that Australians would be required to use force. At the end 1971, Les Johnson, the Australian Administrator in Port Moresby, wrote to the Minister: 'there has been a growing disregard for the established law and those administering it, which has resulted in a substantial increase of violent crime'.<sup>150</sup> He was conscious of the growing numbers of *raskols*, barred windows, electronic alarms and fences in the towns and the resurgent tribal warfare in the Highlands. Local Courts in the Highlands heard 22,380 cases in the year 1971-1972 involving offences against public order, a 25% increase over the previous year.<sup>151</sup> In 1972 in reported incidents of rioting involving more than fifty people in the Western Highlands eighteen were killed,

282 injured, and ten times the police had used firearms or tear gas.<sup>152</sup> Although the violence was in a remote area and under-reported in the press, it was clearly on a scale that the Australian administration could not ignore, but to reimpose the central government's authority was likely to lead to confrontation. It was not going to be like the earlier 'pacification'; already government field officers were complaining of open defiance 'virtually unheard of in the early 1960s'.<sup>153</sup>

From 1969, the Mataungan Association on the Gazelle Peninsula was demonstrating its capacity to bring together crowds of over 20,000 to protest against Australian policies and make demands for land. The government had to call out over 1000 police to 'protect property and support the legally-established council'.<sup>154</sup> In July 1970 when John Gorton addressed a crowd in Rabaul 'he became probably the first ... Australian Prime Minister who felt it necessary to carry a revolver to a public meeting'.<sup>155</sup> Soon after Gorton's return to Australia, David Hay, the Administrator in Port Moresby, believing the situation on the Gazelle to be 'tense and explosive', formally asked for authority to call out the Pacific Islands Regiment to support the police.<sup>156</sup> After some negotiation in which the Minister for the Defence, Malcolm Fraser, initially opposed the request, the Governor-General signed the approval.<sup>157</sup> When Les Johnson replaced Hay as Administrator the threat of violence was still high and Johnson wrote himself an undated authority to call out the army:

From reports received by me today from Rabaul I am satisfied that a confrontation or serious incident has occurred which in my judgment threatens or shows loss of control of the situation by the police. I therefore requisition such military forces as you consider to be necessary for the maintenance of public peace in the Gazelle Peninsula and in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.<sup>158</sup>

On Bougainville the secessionist movement clearly expressed the will of many people on the island, and it gathered strength by articulating opposition to the Panguna copper mine. The only possible response of the Australian administration was, as Johnson said of the Mataungan movement, 'a continuation of a policy of containment until a national Papua New Guinea Government inherited this legacy of colonialism'.<sup>159</sup> That was what the Australian administration managed to do, but senior officials knew that they were close to the mistake, deliberate political ploy or mass emotion that transformed a crowd into a rampaging mob, a hail of reactive gunfire and an

intractable round of violence. The fact that the independent government of Papua New Guinea eventually faced a ten year war on Bougainville demonstrated the strength of one movement that had to be contained or accommodated.

On the Indonesian border the refugees, the operations of the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*), Indonesian demands for the right to cross the border in 'hot pursuit' and the proximity of Papua New Guinean civil and army patrols were always likely to lead to unplanned violence. In 1968 the Minister for External Territories, Charles Barnes, explained what had happened when Indonesian troops chased refugees to Wutung village just on the Australian side of the border: 'During the incursion, the Indonesian party fired shots at the Officer-in-Charge of Wutung Patrol Post, Mr A. Troy, two native constables and the station interpreter, none of whom were armed. It also appeared that the party conducted a house-to-house search of a Wutung hamlet'.<sup>160</sup> Given the reports of violence in Irian Jaya, the presence of armed patrols commanded by Australians near the border and the frequent border crossings the chances of an 'incident', even an 'international incident' poisoning relations between Australia and Indonesia, were high.

By the early 1970s, then, the importance of fixed land bases in a major conflict had declined, there seemed no definable external threat to either Australia or Papua New Guinea, and if Australia stayed in Papua New Guinea then it risked being embroiled in violence that would damage its record as a colonial power, diminish its international standing and leave an independent Papua New Guinea with a peace to be brokered and maintained. In terms of Australia's interests in its own security, Australia could leave, and there were reasons why it should.

## SECURITY AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

Through the 1980s Australia continued to assert that an independent Papua New Guinea was strategically important to Australia. Paul Dibb in his review of defence in 1986 wrote that if a 'potentially hostile power' gained military bases in Papua New Guinea 'this would have direct and important implications for our security interests'.<sup>161</sup> But consistent with his belief that Australia had at least ten years before the development of a substantial threat, Dibb argued that there would be a long warning time before any power with the capacity to threaten Australia established itself in Papua New Guinea. The 1991 Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs,

Defence and Trade simply said 'Papua New Guinea's strategic importance for Australia has remained axiomatic' and it quoted a Department of Defence submission, confirming the danger of an enemy in full or partial control of Papua New Guinea.<sup>162</sup> But by then developments within Papua New Guinea were thought to raise the most immediate security questions.<sup>163</sup>

When Australians first speculated about the possible declining capacity of the Papua New Guinea government to assert its authority, they were worried that if Papua New Guinea could not secure its border with Indonesia then guerrilla forces would be more likely to exploit the area and Indonesian troops would feel a greater need to cross the border and be more able to justify violating Papua New Guinea's sovereignty by pointing out that it could not tolerate a neighbour providing refuge for enemies of Indonesia. In the worst case, this could have led to a progressive domination of and beyond the border by Indonesia. But Indonesia and Papua New Guinea have not allowed many minor incidents to damage their overall relationship. They signed a *Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Co-operation* in 1987, and changes within the Indonesian state and negotiations leading to a more autonomous Papua in the west have reduced concern that it is an inability to police the border that endangers Papua New Guinea's security.

The war on Bougainville, beginning with the explosions sabotaging the power to the Panguna mine in 1988, sharpened concerns about internal security. The 1991 Joint Committee decided that 'Australia's security interest in Papua New Guinea may need to focus on ... the internal threat, as opposed to any increasingly unlikely external threat'.<sup>164</sup> The Papua New Guinea Defence Force proved to be poorly supplied, ineffective in operations and was accused of human rights violations. The use of four Australian-supplied Iroquois helicopters in apparently indiscriminate firing on civilian targets further complicated the issue of the appropriateness of Australian aid to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.<sup>165</sup> The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade told the Joint Committee:

Australia has a strategic interest in the unity of Papua New Guinea, the maintenance of the authority of the central government, the restoration of law and order on Bougainville and the continuing viability of the existing and (potential) substantial investment in the Papua New Guinea economy.<sup>166</sup>

At the time of the Sandline crisis in 1997 the Papua New Guinea state was severely tested. Brigadier General Jerry Singirok led the movement to arrest the Sandline mercenaries contracted to prosecute the war on Bougainville, went on radio and demanded that the Government of Sir Julius Chan resign. Rioting and looting broke out in Port Moresby, and crowds (including armed soldiers) surrounded parliament house. As Sean Dorney, the experienced journalist, said, 'Chaos reigned in the streets outside Murray barracks' and the firing of teargas and other weapons could be heard.<sup>167</sup> Australian contingency planners should then have been considering if Australia would intervene to defend a democratically elected government and, if so, what force, alone or in concert with other powers and with what rules of engagement, should be sent to Port Moresby. They might have also been wondering whether they would have to intervene if mobs shifted from looting and minor violence to major violence. In Papua New Guinea, restraint by army officers, compromise by politicians, the expulsion of the mercenaries and the absence of leaders with clear plans averted crisis. But the 'sentinel islands' had become the 'arc of instability'.<sup>168</sup>

Within the United States there has been repetition that the events in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 changed world security: the nature of the threat, and the means to identify and oppose it were all transformed. The rhetoric of international relations changed with the need to eliminate terrorism the ready rationalisation for intervention in the affairs of other countries. The pre-emptive strike could be justified: what had been the sanctity of sovereignty became the agnosticism of sovereignty.<sup>169</sup> The lessons of 11 September 2001, reinforced by the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002, certainly influenced Australian assessments of its own security and its relations with the region. This was most obvious in the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's *Beyond Bali: ASPI's strategic assessment 2002*.<sup>170</sup> It began with the assertion that 'Terrorism is now a major security problem for Australia' and it rated the chances of a terrorist attack on Australia as 'high'.<sup>171</sup> When the 'assessment' came to consider the region it claimed: 'Three of our closest neighbours – Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – are in different ways struggling to survive as functioning nations and societies. The Solomon Islands is the furthest down the road to state failure, but PNG and Vanuatu also face serious problems.' The ASPI report argued that Australia had a humanitarian concern for the peoples of the islands and the long term

strategic need to keep possible enemies from the area, but now the islands were 'potential havens for terrorist groups' and could 'serve as bases for groups planning attacks in Australia'. In fact 'we risk seeing our neighbourhood degenerate into lawless badlands, ruled more by criminals than by legitimate governments'.<sup>172</sup> Others have added that the islands were allowing the growth of transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, gun smuggling, illegal immigration and money laundering.<sup>173</sup> While the ASPI assessment has been seen as a blunt statement of the degree of decline in government efficiency and authority in the Pacific and an overstatement of the association of the islands with international terrorism, it was influential in quickening and justifying Australia's part in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands in 2003 and the Enhanced Cooperation Program to Papua New Guinea. And significantly in their re-engagement the Australians have invested heavily in the police and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. As assessments of their defence interests were important in causing the Australian colonies to try to assert their control to the north in 1883 and 1884, Australia to take over the administration of Papua in 1906 and New Guinea in 1914, and Australia to withdraw in 1975, they were also significant in their return in 2003 and 2004.

## CONCLUSION

Obviously, concern for security has not been the only factor determining an Australian government presence in Papua New Guinea; but it has always been important and at critical times often dominant. In 130 years there have been consistencies and change in Australia's perception of the place of the islands in Australia's defence. The consistency has been that the Australians have always worried about a hostile nation gaining a hold in the islands from which it could cut Australian lines of communication, raid Australian coasts and eventually mount a major assault on Australia. The changes have been substantial. The initial fear was of a European power gaining an island colony and then being engaged in war with Britain, resulting in Australia having an enemy at the door. That overlapped with and was overwhelmed by the prediction that Japan would take advantage of Britain's forces being committed to war in Europe to occupy the islands and attack Australia. From the 1950s, it seemed that the unstable ex-colonies of Southeast Asia would be the dominoes falling

at the push of international communism, and Sukarno's Indonesia could allow the last domino to fall halfway across New Guinea. By the 1970s the big threats had gone and the Australians, thinking they were in danger of being entangled in conflicts within Papua New Guinea and on the Indonesian border, withdrew. In the twenty-first century Australians decided that their homeland was under threat from international terrorists who might exploit the lawless islands to damage Australia. Through the first seventy years, Australian perceptions of who they were and who their enemies might be were often expressed in terms of race, often simply and bluntly identifying themselves and potential allies and enemies by colour. This was most stark in the 1920s. Race was then significant as the defining characteristic of Australianness and of Australian enemies. Race was still important but declining in 1950, rapidly disappearing in the 1960s and almost gone in the 1970s. Consciousness of race and racism continued in Australia, but the extent of the transformation of the rhetoric and much of the reality was unpredictable, even unthinkable for many Australians, in 1942.

Australians' changing perceptions are obvious in their various expectations of Papua New Guineans in the armed forces. Colonel Kenneth Mackay thought thousands of them could be trained to defend Australia against Asian invasion; but it took more than thirty years before Papuans were enlisted in an infantry battalion. At the same time, Australians could not bring themselves to arm New Guineans. They had less confidence in the ability of New Guineans, and the police had been leaders of the Rabaul strike, the one moment of organised defiance against the Australians in the Mandated Territory. By the end of the war the Pacific Islands Regiment, then recruited from across the Territory, was one of the most distinguished units in the Australian army. At their final parade a newspaper reporter said that, 'The splendid bearing of the island soldiers and the precision of their movements was inspiring to the military audience.... [They] had proved themselves loyal comrades and gallant fighting men'.<sup>174</sup> But there was no place for them in postwar Papua New Guinea, and the last of the four battalions was disbanded in 1947. Spender announced that the Pacific Islands Regiment was to be reformed at the same time as he warned of the rise of international communism and just before Australia committed troops to the Korean War. It was expanded in numbers and functions in the early 1960s and directed to the border in the early 1960s as the Indonesians confronted Malaysia and replaced the Dutch in

West New Guinea.<sup>175</sup> As with other institutions, the Australians were late and rushed in their promotion of Papua New Guineans to senior positions. No Papua New Guineans were trained as officers until two were commissioned in 1963 and in 1973 when the PIR became the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), it was still commanded by an Australian. At independence there were over 200 Australian officers and many other specialist non-commissioned officers in the PNGDF. In 1980, the PNGDF appeared to demonstrate that it was an efficient force when it was used in the suppression of the Jimmy Stevens rebellion in Vanuatu, an assignment that would have been diplomatically, and perhaps tactically, difficult for Australians. After the weaknesses in the PNGDF were made clear on Bougainville, Australians in the early 1990s commented on budget cuts, deteriorating equipment, 'politicisation of the senior ranks', failures when used in domestic security, 'breakdowns in discipline' and 'deteriorating morale'.<sup>176</sup> The PNGDF had become part of the problems of internal security and a target in the aid directed to institutional strengthening. It was a long way from the empire soldiers envisaged a hundred years before, the force that was going to protect white Australia from Asian invasion.

Given the difficulty of predicting international relations over long periods and the hysteria that can overwhelm rational analysis, it is surprising that Australians twice got the threat right. In 1914 Australia had an enemy at the door and in 1942 the Japanese launched an attack. Australians may also have got the reasons to withdraw in 1975 right: it is difficult to see how they could have dealt effectively and non-violently with the war on Bougainville and the various challenges to law and order in the towns and the Highlands. But the fact that Australia had accurate assessments of the danger did not mean that it was ready to respond. It knew little about German New Guinea in 1914, not even where the wireless communication centre was, and it did not have a force ready to go north to occupy German Micronesia. In 1942 Australia was not only ill-prepared but it had the wrong forces, they were wrongly deployed, and initially most used the wrong tactics. The poverty of Australia's initial response to the mounting Japanese menace and early landings was largely because Australia knew that when facing an enemy of that magnitude it had to have a strong ally, but by committing itself to an ally it weakened its capacity for self-defence.

From the 1880s Australia often had aspirations beyond its capacity to realise them. Australia

wanted an arc of islands from Fiji to New Guinea that was either controlled or influenced by Australia. At various times, the Australians enquired about buying or negotiating a transfer of control of those islands outside their authority, but there was no chance of France handing New Caledonia to Australia, and negotiations with the British never passed beyond the preliminary stages. In any case, Australia did not have the military might to defend the islands in a major conflict. Australia knew that without the help of an ally who responded quickly, any garrisoned island posts would be abandoned as Australian forces were needed to protect the mainland. Once it became clear that the Dutch were unlikely to stay in the East Indies, the Australians thought they might administer West New Guinea as owner or as sole or joint trustee. That would have allowed for the eventual union of east and west New Guinea, and anyone looking at the map of the region would agree that the arbitrary division of New Guinea was undesirable. The dilemma for Australia was that if they were to advocate one New Guinea nation then that was less likely to happen.<sup>177</sup> From the foundation of the independent nation of Indonesia, Australians recognized that their relations with Indonesia, soon to have a population of 200,000,000 and influential in Southeast Asia, the non-aligned nations and the Islamic world, were more important than any attempt to assert an influence in the islands west of the 153<sup>rd</sup> meridian.<sup>178</sup> Also, Australia accepted that it was not in its self-interest to act in the region either in defiance of the United States or without regional partners.

For Australia, the problem has always been to match aim with power, to make its policies and its armed forces consistent with the best available assessments of threat, and to work in concert with regional powers and at least one major power. So far, Australians have been reasonable at analysis, poor at preparing to meet the identified danger, and not too bad at the late scramble to deal with the threatening disaster.

## AUTHORS NOTE

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A brief version of this paper was presented at the Pacific History Association conference in Noumea, 5-10 December 2004.

East New Guinea was divided into British New Guinea and German New Guinea in 1884. The southeast became the Australian Territory of Papua in 1906 and German New Guinea became the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea in 1921. I have sometimes found it convenient to use the terms 'Papua New Guinea' and 'Papua New Guineans' although the Territories did not become 'Papua New Guinea' until 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Braga, *Kokoda Commander: A Life of Major-General 'Tubby' Allen*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2004; Peter Brune, *A Bastard of a Place: The Australians in Papua*, Allen and Unwin, 2003; Peter Fitzsimons, *Kokoda*, Hodder, Melbourne, 2004; and Paul Ham, *Kokoda*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Something of these issues is in H.Nelson, 'Kokoda: the track from history to politics', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 38, No 1, 2003, pp.109-27.

<sup>4</sup> *Correspondence respecting New Guinea and other Islands and the Convention at Sydney of Representatives of the Australasian Colonies Presented to both Houses of Parliament ...*, and separately published in 3 Vols by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1884, pp.130-2. Fiji was represented by Governor Sir G.William Des Voeux, Western Australia by the Colonial Secretary and the other colonies by the premier and at least one senior minister.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era 1820-1920*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1980, deals with the earlier interest of the Australian colonies in the islands.

<sup>6</sup> *Correspondence* vol 1, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> Gwyneth Dow, 'Higinbotham, George' in D.Pike, ed, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 4, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1972, pp.391-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 2, pp.1,4, 21-3, 31-3. The *Project de Loi sur les Recidivistes* is printed in vol 1, pp.53-5. The 'Ballaarat' meeting was attended by 4000 people and the French recidivistes were the subject of the first resolution (vol 3, p.14-5).

<sup>9</sup> Minute of the Colonial Secretary, *Correspondence*, vol 1, pp.128-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 3, p.53.

<sup>11</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 1, p.174.

<sup>12</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 1, p.16.

<sup>13</sup> *Correspondence*, Vol 3, pp.51-3. (Governor of Victoria to Lord Derby, 20 Dec 1884; Agent-General for Victoria to Colonial Office, 22 Dec 1884.)

<sup>14</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 3, p.54.

<sup>15</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 3, p.62.

<sup>16</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 3, p.152, documents 171 and 172.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (CPD), House of Representatives, 12 Nov 1901, Vol 6, p.7092 when the parliament debated New Guinea followed immediately by tariffs.

<sup>18</sup> CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, 19 November 1901, p.7416.

<sup>19</sup> CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, 12 November 1901, p.7087.

<sup>20</sup> CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, 12 November 1901, p.7090.

<sup>21</sup> CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, 12 November 1901, p.7080.

<sup>22</sup> It had been used by Barton.

<sup>23</sup> The 'Monroe doctrine' was stated by President James Monroe in 1823 and it excluded European powers from establishing colonies in the American continents.

<sup>24</sup> CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, 19 November 1901, pp.7423-4.

<sup>25</sup> The formal French-British condominium was not to be created until 1906, but the French presence was acknowledged in the joint naval commission.

<sup>26</sup> Published in Melbourne, 1903.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, 1903, p.11.

<sup>28</sup> D.N.Cameron had pointed out the contradiction, CPD, House of Representatives, Vol 6, p.7461. Alfred Deakin made the same point to readers in the *Morning Post*.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 1903, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> 'British New Guinea', Report by Mr Atlee Hunt, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol 2, 1905, pp.6-7.

<sup>31</sup> Hunt, 1905, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> 'Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the present conditions, including the method of government, of the Territory of Papua', *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1907, pp.X-XII.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Royal Commission, p.XIII.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Mackay, *Across Papua: Being an account of a voyage round, and a march across, the Territory of Papua, with the Royal Commission*, Witherby, London, 1909, p.105.

<sup>35</sup> Mackay, 1909, p.87.

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Royal Commission, p.LVII.

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Royal Commission, pp.XIV-XV.

<sup>38</sup> Report of the Royal Commission, p.XV.

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Royal Commission, p.L.

<sup>40</sup> David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1999, p.105. Walker notes other invasion books and the Japanese fleet visits.

- <sup>41</sup> F.West ed, *Selected Letters of Hubert Murray*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1970, p.32.
- <sup>42</sup> David Horner, *Blamey: The Commander-in-Chief*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, p.21.
- <sup>43</sup> N.Meaney, *Fears and Phobias: E.L.Piesse and the problem of Japan 1909-39*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1966, pp.4-4.
- <sup>44</sup> Murray's typescript is with Atlee Hunt papers, MS52, National Library of Australia.
- <sup>45</sup> *Territory of Papua Government Gazette Extraordinary*, Vol 9 No 12, 8 August 1914.
- <sup>46</sup> S.S.Mackenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul: The capture and administration of the German Possessions in the Southern Pacific*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1936, p.4.
- <sup>47</sup> Murray to Minister for External Affairs, 7 September 1914, includes earlier exchanges.
- <sup>48</sup> *Territory of Papua Annual Report 1913-14*, (Annual Report), p.110.
- <sup>49</sup> *Annual Report 1911-1912*, p.6.
- <sup>50</sup> H.Nelson, *Balck, White and Gold: Goldmining in Papua New Guinea 1878-1930*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1976, pp.224-7. One of the German officials was Hermann Detzner, who evaded the Australians for the rest of the war.
- <sup>51</sup> *Australian Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, Vol LXXXIV, 10 September 1919, p.12163.
- <sup>52</sup> Here, as with other significant Australians, I have used the relevant entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
- <sup>53</sup> *Australian Parliamentary Debates*, Vol LXXXIV, p.12170.
- <sup>54</sup> *Australian Parliamentary Debates*, Vol LXXXIV, p.12176.
- <sup>55</sup> Sir Thomas Henley, *New Guinea and Australia's Pacific Islands Mandate*, John Sands, Sydney, 1927, p.72 told Australians that 'A "C" mandate and annexation are, for all practical purposes, of the same value'.
- <sup>56</sup> Mackenzie, 1936, p.1 begins his account of New Guinea in the Great War with an account of the 1884 British 'blunder'.
- <sup>57</sup> H.Nelson, 'Sacred trust and Self-Interest: Australia, Rabaul and beyond', in Craig Wilcox and J. Aldridge ed, *The Great War: Gains and Losses – ANZAC and Empire*, The Australian National University and the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1995, pp.85-116. Some Australians now say that Australia entered a distant and largely irrelevant war at Gallipoli. This takes no account of the fact that Germany and Australia shared a land border in New Guinea and that the German fleet and raiders had orders to attack Australian shipping: the war was in the region.
- <sup>58</sup> Mackenzie, 1936, p.6. The term 'urgent Imperial service' was in the British request.
- <sup>59</sup> *Annual Report 1921-1922*, pp.123-4. Before the sale of the plantations all the Australian overseers were 'as far as possible' ex-servicemen. Of 280 staff recruited for the Expropriation Board all but three were ex-servicemen – the three were a senior accountant and 'two lads' employed as typists (p.124).
- <sup>60</sup> Mackenzie, 1936, pp.346-7 quotes Article 22.
- <sup>61</sup> J.W.Burton, *The Australian Mandate: In relation to our duty to Native Races*, Australian Students Christian Movement, Melbourne, 1921, p.5.
- <sup>62</sup> P.D.Phillips, 'Some Legal Aspects of the Mandates', in F.W.Eggleston, ed, *The Australian Mandate for New Guinea: Record of Round Table Discussion*, Macmillan and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1928, pp.21-34.
- <sup>63</sup> This account of the Japanese acquisition of Micronesia is indebted to Henry Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp.95-102. There are other readily available accounts: Mackenzie, 1936, pp.148-160; T.B.Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, pp.52-55; and Mark Peattie, *Nanyo: The rise and fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1988, pp.41-57.
- <sup>64</sup> Frei, 1991, p.103.
- <sup>65</sup> Frei, 1991, p.104.
- <sup>66</sup> Eggleston, 1928, pp.91 and 97.
- <sup>67</sup> Eggleston, 1928, p.101.
- <sup>68</sup> Meaney, 1996, *passim* N.Meaney, *Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 years*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1999, Chapter 7 pp.69-74.
- <sup>69</sup> R.G.Neale, ed, *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy 1937-49, Vol 1 1937-38*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975, p.10, lists the delegates: J.A.Lyons, Prime Minister, Sir Archdale Parkhill, Minister for Defence, R.G.Casey, Treasurer, S.M.Bruce, High Commissioner in London, and over a dozen senior officials, advisers and staff.
- <sup>70</sup> Neale, 1975, Memorandum prepared for delegation to Imperial Conference, p.52.
- <sup>71</sup> Meaney, 1996, p.41.
- <sup>72</sup> Neale, 1975, pp.12-4.
- <sup>73</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, Vol 149, 13 March 1936, p.123.
- <sup>74</sup> S.Braga, *Kokoda Commander: A Life of Major-General 'Tubby' Allen*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2004, p.62.
- <sup>75</sup> Neale, 1975, pp.58-9, and pp.144-51.
- <sup>76</sup> Neale, 1975, p.169.
- <sup>77</sup> Neale, 1975, p.170.
- <sup>78</sup> Robertson and McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy 1939-1945: a documentary history*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1985, p.148.

- <sup>79</sup> Robertson and McCarthy, 1985, p.156.
- <sup>80</sup> David Horner, *Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the making of Australian defence policy*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2000, p.105. See also Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some memories of men and events*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1967, pp.31-2; Robertson and McCarthy, 1985, pp.146-67; and David Day, *The Politics of War*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2003, especially chapter 6.
- <sup>81</sup> F.West, 1970, pp.96, 99 and 100.
- <sup>82</sup> West, 1970, p.106.
- <sup>83</sup> West, 1970, pp.141, 157, 180, 211 and 232.
- <sup>84</sup> R.McNicol, *Walter Ramsay McNicol 1877-1947*, privately published, Melbourne, 1973, p.201.
- <sup>85</sup> Japanese activities in Papua and New Guinea, F1112/1, A518; and 19/304/188, A816, National Archives of Australia (NAA).
- <sup>86</sup> Page to Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 20 Jan 1939, 19/304/188, A816, NAA.
- <sup>87</sup> R.W.Robson, ed, *The Pacific Islands Year Book*, Pacific Publications, Sydney, 1942, pp.126-8. *Geographical Handbook Series, Pacific Islands, Western Pacific*, Vol 4, Naval Intelligence Division, London, 1945, p.325, says over 70,000 Japanese in 1938. I made some of these same points in a lecture, *Defining the Nation: Australia and the Near-North 1920-1942*, for the History Institute of Victoria, Winter Lecture, August 2001, Melbourne,
- <sup>88</sup> Lavarack, 9 Dec 1938, 19/304/188, A816, NAA.
- <sup>89</sup> E. George Marks, *Pacific Peril*, Wynyard Book Arcade, Sydney, 1933, pp.33 and 83.
- <sup>90</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1938.
- <sup>91</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, February 1942, p.6.
- <sup>92</sup> *Rabaul Times*, 1 July 1938; and Chris Cuneen, 'Hughes, William Morris', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 9, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983, p.399.
- <sup>93</sup> Neale, 1975, p.509. Asmis wrote on 24 October to Lyons. The Munich Pact was on 29 September 1938.
- <sup>94</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1938.
- <sup>95</sup> Report of the Committee appointed to survey the possibility of establishing a combined administration of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea, and to make a recommendation as to a capital site ..., *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol 3, 1937-40, p.28.
- <sup>96</sup> Report of the Committee, 1939, p.29.
- <sup>97</sup> West, 1970, p.225.
- <sup>98</sup> West, 1970, pp.225-6.
- <sup>99</sup> L.Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, p.37.
- <sup>100</sup> *New Guinea Annual Report, 1938-1939*, pp.126-9.
- <sup>101</sup> H.Nelson, 'Loyalties at Sword-Point: The Lutheran Missionaries in Wartime New Guinea, 1939-45', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol 24, No 2, 1978, pp.99-217.
- <sup>102</sup> McNicol to Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 23 November 1939, and other items on file, AB15/2/1, A518, NAA.
- <sup>103</sup> A.Powell, *The Shadow's Edge: Australia's Northern War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp.8-28.
- <sup>104</sup> *Papuan Courier*, 21 April 1939. The Artillery won the competition (the PMF Shield). D.Horner, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1995, pp.207-8.
- <sup>105</sup> H.Nelson, 'As Bilong Soldia: The Raising of the Papuan Infantry Battalion in 1940', *Yagl-Ambu*, Vol 7 No 1, 1980, pp.19-27. The key files are Defence Scheme Papua, 16/401/206, MP729/6, NAA (Victoria); and Defence Scheme Papua 1939-41, 243/5/28, AWM54.
- <sup>106</sup> 'Z' Defence Scheme, 243/5/13, AWM54. J.K.McCarthy, *Patrol into Yesterday: My New Guinea Years*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1963, pp.183-4.
- <sup>107</sup> I.Downs, *The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles 1939-1945: A History*, Pacific Press, Broadbeach, 1999, pp.75-6, 166. E.Feldt, *The Coast Watchers*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1967.
- <sup>108</sup> Territory of New Guinea Scheme for Local defence of Rabaul, 243/5/14, AWM54.
- <sup>109</sup> S.D.Waters, *German Raiders in the Pacific*, War History branch, Department of External Affairs, Wellington, 1949, pp.11-23; G.Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, pp.260-83.
- <sup>110</sup> Records Ex Headquarters 8<sup>th</sup> Military District: Operations and Instructions and Planning in the defence of Port Moresby and Rabaul 1941, 243/5/2 AWM54.
- <sup>111</sup> Appreciations – Defence Schemes Rabaul, Papua and New Guinea, 15/401/498, MP729/6, NAA (Victoria).
- <sup>112</sup> War Diary 'L' Force, attachment, 1/5/48, AWM52,
- <sup>113</sup> H.Nelson, 'The troops, the town and the battle: Rabaul 1942', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 27 No 2, 1992, pp.198-216.
- <sup>114</sup> The words appeared in the *Melbourne Herald*, 26 December 1941.
- <sup>115</sup> Defence of Rabaul, War Cabinet Agendum, 14 Oct 1941, 16/401/493, MP729/6, NAA (Victoria).
- <sup>116</sup> Defence of Rabaul, Prime Minister's Department to Australian Minister to Washington, 12 December 1941, 16/401/493, MP729/6 NAA (Victoria). The *Malaita*, carrying a travelling crane, other gear and navy personnel, was stopped in Port Moresby (1855/12/14, MP1049/5/0, NAA Victoria).

- <sup>117</sup> The Defence of Rabaul file, cited above, says 'advanced air operational base', but it more often called 'advanced observation line' or 'forward air observation line' as in Robertson and McCarthy, 1985, p.216.
- <sup>118</sup> RAAF Operations from Rabaul, 81/4/194, AWM54.
- <sup>119</sup> Prime Minister's Department to Australian Minister Washington, 12 December 1941, Defence of Rabaul, 16/401/493, AWM54.
- <sup>120</sup> The Australian forces included women of the Australian Army Nursing Service, forty-one of whom were to die.
- <sup>121</sup> H.Nelson, 'The Return to Rabaul 1945', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 30 No 2, 1995, pp.147-8; Theo Aerts, *The Martyrs of Papua New Guinea*, University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1994, pp.29-47 considers the numbers. His 333 includes (properly) includes Papua New Guinean missionaries and foreigners who were not formally missionaries.
- <sup>122</sup> The full cable is in Robertson and McCarthy, 1985, pp.204-6. It is there dated 25 January 1942.
- <sup>123</sup> David Day, 2003, pp.248-52; David Horner, *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy 1939-1945*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1982, p.153; David Horner, 2000, p.134; and Paul Ham, *Kokoda*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2004, p.78 (footnote). Ham claims Horner 'does not recognise a betrayal'. In fact, Horner says 'There almost certainly was an "inexcusable betrayal"' (1982, p.153) and gives the context.
- <sup>124</sup> From 1941 both Papua and New Guinea were known as 'New Guinea'. In 1945 they became Papua-New Guinea, and in 1949 'Papua and New Guinea'. It became 'Papua New Guinea' in 1971.
- <sup>125</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol 183, House of Representatives, 18 July 1945, p.4200.
- <sup>126</sup> Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of New Guinea, Article 4.
- <sup>127</sup> G.Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1968, p.379.
- <sup>128</sup> I.Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship Papua New Guinea: Papua New Guinea 1945-75*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1980, p.24; T.B.Millar, *Australia's Defence Policies 1945-1965*, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, Canberra, 1967, p.5.
- <sup>129</sup> J.Dedman, 'Encounter over Manus', *Australian Outlook*, No 20 No 2, 1966, pp.135-53.
- <sup>130</sup> From articles IV and V of the ANZUS Treaty.
- <sup>131</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol 206, 9 March 1950, p.623.
- <sup>132</sup> The signatories were: USA, Britain, France, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand. Britain was more obviously committed to Australia by the use of Australia for atomic and missile tests.
- <sup>133</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol 206, House of Representatives, 9 March 1950, p.624.
- <sup>134</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol 206, House of Representatives, 9 March 1950, p.627.
- <sup>135</sup> S.Doran, *Western Friends and Eastern Neighbours: West New Guinea and Australian Self-Perception in Relation to the United States, Britain, and Southeast Asia, 1950-1962*, doctoral thesis, History, RSSS, Australian National University, 1999, p.8.
- <sup>136</sup> Doran, 1999, p.12.
- <sup>137</sup> Doran, 1999, p.18. Evatt had earlier suggested that West New Guinea be a UN Trust territory with Australia the sole trustee or one of a group of trustees. There had also been a suggestion that Australia buy West New Guinea.
- <sup>138</sup> Doran, 1999, pp.15-22.
- <sup>139</sup> T.B.Millar, ed, *Australian Foreign Minister: The diaries of R.G.Casey*, Collins, London, 1972, pp.80-1 has a condensed statement of Australian policy 1952.
- <sup>140</sup> Casey diary, 14 February 1959, in Millar, 1972, pp.314-5.
- <sup>141</sup> Submission No 550, A5818/2 Vol 13. Stuart Doran brought this document to my attention.
- <sup>142</sup> Quoted in the Cabinet submission.
- <sup>143</sup> Doran, 1999, pp.152-5.
- <sup>144</sup> H.Nelson, 'The Talk and the Timing: reputations and reality, and the granting of self-government to Papua New Guinea' in D.Denoon, ed, *Emerging from Empire? Decolonisation in the Pacific*, Division of Pacific and Asian History, Australian National University, 1997, pp.110-1.
- <sup>145</sup> *Australian Defence: Presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Hon D.J.Killen*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976, p.10. See also, *Australian Defence Review*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1972; and R.O'Neill, 'Defence Policy', in W.J.Hudson, ed, *Australia in World Affairs 1971-75*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1980, pp.11-36.
- <sup>146</sup> P.Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, Development Studies Centre Monograph, No 2, Australian National University, Canberra, 1976, pp.66-7, footnote 16.
- <sup>147</sup> *Australian Defence Review*, 1972, p.5 notes Australia's 'obligations' to defend Papua New Guinea, but has little to say about the 'vital' place of Papua New Guinea in Australia's defence.
- <sup>148</sup> Papua New Guinea, *Annual Report, 1971-1972*, p.13.
- <sup>149</sup> Papua New Guinea *Annual Report, 1971-1972*, p.15.
- <sup>150</sup> L.Johnson, *Colonial Sunset: Australia and Papua New Guinea 1970-74*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1983, p.92.
- <sup>151</sup> Papua New Guinea *Annual Report, 1971-1972*, p.14.
- <sup>152</sup> *Report of the Committee Investigating Tribal Fighting in the Highlands*, (Paney Committee), Government Printer, Port Moresby, 1973, p.38.

- <sup>153</sup> *Tribal Fighting in the Highlands*, 1973, p.3.
- <sup>154</sup> Johnson, 1983, p.29.
- <sup>155</sup> Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: He did it his way*, Hodder, Sydney, 2002, p.290-1.
- <sup>156</sup> Hancock, p.294.
- <sup>157</sup> In March 1971 Fraser claimed that the process of the call-out of the army had been wrong and demonstrated that Gorton was unfit for office.
- <sup>158</sup> Johnson, 1983, p.30.
- <sup>159</sup> Johnson, 1983, p.40-1.
- <sup>160</sup> H.Nelson, *Papua New Guinea: Black Unity or Black Chaos*, Pelican, Melbourne, 1974, p.42.
- <sup>161</sup> P.Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986, p.33.
- <sup>162</sup> *Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade: Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea*, Senate Publishing and Printing, Canberra, 1991, p.158.
- <sup>163</sup> Note the quote from Rabbie Namaliu in 1983, then Foreign Minister, who said that the greatest dangers to the region were 'domestic internal threats to individual states' in *Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Australia's Relations with the South Pacific*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989, p.149.
- <sup>164</sup> Joint Committee, 1991, p.158.
- <sup>165</sup> Joint Committee, 1991, p.193.
- <sup>166</sup> Joint Committee, 1991, p.191.
- <sup>167</sup> S.Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History since 1975*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2000, p.155-6.
- <sup>168</sup> 'Arc of instability' was an extension of the geological description eg 'Pacific rim of instability' in H.Nelson, *Taim Bilong Masta ...*, ABC, Sydney, 1982, p.83. It was used as a title (with question mark) in R.J.May ed, 'Arc of Instability?': *Melanesia in the early 2000s*, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Project and MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, Christchurch, 2002.
- <sup>169</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the Twentieth Century*, Profile Books, London, 2004, pp.129-33, points out that sovereignty had already been eroded by the humanitarian interventions (Somalia, Cambodia, Haiti etc). There was an argument for the obligation to intervene.
- <sup>170</sup> A.Borgu, *Beyond Bali: ASPI's strategic assessment 2002*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2002.
- <sup>171</sup> *Beyond Bali*, p.3.
- <sup>172</sup> *Beyond Bali*, pp.28-9.
- <sup>173</sup> *Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, A Pacific Engaged: Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea and the island states of the south-west Pacific*, Senate Printing Unit, Canberra, 2003, p.175.
- <sup>174</sup> *Guinea Gold*, 27 April 1946, photocopy in G.M.Byrnes, *Green Shadows: A war history of the Papuan Infantry Battalion ...*, privately published, 1989, p.226.
- <sup>175</sup> R.J.May, *The Changing Role of the Military in Papua New Guinea*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1993, p.4. May includes an excellent bibliography. And see also May 2002.
- <sup>176</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Papua New Guinea Update: Report on Proceedings of a Seminar 11 and 12 November 1996*, House of Representatives, Canberra, 1997, pp.20-1; and Paul Dibb and Rhondra Nicholas, *Restructuring the Papua New Guinea Defence Force: Strategic Analysis and Force Structure Principles for a Small State*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1996.
- <sup>177</sup> John Kerr (then outside government) was a public advocate of a union of east and west New Guinea – and more broadly a Melanesian federation : 'The Political Future of New Guinea', *Australian Outlook*, Vol 13 No 3, 1959, pp.181-92.
- <sup>178</sup> Australian actions in East Timor have twice (1975 and 1999) illustrated the limits to which Australia thinks it can assert influence in the area.



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