

Chapter 5: Australian Attempts to Balance Interests in WNG and Indonesia, May-August 1958

I

For the remainder of May 1958, and a number of weeks following, the intensity of Dutch lobbying was a major feature of activity in Western circles on WNG. Luns, whose methods in the international sphere were markedly similar to those of Spender, was relentless in his campaign for deterrents and guarantees. With reference to Australia, the need to continue responding again resulted in indications of the state of WNG policy. There was also an important extent to which this imperative compelled distillation of that policy.

The Casey to McClure-Smith telegram of 14 May had made it clear that Australia was not to talk to the Dutch with only a negative voice. The Minister clarified that there was no consideration of abandoning them. Approval was given to Luns' suggestion that the US be made aware of the danger of an attack on NNG: "We have instructed [Ambassador to the US, Howard] Beale again to represent to Dulles the particular interests which the Dutch and ourselves have in relation to Netherlands New Guinea and you may inform Luns of this."¹ Casey also assured McClure-Smith that while Canberra thought current events in Jakarta

could well decide the future of the whole of Indonesia and that we therefore cannot afford to see any chance of promoting favourable developments...being neglected[, Australia,] at the same time[, had] sought repeatedly to impress on the Americans our view that they and we should seek concrete assurances before delivering substantial military aid to [the] central government.

In spite of this ongoing empathy, the tension in the bilateral relationship would not dissipate. The next 'issue' again grew out of a Dutch initiative. Luns said he was grateful for the promise of representations by Beale,² but proffered yet another request. In preparing the ground, he said "with great emphasis" that the Dutch would resist any attack on NNG "with arms to their full capacity", but that the outcome, both military and in terms of Dutch public opinion, could be "vitaly affected by the attitude of their friends".³ He went on: "Since we had consistently maintained the importance of Netherlands New Guinea to our security, had not the time come for staff talks and an

¹ Howard Beale, previously a Cabinet minister, replaced Spender as Ambassador in early 1958. In conversation with Dulles, Beale apparently responded to the Secretary's observation that an attack on WNG was unlikely by asking if the success of the central government in Sumatra "might not change the picture". This was ostensibly Beale's only reference to WNG during the talk. See conversation between Dulles and Beale, 22 May 1958, in *FRUS*, Vol. XVII, 1958-60, 'Indonesia', pp. 191-93.

² Cablegram 120 from McClure-Smith to Casey, 15 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

³ Cablegram 121 from McClure-Smith to Casey, 15 May 1958, in A 1838/276, TS3036/6/1, Pt 5, NAA.

exchange of technical information between Australian and Dutch fighting services on a strictly secret basis with no political commitments?” This approach was in accord with the second aspect of the two-pronged Dutch push for deterrence and contingency planning. The Dutch Foreign Minister had had some success in building an atmosphere that would achieve the first, and he was determined to have options in place should this fail.

In October 1957, the Australians had agreed to a Dutch proposal to exchange technical information on WNG, especially in connection with compatibility of military equipment and the use of base facilities, but, as H. M. Loveday of the Defence Liaison Branch (DEA) noted, this was “a good deal less than Luns’ present proposal for “staff talks””.⁴ Consequently, the response from Canberra was tentative. Tange instructed that Luns be told his idea was under “intensive examination”, but that no definite reply could be given until Australia had finished with its own assessment of the Indonesian threat.⁵ Tange’s reticence proved to be an omen; the issue of staff talks was to become one of the main bones of contention between Australia and the Netherlands, though this outcome was not immediately obvious.

A second specific disagreement – and like staff talks, this too was rooted in differences over views on the importance of Indonesia – emerged at the same time. In a manifestation of the thaw between the Americans and the Indonesian central government, an agreement had been signed on 22 May whereby the US would provide the Indonesians with 35,000 tons of rice, and with a number of small arms and aircraft parts.⁶ The Drees Government was fearful of the repercussions of this on WNG security. McClure-Smith was told that “the Netherlands must take account of the fact that besides receiving American arms, Indonesia was also receiving heavy military aid from Communist countries and that this greatly increased the danger of an attack on Netherlands New Guinea.”⁷ The Dutch, who heard about the deal via the press, were also seemingly incensed at what they saw as a breach of an earlier promise by Dulles. Netherlands officials charged that Dulles had given assurances “that there was no question of delivering arms to the Sukarno regime”, and that the Netherlands would be consulted in advance if there was to be an alteration of policy.⁸ Dulles seems to have

⁴ H. M. Loveday (Defence Liaison Branch, DEA) to Tange, 19 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA. Loveday also observed that the Dutch had not in fact pursued their initiative.

⁵ Cablegram 96 from Tange to McClure-Smith, 29 May 1958, in A1838/276, TS 3036/6/1, Pt 5, NAA.

⁶ See editorial note in *FRUS*, Vol. XVII, 1958-60, ‘Indonesia’, pp. 190-91, and conversation between Dulles and van Roijen, 27 May 1958, in *ibid.*, p. 208.

⁷ Cablegram 132 from McClure-Smith, 27 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

⁸ *loc.cit.*

said he would provide warning, but apparently also told van Roijen on 13 May that although the US “had no present intention of supplying arms,...he could not rule out the possibility...if it seemed justified from the point of view of achieving common objectives.”⁹ At any rate, in a terse meeting with van Roijen on the 27th (later described by A. H. J. Lovink (Dutch Ambassador, Canberra) as an “explosion”),¹⁰ he said it “had not occurred to the [State] Department that the Dutch would consider these transactions as arms deliveries to Indonesia,” and added that the US did not, for the moment, plan on giving Indonesia military equipment.¹¹

As hinted by Dutch distortion of Dulles’ pledges, the Netherlands Government, though genuinely worried about the direction of US policy, was not beyond making capital from an unpleasant situation. Before the Dulles-van Roijen meeting was cabled back to the Netherlands, Luns asked that Australia make a public statement that it would support the Dutch in the event of an attack, and that Australia support representations in Washington.¹² He could also not resist using US moves as a means of exerting further pressure over staff talks, saying he thought the delivery of arms would increase the danger of an invasion, and that Lovink had been told on 23 May to follow up his earlier proposal.

The Australians would not humour the Dutch. No appeal was made to Dulles in Washington, and on 26 May Tange had reiterated his earlier message on staff talks by telling Lovink that it “would be several weeks before an Australian view was available.”¹³ Casey must have supported Tange’s comments in a conversation with Lovink on 30 May.¹⁴ Moreover, the Menzies Government was by no means willing to make a public commitment to the defence of WNG when it had not even decided on either the scale of the threat to the territory or whether to go ahead with exploratory talks between Dutch and Australian servicemen.

The ruffling of the Dutch-Australian relationship caused by these disagreements was increased by a further discussion between van Roijen and Dulles on 27 May. Apparently in an attempt to cool Dutch tempers, Dulles candidly explained America’s

⁹ This is the account of J. G. Mein (Director, Office of SW Pacific Affairs, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, State Department) as transmitted in cablegram 689 from Washington, 14 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹⁰ See conversation between Plimsoll and Lovink, 10 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹¹ Conversation between Dulles and van Roijen, 27 May 1958, in *FRUS*, Vol. XVII, 1958-60, ‘Indonesia’, pp. 206-10.

¹² See cablegram 132 from McClure-Smith, 27 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹³ Cablegram 97 to The Hague, 29 May 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹⁴ This talk is mentioned in Casey to McClure-Smith, 3 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA, but no record of the conversation has been found.

Indonesia policy, admitting to US involvement in support of the rebels on Sumatra and Sulawesi, and remarking how the demise of the dissident movement had led them to decide “the moment had come when we should try to influence Indonesian military and civilian leaders.”¹⁵ In this context, he mentioned that the US, the UK, and Australia had consulted with each other, and had agreed that this was the best course. This seems to have annoyed Luns, who accused the Australians of a lack of “complete frankness” – a charge to which Casey declined to respond, feeling that doing so “might suggest a guilty conscience”.¹⁶ A day earlier, Tange had pinpointed the overall tenor of the Netherlands-Australian connection, saying to the British High Commissioner that “Australia looked like having some rough times in our relations with the Dutch as a result of our supporting a policy which contained some risks”.¹⁷

II

The intensity of Dutch pressure on Australia increased over the following eight weeks. Netherlands officials were aware that Australian authorities were assessing various aspects of the WNG problem anew, a process that they knew would have a critical effect on the limits of Dutch Government policy. From an Australian perspective, this pressure was a major factor stimulating a review in August of WNG policy in its entirety. Combined with other anxieties that were soon explicitly broached, it forced Australian policy-makers to tie together the implications of the changes late 1957 and 1958 had brought, and to move towards a more comprehensive response. This process, though not completed until early 1959, compelled members of both the civil service and Cabinet to push on with the alterations to Australian policy that had been in their infancy in the first half of the year, and embark on ones that had played little part in past Liberal Government thinking.

The central tactic of the Dutch crusade involved constant representations in Canberra through their Embassy. On 10 June, Lovink questioned Plimsoll on the progress of Australia’s re-evaluation of the situation and the associated issue of staff talks.¹⁸ He received an indefinite answer, to which he commented that “he would be glad to have an indication of our timing as soon as we were in a position to tell him, because the Dutch would like to be able to alert suitable officers to come out here to talk

¹⁵ Conversation between Dulles and van Roijen, 27 May 1958, in *FRUS*, Vol. XVII, 1958-60, ‘Indonesia’, p. 211.

¹⁶ Cablegram 101 from Casey to McClure-Smith, 3 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹⁷ Conversation between Tange and Lord Carrington (UK High Commissioner, Canberra), 2 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

¹⁸ Conversation between Plimsoll and Lovink, 10 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

to us.” A complementary alternative to this method, which appeared to be an attempt to coerce through the presumption of a positive answer, was the painting of a dark picture of the repercussions of a negative answer. Ten days after Lovink’s meeting with Plimsoll, J. H. Insinger (First Secretary of the Netherlands Embassy) told J. P. Quinn (head, South and SEA Branch, DEA):

If the Netherlands did not receive from its friends and allies the support that it could reasonably expect, a reaction might well set in. The potential forces against the...New Guinea policy were strong and if expenditure or a markedly increased defence effort in the territory they could well become prominent and effective. The Netherlands was engaged in extensive reclamation works to cope with its continuing growth of population and with the loss of its investments in Indonesia ...could no longer afford to pay out money on an increasing scale to maintain a piece of territory at the far end of the world.¹⁹

This campaign on two fronts continued into July. At a reception early in the month, Lovink cornered Plimsoll, claiming that he was “very worried about the security of New Guinea”, and that the Indonesians might “try to land a few men and proclaim a government” in the territory.²⁰ Requesting an interview with Casey, he added that “he hoped to be able to report to Luns...that, if Indonesian military action occurred in respect of Dutch New Guinea, the Netherlands would not be left on its own.” No doubt for genuine reasons, but probably also to give their diplomatic offensive more punch, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence had also announced on July 1 that WNG would be militarily reinforced in the near future.²¹

Partially in response to an imminent *demarche* by Lovink, but also as a general preliminary investigation of the dispute in its post 1957-58 context, Casey took a submission on WNG and related problems to Cabinet. This paper (which was accepted by the Ministers)²², along with a June Cabinet meeting at which WNG had been discussed without memorandum, both confirmed and further uncovered the pressures that the Ministers believed they were subject to over WNG.

The agendum demonstrated, as Casey’s cable to The Hague had, that fears of Indonesian communism were affecting the solidity of traditional WNG policy. Support for the American push to bolster Nasution was prominently affirmed, in spite of acknowledgement that the decision to furnish Indonesia with arms greatly disturbed the Dutch. The willingness of the Australians to break with the Dutch, in favour of a group

¹⁹ Conversation between J. P. Quinn (Head, South and South East Asia Branch, DEA) and J. H. Insinger (First Secretary, Netherlands Embassy, Canberra), 20 June 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

²⁰ Conversation between Plimsoll and Lovink, 4 July 1958, in A1838/269, TS696/3/3, Pt 1, NAA.

²¹ See Submission No. 1281, 8 July 1958, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/2/1, Pt 1, NAA.

²² For the ministerial reaction, see Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/2/1, Pt 1, NAA. For the agendum, see Submission No. 1281, 8 July 1958, in the same file.

of Indonesians, and perhaps at cost to Netherlands morale, was a testimony to how worried Cabinet had become regarding Indonesian communism.

The two meetings also indicated that fear of Indonesia was impinging on WNG policy in another way; the second strand of Australian anxiety arising from 1957-58 – that of the expanded capability of native Indonesian forces – was being seen as increasingly relevant to NNG. In spite of the absence of a JIC report, the Ministers judged that the risk of an Indonesian attack on the territory was real.²³ This was a problem in a policy sense because there were now suspicions that the defeat of such a move was not a *fait accompli*. In discussion on 9 July (as Casey related to Tange) “One or two Ministers” suggested “if it was that agreed Dutch New Guinea was essential to Australian security, should we not go the whole hog and support them, with force of arms if necessary?”²⁴ Casey replied “that this was right enough, except for the fact that we had practically nothing to support them with” – a view backed by John McBride (Minister for Defence). Menzies seems to have been sceptical that Australia had “nothing”, but there apparently existed general agreement that the Dutch and Australians would have considerable difficulty repelling any attack alone. This sentiment expressed itself in the extreme caution with which any military commitments to the Dutch were treated; on 3 June, for example, Cabinet had indicated that a decision on staff talks “would require the most careful prior consideration”.²⁵

Beyond Indonesian communism and the chance of violence, there were clues in the submission to three other factors the Ministers believed had to be considered in connection with WNG. In a part on Australia’s relations with the Netherlands, Casey commented on their “sharp disappointment” over a decision not to allow more KLM flights to Australia, and that Australia would probably not be able to give military support to the Dutch to the extent they wished. He continued: “I think the time has come for us to try hard to give the Dutch something [*sic*] that they ask for, or to do something positive to help them, because it is in our direct interest to assist to rally public opinion behind the Netherlands Government in standing firm on Netherlands New Guinea.” This emphasized that Casey (and in open discussion it was obvious that he was not alone) still assumed that WNG was strategically central to Australian defence; it remained a definite “interest”. Secondly, it drew attention to the fact that the Australians realized Dutch resolve was not without its limitations. They might give up, which

²³ In an appendix, Casey quoted a cable by McIntyre, in which the Ambassador said an invasion was unlikely, but by no means impossible.

²⁴ Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in A1838/276, 3036/6/1, Pt 1, NAA.

²⁵ Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 3 June 1958, in A4910, Vol. 7, NAA.

would, in an era when Australian administration of the territory was politically impossible, probably mean some form of Indonesian penetration. This fear was to become more prominent in Canberra over the coming weeks.

A penultimate pressure was that many within Cabinet felt Australia had a moral obligation to stand by the Dutch. Canberra may have used the Dutch administration as a proxy for its own presence in WNG, and at times bullied them into staying, but now that this had been done, it would be dishonourable to rapidly pull away from them. Reflecting this sense of duty, Menzies said emphatically during general dialogue on the 9th that “the Dutch cannot be allowed to stew in their own juice”.²⁶

A final burden on Cabinet, and not mentioned in the submission, was ever-present concern over Australian public opinion. In April, the fourth Gallup poll of the decade on WNG had shown that well over half of those with an opinion on the issue favoured either direct Australian ownership of the territory or an Australian trusteeship.²⁷ Another third favoured a United Nations solution, but only 10% of those with a view wanted Indonesian control over WNG. The Government would have been particularly wary of these figures given that federal elections were due in November.

The six pressures, when related to each other, can be seen to be of two categories. The first – including the need for moral support for the Dutch, the strategic importance of WNG, and public opinion – pushed Australian policy in its traditional direction. The second group, on the other hand, and involving fears of an attack plus those of Indonesia becoming communist, was pulling Australia away from a protectionist policy for WNG, and towards concentration on the Indonesian problem. (Anxieties over Dutch determination had the ability to pull either way). Before 1958, this contradiction had not existed, at least in terms of Australian convictions.

Cabinet’s response to these two diverging forces was to try to address both, without giving up either – even if this meant foregoing ideal methods in each context. Support for arms aid to Jakarta was continued – for the sake of anti-communist elements – but on the condition that it was limited on the basis of type (that suited to internal security only) and quantity – and this was to encourage and appease the Dutch, pacify the electorate, and minimize the chance of invasion. For similar reasons, the Netherlands were to be supported both diplomatically and materially through exchanges of intelligence and Australian pressure for an international atmosphere of deterrence,²⁸

²⁶ Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in A1838/276, 3036/6/1, Pt 1, NAA.

²⁷ See Aitkin and Wolfers, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

²⁸ For references to the particular objectives mentioned in this and the previous sentence (apart from the logic behind them), see minutes of Cabinet meeting, 3 June 1958, in A4910, Vol. 7, NAA, Submission

but they were at this stage to be given no military promises, for these would be incommensurate with Australia's capabilities. Cabinet had not made final decisions, but in June and July, a 'balancing act' policy, with its roots in the Indonesian crisis of 1957-58, and first hinted at by Casey in May, emerged strongly.

III

This policy, and Australian activity over WNG which had followed Casey's cable, were consistent with what was earlier identified as the real, yet partial, decline of Australia's self-perceived role as a middle power. Hesitation over Luns' requests after 14 May, which again heightened tensions with the Dutch, drew further attention to diminishing confidence over Indonesia, and accentuated dependence on the US (at least in terms of coping with the Republic). Nevertheless, this occurred against the background of Casey's assurance that the Government would continue to represent Dutch and Australian interests to the Americans – and this showed that an independent mindset on WNG had not been discarded.

The finely balanced policy that came to prominence in June and July, and which crystallized the Australian response to a number of the specific issues raised by Luns, was of course the clearest illustration of the tangible but incomplete changes to the way that Australians viewed the status of their country. The Australians felt constrained to pay heed to the threat from Indonesia, and to the need to secure help from the US, in an area of foreign policy that had previously testified to Australia's 'imperial' approach to offshore SEA. Still, it is notable that these limitations were not considered to be of a magnitude great enough to cancel out the influence of other factors. In other words, the Menzies Government did not yet think the Indonesians were so dangerous, and dependence on the US and UK so necessary, that it had to ignore the inherent value of WNG, obligations to the Dutch, and Australian public opinion.

This said, it must also be recognised that both fear and dependence, and the commensurate rate of decline in faith in Australia's status, had increased since May. Obvious dependence on the US had before been confined to operations within the Indonesian sphere. Now, however, one of the generalized fears originally linked to the Indonesian civil war – that Jakarta's forces would in themselves become a threat – had become germane to WNG, and this meant defence of the buffer zone, previously

No. 1281, 8 July 1958, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/2/1, Pt 1, NAA, and Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in the same file.

Australia's prerogative as an 'imperial' power, was now thought to depend, to a large extent, on the attitude of the US. Indeed, during debate on 9 July, Menzies said that "the United States were the only people who could either deter (or combat) Indonesian aggression against Dutch New Guinea if it took place."²⁹ This assessment of Dutch-Australian strength, or lack of it, meant that any military plans for WNG were believed to be heavily constrained by American policy on the issue of invasion. Such thoughts were a far cry from the autonomous tenor of the Australian outlook in past years.

IV

Many of the methods of Cabinet's 'balancing act' were on display during Casey's talk to Lovink. It was an appointment that also revealed in stark terms the central aim of Luns' long line of requests.³⁰ Lovink, mirroring Luns' penchant for drama throughout the meeting, began by pointing again to what he portrayed as the very real danger of an invasion, mixing this observation with the threat that the Netherlands Government would probably ditch current WNG policy if Australia's military and diplomatic backing was not forthcoming. Then, as expected, he specifically asked "whether he could inform his government that in the event of an attack, it would receive immediate military support from Australia." On top of this, he intimated that, for the sake of deterrence, this should be publicly announced. In reply, Casey tried to both sooth and elude. He said Australia "regarded such an attack as out of the question", though if one of the kind envisaged by the Dutch occurred, "this would extend into something of very much greater consequence, with which neither the Netherlands nor Australia could cope." "Hence", he went on, "the importance of engaging the support of other allies – and in the Pacific the United States was the major power."³¹

The Dutch had not fully grasped, or did not want to accept, that Cabinet's attitude over WNG was changing. They were naturally happier with the situation, which had prevailed for most of the decade, in which the Menzies Government had shown scant regard for Indonesian capabilities, and been prepared to conflict with the US over Indonesia policy in order to protect the *status quo* in WNG. Unsurprisingly, then, Lovink by implication rejected Casey's presentation of the US position as critical. He contended that what the US did would be influenced by its policy of neutrality. What

²⁹ Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/2/1, Pt 1, NAA.

³⁰ See Tange's record of conversation between himself, Lovink, and Casey, 10 July 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

³¹ For a more detailed account of what Lovink was told of the significance of Australia's connection with the US, see Casey's record of the talk in his letter to Menzies, 11 July 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

was important for the Netherlands was whether the Dutch could rely on Australian support “in deeds as well as words.” The Ambassador remarked that, from what Casey had said, he would assume the Dutch would “stand alone” if an attack took place in the foreseeable future, and that if any military consultations or moves for active support were to be forthcoming, these would only be taken at the time.

Casey made a number of positive noises in response, but again would not assume any obligations. He argued that the US rejoinder to an attack would be very different to that demonstrated in a UN situation; “it would be bound to respond.” Meanwhile, Australia would use its “rather special relationship” with the US to ensure a clearer understanding of the serious situation presented by an attempted invasion. On the issue of a guarantee, Casey said he could not give a direct reply, though, echoing Menzies, “he did not believe that anyone could envisage the Dutch being left to stew in their own juice.” Concerning the problem of an exchange of intelligence, the Minister noted the topic was still under review,³² whilst Tange added that the delays had nothing to do with the fact that the third country was Indonesia. They were merely those to be expected with any intelligence problem.

A conversation between Menzies and Lovink at a dinner (ironically for Spender and his wife) on the same day again exemplified the tactics necessitated by the delicate temper of Australian policy. After outlining Casey’s comments – which Menzies affirmed as “a very proper account of the result of a Cabinet discussion”³³ – Lovink intimated that he would send a negative report to Luns. Menzies discouraged this, and suggested he should attempt to describe Australia’s feelings accurately to The Hague. In what was cold comfort for the Dutch, he also said:

[You] must not expect Australia to be entering into absolute commitments on so far reaching a matter...the determining factor in this matter might be the American attitude...we should all use such influence as we had to persuade the United States to lay a cool and warning hand on the Indonesian brow.³⁴

Perhaps sensing scepticism on Lovink’s part, he continued unconvincingly: “if it should turn out that the United States took quite definitely a view unfavourable to Dutch and Australian interests in New Guinea, a state of affairs would then arise which we would be, of course, willing to discuss and consider.” This evidently had little impact on the

³² Lovink also referred to the “lack of response to the request for military consultations”, but Casey did not directly respond to this.

³³ On 9 July, Cabinet had agreed that a paper entitled “Notes for talk with Dutch Ambassador” could be used as the basis for Casey’s discussions with him. See Cabinet minutes in A4910, Vol. 7, NAA.

³⁴ Menzies to Casey, 14 July 1958, in teleprinter message from Casey to Tange, 15 July 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

Ambassador, who told Plimsoll on 14 July that his talk with Casey would “cause consternation” in The Hague³⁵ – hardly an encouraging sign in the early navigation of Australia’s new course.

V

To gain a more comprehensive appreciation of the situation, six papers were prepared between June and early August by Defence, in cooperation with the DEA, on the Indonesia-WNG problem. The intention was to use these in the construction of a joint submission to Cabinet.³⁶ The papers, dealing explicitly with many of the problems pulling Australian policy in opposite directions, led not only to a considered and coherent bureaucratic response to them, but to a firm and clearly defined Cabinet position. More specifically, the memoranda confirmed recent changes in Australian policy in more ways than one; they added an articulate and independent voice to a number of the untested assumptions evinced by Cabinet; they bred recommendations (as embodied in a joint submission) that essentially endorsed the tactical approach of the previous weeks; and these proposals in turn resulted in the most wide-ranging Cabinet decisions on WNG of 1958 – decisions which nevertheless were consistent with preliminary choices of June and July.

Of the six papers, the most important were a review of WNG’s strategic significance, a report on the importance of Indonesia to Australian and regional defence, and an assessment of the likelihood of a successful Indonesian attack on the territory. An estimate of the military measures which could be taken in response to such an attack was also of note. The first, created under the auspices of the JPC as in 1956, proved a considerably diluted version to its previous form. C. T. Moodie (Assistant Secretary, Division 7, DEA) highlighted for Tange some of the central differences in a memorandum. Focussing on the conclusions, he remarked:

The holding of Australian New Guinea is no longer defined as “vital” but as the “final defence in depth of the Australian mainland” and thus “a primary objective of our defence strategy to hold”. Indonesian control of Netherlands New Guinea is no longer defined as “strategically unacceptable” but as a “grave potential strategic threat”. In the body of the Appreciation, again, such words as “vital” have been omitted and such words as “most important” substituted.³⁷

³⁵ Conversation between Plimsoll and Lovink, 14 July 1958, in A1838/1, 3036/6/1, Pt 29, NAA.

³⁶ See cover note by the Defence Liaison Branch (DEA), 15 August 1958, in A1838/269, TS696/3/3, Pt 1, NAA.

³⁷ C. T. Moodie (Assistant Secretary, Division Seven, DEA) to Tange, 18 June 1958, in A1838/269, TS696/3/3, Pt 1, NAA.

These alterations flowed from the conviction that Australia had few resources to commit to the defence of WNG, and apparently from fears in the JPC over the threat of a communist Indonesia. Moodie noted: “In general I should say that the J. P. C. were somewhat influenced by political considerations in this Appreciation and very much preoccupied with the practical problems of giving military support to the Dutch in what they say is the present state of our defences.” It is notable that judgements on the strategic importance of WNG were affected by observations regarding Australia’s ability to defend itself and its interests in the area. This squared with Cabinet thinking, in which changes in the strategic significance of WNG were symptomatic of feelings of fear and vulnerability associated with Indonesia.

In a meeting on 19 June, and later out of session, the Defence Committee endorsed the JPC study without amendment.³⁸ Therefore, the official Defence Department view on the significance of WNG was more qualified than it had been for most of the 1950s; NNG was important to Australia, but not “vital”. On top of this, and revealing that the higher levels of Defence had also come to believe that a solution had to be found for the dispute, the Committee directed that the JPC make a “detailed examination...of the political and military implications of “a neutralised Netherlands New Guinea.”” Tange has recently implied that the problem with the generals was that they did not “think”.³⁹ If by this he meant that they were unwilling to look at alternatives to the *status quo*, such an opinion failed to apply after mid-1958.

Another of the estimates written at this time – and one which had implications for the relative significance of WNG, and supported Cabinet’s feeling that a communist Indonesia was a danger – was that of the “Importance of Indonesia to Australian and Regional Defence”. This DC report argued unequivocally that Indonesia was vital in both respects. A central conclusion of the Committee was that the archipelago, lying between Australia and mainland SEA, and astride the NW approaches, was “of great strategic importance to Australia and constitutes a most important factor in both Australian and regional Defence.”⁴⁰ The basis of this view was explained in the findings that followed. First, the “size of Indonesia’s population and her economic possibilities” was seen to “endow her with a long term potential far in excess of her present importance.” Second, a “hostile” Indonesia was deemed capable of impairing

³⁸ Minutes of Defence Committee meetings of 19 June 1958 and out of session, dated 30 June 1958, in A1838/269, TS696/3/3, Pt 1, NAA.

³⁹ Speaking of DEA frustrations in 1956 with the Defence Committee, Tange said: “What we wanted these Generals to do, first of all, was to think.” Interview with Tange, 23 June 1998.

⁴⁰ Defence Committee report, “The Importance of Indonesia to Australian and Regional Defence”, July 1958, attached to DC minutes of 28 July 1958, in A1838/269, TS696/3/8, NAA.

Australia's relations with other Asian countries. Third and fourth – and the obvious focus as Indonesia became increasingly embroiled in the Cold War – it was stressed that

A Communist-controlled Indonesia would result in the establishment of a Communist state within a few hundred miles of Australia and assist the growth of Communist and neutralist sentiment throughout South East Asia....Indonesia could provide bases from which external Communist forces could operate against Australia and other neighbouring countries and communications within the region. In particular an air and submarine threat could develop very quickly especially if Indonesia were Communist or supported by the Communist bloc.

It was admitted Indonesia's current capacities were limited, but the Committee was careful to point out that this situation was not, of necessity, permanent: "In the long term, Indonesia could pose a serious threat to Australia in view of her potential and the possibility of support from the Communist bloc. With large-scale military aid, she could build up a substantial military capability which could well exceed that envisaged for the Australian defence forces." Finally, and in summary, it was contended that the "maintenance of a friendly or neutral Indonesia is of great importance to Australian and regional defence." Use of the phrase "great importance" placed Indonesia at least on a par with WNG regarding Defence's definition of strategic significance, and spoke of an outlook that was very different from previous years.⁴¹ The assumption had then been that Indonesia would remain, for the foreseeable future, a second-rate power. Projections were now quite different.

On 28 July, the Defence Committee considered the JIC's assessment of the likelihood of Indonesia gaining control of WNG before the end of 1960.⁴² Militarily speaking, the Intelligence Committee had concluded that each arm of the Indonesian forces was limited by sheer lack, and obsolescence, of equipment. They would therefore not, in the period under review, be able to embark upon the sort of comprehensive operations necessary for capturing all of NNG. Still, it was thought the Dutch were not capable of defending the territory in its entirety, and that the Indonesians had the ability to mount a landing of battalion strength in the south and south-west. Such a lodgement would, it was argued, take the Dutch an estimated four weeks to eliminate. In such a situation (and this conclusion was based on a section provided by the DEA),⁴³ Indonesia would not be forced to leave by the UN. Rather, a resolution might be passed calling for

⁴¹ For relevant past assessments, see JPC report No. 29/1956, compiled at meetings of 2, 10, and 17 May 1956, endorsed by the Chiefs of Staff (see memorandum by Tange, 1 June 1956, in same file), in A1838/269, TS696/3/2, Pt 2, NAA. See also an earlier Defence Committee version of the "Importance of Indonesia to Australian and Regional Defence", DC report No. 31/1957, compiled at a meeting of 14 February 1957, in A1838/269, TS696/2/2, Pt 4, NAA.

⁴² The JIC report (JIC (M) (58) 42, July 1958) can be found in A1838/269, TS666/42.

⁴³ See memorandum by Plimsoll, 4 June 1958, and attachment, in A1838/269, TS666/42.

a cease-fire, and even negotiations – an outcome that would “be detrimental to Dutch interests”, and “might result in the Dutch having to relinquish control of the territory in some measure.” In a similarly negative vein, the JIC decided that Indonesia might gain a degree of control over WNG if Dutch policy underwent modification. Such a modification was seen as likely if the Dutch thought there was a “growing Indonesian military or politico-military threat which could not be countered adequately by political and military means and/or that countries strategically interested in the maintenance of Dutch sovereignty were not prepared to contribute effectively to the Defence of the territory.”⁴⁴

The Defence Committee did not differ from the main JIC findings (although it constructed an alternative set of conclusions that more succinctly expressed the aim of the paper).⁴⁵ The basic tenor of Defence opinion on the matter, therefore, was that the main danger before the end of 1960 was not a major assault on WNG with the aid of Bloc weaponry, but a minor incursion followed by diplomatic action. Additionally, a slide in Dutch confidence could allow the Indonesians a foothold. These postulations confirmed those earlier expressed in Cabinet, but the judgement of Indonesia’s military capabilities was more subtle. Menzies had said baldly on 9 July that the US was the only power able to deter and combat Indonesian aggression.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the DC had decided that in the immediate future an Indonesian invasion would be dangerous, not due to overwhelming superiority, but because of Jakarta’s ability to combine a minor and temporary military success with a favourable political situation at the UN.⁴⁷

A complementary paper by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on “Military Measures Which Could be Taken in the Event of An Indonesian Attack on Netherlands New Guinea” confirmed this appreciation.⁴⁸ It also provided another qualification to views demonstrated in Cabinet – this time in connection with Casey’s claim that, practically speaking, Australia had nothing with which to back the Dutch up. The Chiefs thought that Australia and the Netherlands could, without the support of allies, and with

⁴⁴ Emphasis original.

⁴⁵ Conclusions of the Defence Committee, July 1958, attached to minute of DC, 28 July 1958, in A1838/269, TS666/42.

⁴⁶ See Casey to Tange, 9 July 1958, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/2/1, Pt 1, NAA.

⁴⁷ This view was supported by a paper entitled “Indonesian Military Capability up to 1960”. The basic verdict of this study, as reflected in its conclusions as revised by the DC, was that, in the period under review, Indonesian forces would be particularly limited in terms of large-scale operations, but might be able to engage in operations on a smaller scale. See this report, and the revised DC conclusions, entitled JIC (M) (58) 40 (Revise), July 1958, in A1838/269, TS666/40, NAA.

⁴⁸ Report by Chiefs of Staff Committee (CSC), “Military Measures Which Could Be Taken in the Event of an Indonesian Attack on Netherlands New Guinea”, July 1958, attached to CSC minutes of 24 and 30 July 1958, in A7941/2, I8, Pt 1, NAA.

careful cooperative preparation with the Dutch, repel an Indonesian invasion. Nevertheless, they would not be able to prevent an initial lodgement, and Australian forces could suffer from serious deficiencies without allied help. The existence of the first, moreover, would mean that Australian intervention would have to be “prompt and rapidly effective”. The time frame enabling effective intervention would be “a few weeks at most”, and the report warned that UN calls for a cease-fire could take place within hours. On the whole, the study implied that unless Australia and the Netherlands were acting within an ANZAM and ANZUS context, a small Indonesian force could land and, though this could be destroyed with time, it was reasonably likely that political events would prevent its elimination, allowing the Indonesians a permanent foothold on the island.⁴⁹

Overall, the papers made some important qualifications to the judgements of Cabinet, especially in relation to the question of an Indonesian invasion, but in general the assumptions and intuitive conclusions of the Ministers were upheld. West New Guinea remained important relative to Indonesia, but because of the rising threat of Indonesian communism, and the problems that would be encountered defending the island, Indonesia’s significance, and Australia’s need for US and UK help, had increased greatly. Dutch resolve, furthermore, was mentioned as a potentially critical extraneous factor.

VI

On 12 August, Defence and the DEA brought their joint submission on WNG to Cabinet. Unsurprisingly, this memorandum, and the result of its scrutiny, closely reflected the dove-tailing of essential public service and executive opinion. Divided into four basic sections, the paper incorporated an introduction, one segment on the external affairs aspects of Australian policy on WNG and Indonesia, another on military facets, and a final part embodying general observations and recommendations. The introduction noted that NNG had been brought before Cabinet again for two reasons; firstly, the chance of an Indonesian attack was “now less remote than had previously been assessed”, and secondly the Netherlands had proposed staff talks, and asked for assurances regarding an attempted invasion.⁵⁰ Describing Cabinet talks in June and July

⁴⁹ ANZAM was a command structure aimed at defence of the Australia, New Zealand, and Malaya area, and was operated by the Australian, New Zealand, and British governments.

⁵⁰ Submission No. 1312 can be found in A1838/269, TS696/3/3, Pt 1, NAA, or A4926, Vol. 54, NAA.

as “preliminary”, it was thought timely for Cabinet to look at Australian WNG policy as a whole.” This, in turn, involved three fundamental questions:

How much importance do we attach to the Dutch remaining in western New Guinea? What are the offsetting disadvantages of their remaining? Is there any desirable or acceptable alternative?

The first part of the body of the paper, dealing with pertinent political points, some of which had been outside the terms of reference of the six Defence papers, opened with a consideration of why Australia had supported the Dutch. Apart from a conviction that the Dutch case was legally incontrovertible, the arguments for support were identified as the danger of having an unreliable (and potentially communist) Indonesia as occupying power, as opposed to the “safer” and “smoother” one of the Dutch. The Netherlands administration also served the interests of the inhabitants better. The policy flowing from these considerations, the submission went on, had nonetheless brought with it a number of disadvantages: it caused antagonism between Australia and a potentially menacing neighbour, and it agitated the Afro-Asian group. On top of this, “some” had argued that transfer to Indonesia would make a communist takeover in the archipelago less likely. Moreover, if the Dutch pulled out Australia “would have backed the losing side.”

Focussing on the potentially negative aspects of the Dutch commitment, it was remarked voices in the Netherlands against Dutch policy had been heard since 1950, but these had not come from the mainstream. “Nevertheless”, the paper argued, “there are clear indications that this mood of obstinate determination to hold on at all costs may be fading”. There were now doubts as to whether WNG could be defended without aid, and the Dutch were asking for staff talks and a pledge of military assistance. This, it was implied, was a factor that had brought Australia to the crossroads:

If Australia is not able to give, either unilaterally or in consort with major allies, some assurance of military support, the Dutch may decide that they cannot accept the sole burden and throw their hand in. Can Australia accept the political, economic, and military consequences of giving such a commitment? Is it within our capacity to do so?

The impression given was that Australia had been – through circumstance – forced into a corner. There were great disadvantages to both Netherlands and Indonesian occupation, and now the Dutch might crumple anyway. Thus, it was thought “logical to look whether there is some acceptable alternative to either Dutch or Indonesian sovereignty”. The DC it was noted, had shown an interest in a “neutralised” WNG, but the DEA, for its part, had not found an option that did not contain substantial risks. Still,

it could “not be said absolutely” that no alternative along the above-mentioned lines did not exist, and it was felt it could be valuable for Australia to secretly “plan ahead”.

Consistent with the popularity of a Papuan state in External Affairs, the importance of the indigenous population was emphasized at this juncture. It was the people of New Guinea, the submission claimed, and not the legality of the Netherlands position, that would appeal to the delegations of the UN. Self-determination, however, would take an estimated 40 to 50 years to complete, and the world would not wait this long before deciding the territory’s status. Consequently, it was believed Australia’s “best hope is that the Netherlands can build up over the next few years a significant body of opinion in Netherlands New Guinea which can and will assert its wish not to be incorporated in Indonesia.” This was deemed an important and valid consideration regardless of whether Australia chose to back a continued Dutch presence or an alternative to Indonesian rule.

The second main section of the paper reproduced the findings of the six Defence papers prepared from June onward. No attempt was made by Defence at this point to coalesce the findings into a series of basic observations. Rather, the observations of External Affairs were afterward combined with the military ones to form a series of general conclusions, followed by recommendations. It was said the Dutch presence might allow a movement to self-determination that “encourages future association with the people of Australian New Guinea rather than with Asia”. This, and the legal right of the Dutch to sovereignty, “lead Australia to support the Dutch”. In contrast, and secondly, it was remarked that self-determination was a long-term goal, “whereas Indonesian capability is likely to increase substantially in the next few years.” Additionally, maintenance of support for the Dutch would obstruct friendly relations with the Republic, and a hostile Indonesia could threaten Australia and prevent Australian forces from contributing elsewhere. In terms of The Hague, the Dutch Government could unilaterally withdraw from WNG. The idea of neutralization, though not dismissed earlier, was basically ruled out with the judgement that the UN and Indonesia would not accept it, and the dispute would continue.

The resulting proposals were fundamentally geared to enabling WNG to face east, rather than west, via a diplomatic path that contained less risk – and that accounted for the perceived importance of Indonesia as implicit in Cabinet’s policy of balance – than one based on Australian and Dutch armed force. Australian policy, it was argued, should “for the present be directed to keeping the Dutch in New Guinea.” With this in view, vigorous cooperation was to be encouraged between the administrations on the

island, whilst Canberra should try to “make Indonesia of the opinion that...an attack on Netherlands New Guinea would be unsuccessful”; the building of an international atmosphere opposed to force would be the primary means by which this would be done. In regard to the US, it was to be told frankly how Australia viewed the strategic situation, with the goal of establishing agreed courses of action. The level of military commitment to the Dutch would match that given by the Americans. Specifically, Australia should not give any guarantee concerning military combat assistance if the US was unwilling, and the Dutch were not to be informed of this condition. The possibility of military aid short of this could be studied, but no decision would be conveyed until after wider talks with Washington. This principle should also apply to staff talks. Contrarily, New Zealand and the UK would be informed and consulted. On the long-term front – and this was given no great place in the recommendations – it was suggested the DEA, with the DT, look secretly at alternatives such as trusteeship, particularly if the Dutch appeared likely to capitulate.

Cabinet discussed the submission at length. Before a general conversation, Casey and McBride reiterated points “to which they attached particular importance.”⁵¹ Casey said the memorandum had come before Cabinet for two main reasons: firstly, “Indonesia’s capacity and intentions” had changed and, secondly, he needed instructions for upcoming talks with Luns, Selwyn Lloyd, and Dulles. He then emphasized his opinion that “Australia’s policy should be to use all possible methods of deterring the Indonesians from beginning any military venture”. “It was true” that a Dutch-Australian force could repulse an Indonesian lodgement “after a short interval”, but international political factors meant that there “was quite a chance...that the matter would not be fully tested militarily.” (Privately, Casey also believed, as he made Plimsoll aware, that it “is impossible to contemplate our using force in support of the Dutch”, ostensibly because this “would put us completely in the wrong with...South and South East Asia – and would destroy, at one blow, everything that we have been trying to do for the last ten years”).⁵² Looking further ahead, he said trusteeship contained numerous difficulties, and argued that any consideration of it be kept from the Dutch, and even the Americans.

Picking up on the question of deterrence, and showing that his thinking had changed little since 9 July, Menzies thought the US might be convinced to sign a joint declaration to the effect that an attack by Indonesia would be viewed as an act of

⁵¹ Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 12 August 1958, in A4910/XM1, Vol. 7, NAA.

⁵² Emphasis original. See attachment to Casey to Plimsoll, 6 August 1958, in A1838/277, 3036/6/1, Pt 30, NAA. This is an important document showing that the Minister, at this stage, was in solid agreement with the thrust of the DEA section of the submission.

aggression. This, against the backdrop of traditional American caution over NG, was a rather hopeful suggestion, though the Prime Minister did admit “it would not be easy.” He then proceeded to broach an even more problematic idea. He supposed it might be possible to “arraign Indonesia before the Security Council on the ground that her provocative actions or statements were threatening the peace.” This, he thought, might force Indonesia to issue such a vehement denial as to make an attack diplomatically difficult for a long period, or a luke-warm Indonesian reaction might pave the way for a UN action such as the dispatch of Observer Corps. Russia would veto this, but “the exercise would not be valueless.” Menzies interest in deterrence, which was one of the central recommendations in the submission, was consistent with the approach taken regarding the Dutch in the previous 10 weeks, and it hinted at the nature of the decisions to be made by Cabinet on the next day.

McBride, taking his turn, drew attention to the strategic significance of WNG. He said Defence thought of ENG as important, and DNG therefore “very little lower.” However, there were two unfortunate circumstances facing Australia at this time. On one hand, Australia was limited, in practical terms, in how much help it could give the Dutch and, on the other, Indonesia’s military strength was “growing”. He implied this would not be a problem in the short-run, if enough cooperative planning was done, and if political problems did not intrude. He made no comments on the long-term, but the Ministers were well aware that the increase of military muscle mentioned was not likely to cease in the near future.

General debate between the Ministers revealed some conflict. The most glaring divergence was over the strategic importance of Indonesia as opposed to WNG. In what would have been earlier viewed as ‘heresy’, some Ministers said:

the real question for Australia was whether Indonesia was hostile or friendly. A hostile Indonesia without West New Guinea could be equally as dangerous to Australia as a hostile Indonesia which included West New Guinea and, while the question of West New Guinea remained unresolved, this fact tended to make Indonesia hostile.

Others, speaking later in the talk, commented that the idea of backing the Dutch only to the extent rendered by the US was “too negative”. Rather, they held that

the proper course should be to tell the United States that Australia would be fully obliged to support the Dutch in the face of an Indonesian attack and to seek American assistance in this eventuality...this was a matter of fundamental principle and...Australia should be ready to stand, and, if necessary, fight against an aggressor and this all the more so when Australia’s own vital interests were involved.

This dissension is perhaps a partial explanation for the middle-of-the-road path taken earlier by Cabinet – that is, the determination to look after interests in both Indonesia and WNG, despite the increasing difficulty of doing so. More significantly, however, it appears that key figures in Cabinet were convinced that the central points of both sides were valid and pertinent. In a continuation of conversation the next day, the Prime Minister brought his weight to bear in favour of the cautious juggling act already in place. Beginning a summary of “discussion and the issues”, he said ENG was “vital”, and the loss of WNG would make its defence, and that of Australia, more difficult.⁵³ Against this, there was a “strong possibility” of the Dutch leaving, and one of the reasons they had remained thus far “has been the strong moral support of Australia.” Now the Dutch were asking for a promise to fight. This, Menzies thought, meant that if a “blunt answer” of ‘no’ were given, “we can expect the Dutch to leave sooner rather than later”. Additionally, respect for Australia in SEA would fall, and “public opinion in Australia would be seriously troubled.” It followed that such a blunt answer should currently be avoided. Similarly, a military commitment – which would have “undesirable political consequences...at the present time” (and here he was thinking primarily of repercussions on the US fight against communism in Indonesia, and on US-Australian relations) – could not be given for now. The other reasons, not mentioned by Menzies in this context, but raised by the Ministers earlier in the conversation, were that Australia could give only “limited” assistance to the Dutch, and that Indonesia appeared capable of gaining “a lodgement[, which] might satisfy the immediate political objectives of President Sukarno”.

At heart then, Australian policy was maintained, rather than altered. Australia still supported Dutch sovereignty, and did not want the Indonesians in WNG. There remained too many factors in favour of this to think of abandoning traditional policy. Nevertheless, the price Australia was able and willing to pay for the maintenance of the *status quo* had greater limits than hitherto thought. Not surprisingly, re-commitment to the duality of WNG policy consolidated tactical elements that had already been employed. Certainly, the only way to sustain long-established policy, keeping in mind a lesser preparedness to make sacrifices and a more risky environment, was to further develop the tactic of bluff. Endorsing a suggestion in the submission, Menzies thought the US needed to be convinced to become actively involved in deterring Indonesia from making an attack. This was something Casey should raise with Dulles. He would appeal on the familiar basis of the expectation that the US realized the strategic centrality of

⁵³ Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 13 August 1958, in A4910/XM1, Vol. 7, NAA.

WNG to Australian defence. In The Hague, Casey had to keep the Dutch guessing; they should be told not to push Australia “too hard”, and that the US had to become “better aware” and “more active”. Nonetheless, they should be given the “impression” that a future commitment by Australia was “not impossible”. Menzies thought Dutch attention should also be diverted to deterrence, and that they ought to be told an exchange of intelligence on a broad level was possible (though staff talks were presently not practicable).

Predictably, Cabinet endorsed Menzies’ proposals.⁵⁴ In doing so, it exhibited a conviction that the old policy could be melded with new needs and realities. Effort, ingenuity, and an eye to improvisation might be required, but the middle road was not necessarily utopian. This perspective remained at the heart of Australian policy over the next few months.

VII

In general, further interaction with the Dutch, and the Cabinet decisions of August, merely reaffirmed perceptions that Australia’s status as an ‘imperial’ power had taken a series of blows. Fear of Indonesia, and subsequently greater dependence on the US, was again shown in a context (WNG) that had previously testified to the sum (Australia as the offshore power) of opposite characteristics (fearlessness and independence) – and the process was again revealed as incomplete; the Australian Government was not intimidated or subordinate to the extent that it forewent a policy that the Indonesians hated and the US thought a nuisance.

Keeping this in mind, greater fear of Indonesia than before, and an accelerated loss of independence over WNG, was evident – as had been the case in the May to July period. In refusing to provide a military guarantee, the need to take account of “political” considerations had now been added to restrictions imposed by military weakness. In saying that Australia “did not wish to part company” with, or “create problems” for, the US over a pact,⁵⁵ Menzies was showing that the struggle against Indonesian communism was now viewed so gravely that the need for US-Australian cooperation had to be allowed to limit buffer policy. In short then, the perceived need for dependence had grown, and this was because apprehension over the communist menace had, by inference, also increased. In a wider sense, this axiomatically meant confidence in the concept of Australia as a middle power had again slipped, if incrementally.

⁵⁴ Its only addition was to order that no studies of trusteeship be made, even at a secret level.

⁵⁵ Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 13 August 1958, in A4910/XM1, Vol. 7, NAA.