

Chapter 3: Typical 1950s Australian WNG Policy: the United Nations Campaign, 1954

I

By late 1952, the basic dynamics of the dispute – as they were to remain for most of the 1950s – had been set. The Dutch, though they had wavered in December 1950 by offering to pass sovereignty over WNG to the Union,¹ had hardened against giving any real concessions to the Indonesians. In October 1952, the new W. Drees Government, which included the tough-minded Foreign Minister, Joseph Luns, publicly announced that it would not relinquish WNG, or accept restriction of its full sovereignty in any way.² Rather, it would develop the territory to the point of self-determination. Further negotiations on issues of substance, which had failed again in February, were also rejected. The Indonesians, meanwhile, remained determined to achieve complete transfer, and had become increasingly frustrated and angry with the Dutch. Still, owing to military weakness, their successive governments had settled into a pattern of prosecuting the Irian campaign through standard political and legal channels.

The American position had changed a little since 1950, but not in an unpredictable manner. The administration of Democrat Harry S. Truman had adopted a more strict policy of neutrality – by trying to dampen tempers over WNG, whilst refusing to encourage or discourage negotiations – as the problem had become more intractable.³ This was conceived as a temporary measure, until the climate of Dutch-Indonesian relations became more favourable to compromise, but it was actually to endure as the US *modus operandi* until 1961.⁴

The British stand had altered considerably after the re-election of a Tory Government in October 1951. Though new Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden continued to support Bevin's policy of 'cold storage'⁵ – the strategy, which had emerged early in

¹ Cablegram 565 from The Hague, 27 December 1950, in A1838/283, TS3036/6/1, Pt 2, NAA.

² Cablegram 589 from The Hague, 30 October 1952, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 5, NAA.

³ See Acheson to Richard Casey (Australian Minister for External Affairs as of April 1951) in cablegram 163 from Spender to Casey, 4 February 1952, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/1, Pt 3, NAA; Acheson to Cochran, 25 January 1952, in *FRUS*, Vol. XII, Pt 2, 1952-54, 'East Asia and the Pacific', pp. 249-51; and A. F. Peterson (position unidentified) to A. B. Foster (Deputy Director, Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, State Department), 17 October 1952, 756C.00/10-1752, Box 3748, RG 59, DF 1950-54, A2.

⁴ For an example of American policy after the election in November 1952 of Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, see telegram 1306 from John Foster Dulles (US Secretary of State) to The Hague, 30 March 1953, 756C.00/3/1953, Box 3748, RG 59, DF 1950-54, A2.

⁵ 'Cold storage' was not, as has been claimed (see Haupt, *op.cit.*, p. 117, and Viviani, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-75), first adopted by the Dutch, and later borrowed by Casey. Rather, it was a British idea developed in 1950, and proposed to Menzies as a policy in January 1951. The Prime Minister adopted this concept for different reasons to the British – a decision later aided by an Indonesian feeling that negotiations should be postponed for a time, and by a Dutch Cabinet crisis. For this sequence of events surrounding the

the year, of encouraging the Dutch and Indonesians to shelve the WNG problem for a period – this disguised significant fundamental modification. Under Bevin, the ‘icebox’ policy, as it was otherwise known, was a stop-gap measure in the absence of the preferred method of encouraging negotiations. For Eden, ‘cold storage’ became the ideal, whilst talks were viewed as an option to be used should this become impossible.⁶ In effect, Eden was seeking perpetuation of the *status quo* – and not only because of a desire to strengthen links with the Dutch in Europe, but also because of an eagerness to engender greater traditional ‘family’ intimacy with the Australian Government.⁷ In spite of the fact that ‘cold storage’ was soon to disappear, these motives stayed at the heart of a British policy of ‘no change’.

In Australia, Spender, as a result of ill-health, had tendered his resignation in April 1951. But he did not disappear. On Menzies’ advice, he accepted the position of Australian Ambassador to the United States – a vantage point from which he exerted influence on Australian WNG policy until the end of his tenure in 1958. His replacement as Minister for External Affairs was Richard Casey. Casey was a very different man, both in background and temperament, to his predecessor. From a wealthy and well-connected family, Casey was educated at Melbourne Grammar School, the University of Melbourne, and Cambridge University. His career prior to 1951, aided immeasurably by connections in Australian and British high society, was remarkable in its scope. In the First World War, he was a junior Staff Officer in the Australian Army, and afterward, in 1924, he was appointed as a representative of the Australian Government in London by Prime Minister Stanley Bruce. In 1931, he returned to Australia, joined the UAP, and became Federal Member for Corio. Two years later he was admitted to Cabinet as an Assistant Minister (Treasury), and he became Treasurer in his own right in 1935. Casey had ambitions of becoming Prime Minister, but they received a blow in 1934 with Menzies’ arrival in Canberra. Though Menzies was looked upon by some as arrogant,⁸ he had a sharper mind than Casey, and was certainly a better politician. The two men had a strained relationship from this time on – a fact not without importance in the 1950s – and when Menzies became Prime Minister in 1939,

emergence of ‘cold storage’, see J. D. Murray (Head, SEA Department, FO) to E. Dening (Assistant Under Secretary of State, FO), 5 September 1950, in FO 371/83706, PRO; telegram 4 from FO to Jakarta; 11 January 1950, in FO 371/192469, PRO; cablegram 303 from Menzies to A. Fadden (Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) and Spender, 18 January 1951; and cablegram 26 from Hood to Spender, 11 January 1951, in A1838/276, TS3036/6/1, Pt 3, NAA.

⁶ See minute by Murray, 20 November 1951, and the reply of Anthony Eden (British Foreign Secretary), 22 November 1951, in FO 371/92473, PRO.

⁷ For an example of the British willingness to largely harmonize its position with that of Australia, see attachment to memorandum by Murray, 28 December 1951, in FO 371/101094, PRO.

⁸ Spender, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-54.

he exiled Casey from Canberra, sending him to Washington as head of the Australian Legation.

Casey had tremendous success in the US in raising Australia's profile, and establishing a rapport with numerous highly-ranked and influential figures. However, he grew increasingly unhappy after the Labor Government defeated the UAP on the floor of the House in 1941, and in 1942 accepted an extraordinary offer from Churchill to become British Minister resident in the Middle East. Here he became acquainted with many of the important Allied military leaders of the War. In 1943, Casey had wanted to return to Australian politics, but Labor was re-elected, and he chose instead the post of Governor of Bengal. This proved a difficult job, but, significantly, it brought him into contact with Asian anti-colonial feeling. Casey left Bengal hoping to take over leadership of the newly-formed Liberal Party from Menzies, but he missed the 1946 elections, and instead had to take a fund-raising role as party President. In 1949 he won the seat of La Trobe, and entered Cabinet as Minister of Works and Housing, and Minister of Supply and Development (later National Development). He was unhappy under Menzies, who was now firmly ensconced as party leader, but Menzies seems to have acknowledged his unparalleled array of contacts in Washington and London, along with his Asian experience, and therefore appointed him to External Affairs upon Spender's departure. It was a position he was to occupy for almost a decade.

As a person, Casey was perhaps the quintessential British gentleman – he was emotionally limited, especially with regard to the expression of intimacy, though inculcated with the notions of decency, manliness, and duty.⁹ He was also shy, and yet highly sociable – and had developed a tendency to consult constantly with 'experts', rather than read about a subject.¹⁰ The latter was a habit that was to mark his tenure as Minister for External Affairs through his emphasis on the value of personal diplomacy – and it perhaps flowed from the high value he placed upon being 'practical'. Certainly, Casey was no intellectual (some Cabinet colleagues, perhaps harshly, characterized him as a lightweight),¹¹ nor was he creative by nature; he was more in the mould of a hard-working servant.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the changeover from Spender to Casey had been relatively seamless in terms of WNG policy. Vigorous support for the 'cold storage' expedient in 1951-52 had not been indicative of a fundamental deviation in policy. Nor was the new

⁹ See W. J. Hudson, *Casey*, Melbourne, 1986, p. 15, and Spender, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁰ Hudson, *Casey*, pp. 25, 27.

¹¹ See P. Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, Melbourne, 1997, p. 87.

¹² Hudson, *Casey*, pp. 25, 241.

tactic of “curing the boil” adopted in 1953.¹³ The Australians – realizing that Indonesia did not intend to give up its Irian campaign, but was rather seeking to ‘internationalize’ the dispute – tried to persuade the US and UK to declare to the Indonesians their opposition to Jakarta’s claim. The Australians still thought their security was best protected by barring the Indonesians from NG, and by encouraging a Dutch presence of some kind. The only adjustment of enduring significance between 1951 and 1953 was the decision to back complete Dutch sovereignty, without any thought of partial Australian government.¹⁴ It is impossible to determine exactly when this choice was made – and, in reality, it is likely that it ‘emerged’ gradually in 1951 – but the point is that, with this development, the attitudes that were to be remembered as the cornerstones of archetypal 1950s Australian policy were given final definition.

II

In 1954, the now established positions of Britain, America, Indonesia, and Australia were shown clearly in action. As such, it was year which epitomized the nature of the dispute as a whole before the critical events of 1958. The occurrence that animated the year’s proceedings was a decision by the Indonesian Government to ‘internationalize’ the campaign to gain ‘freedom’ for Irian. Though 1953 had been a relatively quiet year in the absence of Dutch-Indonesian negotiations, the Indonesians had begun to move towards using the United Nations as a means of forcing the Netherlands to back down.¹⁵ (Almost concurrently, the Australians had consolidated their supportive relationship with the Dutch by making an agreement for administrative cooperation between East and West New Guinea).¹⁶ Officials in Jakarta appear to have believed that if a pro-Indonesian resolution could be passed by the General Assembly, the Dutch, although not legally bound by such an act, could be coerced because of resultant political isolation.

The Australians, of course, were not given early official notice of Indonesian plans, though it was not difficult for them to see that policy was heading in an ‘internationalist’ direction. In February they heard of indications that the Indonesians

¹³ The expression is Casey’s. See Casey Family Papers, R. G. Casey (Lord) *Diaries* (hereafter Casey, *Diaries*), 10 September 1953, MS 6150, Series 4, Box 27, Vol. 15, p. 288.

¹⁴ An outcome of this decision, and the tough policy of the new Drees Government of 1952, was the Netherlands-Australian cooperative agreement of July 1953. This involved mutual aid between the NG administrations in areas such as communications, health, and education. Politically speaking, it was geared to holding the Dutch to WNG for an indefinite (and preferably long) period.

¹⁵ See savingram 5 from Jakarta, 9 April 1953, and memorandum by Gilchrist for T. W. Eckersley (Counsellor, Pacific Branch, DEA), 13 April 1953, in A1838/278. 3036/6/1, Pt 6A, NAA.

¹⁶ See summary of Dutch-Australian meeting, Canberra, 7 July 1953, in A1838/278, 309/1/1, Pt 3, NAA.

had been approaching other countries in Southeast Asia *vis-à-vis* WNG,¹⁷ and a month later J. C. G. Kevin, the Australian Minister and *Charge d'affaires* in Jakarta, reported a decision at a conference of Indonesian diplomats to pursue a “more active” policy on WNG – something that would express itself in approaches to other governments of “like thinking”.¹⁸ Kevin also remarked that he had spoken to Hugh Cumming, the US Ambassador to Indonesia, who said he believed “things were steaming up over Dutch New Guinea”, and related confidentially that the Indonesians had asked for American support, “or at least that the United States attitude of neutrality be maintained.”

It was not long before the Australians clashed with the Indonesians in the diplomatic sphere – albeit indirectly. Given that the Colombo Conference of Asian Prime Ministers was approaching, there were fears in Canberra that the Indonesians might use the opportunity to seek support for their claim.¹⁹ In a forthright move, the Australian High Commissioner in Ceylon was asked by Canberra to seek an opportunity to explain the Australian position to the Prime Minister of that country, and perhaps suggest to him that he should not approve of the Indonesian claim. Fortunately for the Australians, the Ceylonese Prime Minister said he believed the Indonesian claim to be a colonial one, and that he not only disagreed with it, but would actively discourage Indonesia from raising the question at the conference.²⁰ In the event, the Indonesians did not mention the issue in any formal session, having apparently been told “no dice” by the Ceylonese in a closed informal meeting.²¹

This was a pleasing result for the Australians, especially considering Ceylon’s position as a newly-independent Asian state. On the other hand, officials at the DEA knew that this was for them merely the opening sortie in what promised to be a long campaign. Certainly, there were constant signals that Indonesia’s actions were preparatory to a concerted assault in the UN General Assembly. In early May, for example, the Burmese *Charge d'affaires* in Jakarta told the Australian Embassy that he thought the Indonesians might raise the Irian problem in the UN,²² while Indonesia’s

¹⁷ C. T. Moodie (DEA Officer, London) to Tange, 16 February 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 10, NAA.

¹⁸ Savingram 13 from J. C. G. Kevin (Australian Minister and *Charge d'affaires*, Jakarta), 23 March 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 10, NAA.

¹⁹ Memorandum 202 from J. Plimsoll (Assistant Secretary, Geographical Regions Division, DEA) to A. R. Cutler (Australian High Commissioner, Colombo), 25 March 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 10, NAA.

²⁰ Letter from Cutler to Watt, 15 April 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 10, NAA.

²¹ See Cablegram 83 from Jakarta, 10 May 1954, and savingram 73 from Washington, 25 May 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

²² Conversation between C. Lee (Counsellor, Australian Embassy, Jakarta) and Mya Sein (Burmese *Charge d'affaires*, Jakarta), 4 May 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

nationalist *Merdeka* newspaper stated the country's "new tactics in regard to West Irian is [*sic*] still secret but will be executed when the right time comes."²³ Three weeks later, Abu Hanifah (head of the UN and American Division, Indonesian Foreign Ministry) asked Kevin "whether Australia could not adopt an attitude of neutrality", and claimed "that if Australia sided with the Dutch in any international forum, "Indonesia's enemies"...would make much of this fact".²⁴ Hanifah need hardly have added that reference of the problem to the UN was "possible".

As the Indonesians looked to a multilateral solution, their historical relationship with the Dutch ground towards its death. Between June and August discussions were held at The Hague to determine the future of the Union, and it was decided that the institution should be abolished – although various separate agreements were to be signed. From a Dutch point of view the retention of some formal links was desirable in order to protect the expatriate community in the Republic, and to maintain the substantial economic interests they still had there. In the long-run, this was a vain wish. The residual anti-Dutch feeling – greatly exacerbated over the WNG issue – that drove the Indonesians to reject the symbol of continued Netherlands influence, would also provoke them to destroy the reality of that influence.

The most important immediate effect of the conclusion of Union discussions was that the Indonesians were now able to devote themselves fully to the planned international thrust for West Irian. At the close of the conference, Sunarjo, the Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs, made a formal public protest against the unilateral Dutch decision to rule over Irian and to refuse to discuss the problem further.²⁵ On the same day, Ruslan Abdulgani, Secretary General of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, confirmed that the Republic would bring the question before the General Assembly in the form of a request for the Dutch to resume negotiations over the territory.²⁶

The Australian response to this move was suggested a week later by Casey in parliament:

I think I can forecast the attitude of the Australian Government that we will resist the matter being included in the agenda in the forthcoming U. N. Assembly. However, it may be beyond our power to stop the matter being discussed at the U. N. When it is discussed we will again with

²³ Quotation in cablegram 83 from Jakarta, 10 May 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

²⁴ Conversation between Kevin and Abu Hanifah (Head, UN and American Division, Indonesian Foreign Ministry), 1 June 1954, attached to Kevin to A. H. Tange (Secretary, DEA, as of 26 January 1954), 5 June 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

²⁵ Cablegram 237 from The Hague, 11 August 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

²⁶ Cablegram 161 from Kevin, 11 August 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

force, but I hope without heat, express our view on this matter. Dutch New Guinea is a matter of very great strategic importance to Australia.²⁷

Thus, the Australian line of defence was twofold. The first action would be an attempt to shipwreck the Indonesian scheme before it got out to sea. Under the procedural rules set down in the UN Charter, any item on the provisional agenda was first set before the General Committee, which then made recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the item's inclusion or rejection concerning the agenda proper.²⁸ The Australians had the right to argue against any pro-Indonesian item in the General Committee, in the hope of attaining a negative recommendation, which might then prejudice voting in the next phase. Before a vote in the General Assembly, a simple majority of which was necessary for the transfer of an item from the provisional to the effective agenda, the Australians again had a chance to argue their case, and lobby for exclusion. Success for Australia in either the General Committee and, more importantly, in the Assembly, would be ideal, but its probability was low; most members of the UN voted for the inclusion of any item not deemed to be aimed at grossly misusing the organization's function.

Australia's second plan, as Casey mentioned, would involve a clear statement of Government policy on WNG, but this, in turn, would be part of an overall attempt to ensure the Indonesians did not gain the requisite two-thirds majority for the passing of a General Assembly resolution favourable to their claim.²⁹ In this context, the Australians were also aware it would be important in 1954 to create precedents inimical to the realization of Indonesian ambitions. Because the General Assembly met annually, it was likely Indonesia might, if it failed at first, raise WNG repeatedly in the hope of securing a change in the previous year's voting configuration. This, however, would be difficult if a large blocking group was established, for it was not typical for the bulk of member nations to alter their initial stance on issues regularly before the Assembly. A small oppositional minority, on the other hand, would give the Indonesians much greater hope of altering the situation to their advantage – particularly as the proportion of Third World members increased. Therefore, though the Australians were focussed first on fighting WNG's inclusion on the agenda, and then on defeating the threat of a

²⁷ Copy of answer to question without notice in the House, 18 August 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 11, NAA.

²⁸ See the UN document, "Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly", quoted in S. D. Bailey, *The General Assembly of the United Nations: A Study of Procedure and Practice*, London, 1960, pp. 276-301.

²⁹ A two-thirds majority (as opposed to a simple one) was necessary for decisions on questions seen to be "important", including "recommendations with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security". See *ibid.*, p. 19.

successful Indonesian resolution, they were aware that events following the dispute's introduction to the UN contained critical possibilities in the long-term.

For the Australians, the battle over inscription was predictably not very encouraging. In the lead up to General Committee debate, a member of the Australian Embassy in Washington inferred to Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell-Smith that the US should oppose inscription,³⁰ but a week later Arthur Tange, Watt's replacement as Secretary of the DEA, told Casey that the American attitude would apparently involve abstention on inscription and anything following.³¹ Even the British were not particularly enthusiastic about the Australian approach. On 15 September, they passed an *aide memoire* to the DEA, which said that the UK Embassy in The Hague had been "instructed to inform the Netherlands Government that...they would be wiser to...accept the inscription of the item", although it was also noted the British Government would not oppose Netherlands policy if the Dutch were determined to resist.³² The Australians had already told the British they would not be moved, pending Dutch views, and the Netherlands decided to ignore UK advice, so London reluctantly went along with Dutch-Australian tactics, yet this minor divergence was a harbinger of worse to come.

General Committee debate began on 22 September. Indonesia's representative, Dr Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro, adopted tactics – involving both claims of Indonesian good faith and implicit threats – that were to become familiar to members of the UN over the following years. He argued that his country had consistently attempted to solve the dispute by peaceful means, and that Dutch refusal to discuss the question contradicted the provisions of the Round Table agreements and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.³³ In contrast, he also spoke of those "who would prefer to meet the problem with drastic and extreme measures", and claimed that "continued abeyance of this dispute will certainly increase tensions to a degree endangering not only relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, but the peace and security of that important area of Southeast Asia itself." Taking account of these statements, and the claim in Indonesia's explanatory memorandum that the Dutch were suppressing a

³⁰ Cablegram 864 from Washington, 2 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

³¹ Cablegram 99 from Tange to Casey, 11 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

³² Memorandum by Office of UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 15 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA. The Australians also had problems with NZ and Canada; see cablegram 455 from Casey to P. R. Heydon (Australian High Commissioner, Wellington), 23 September 1954, and Casey to Lester Pearson (Secretary of State, Canadian DEA), 24 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

³³ Speech by Dr Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro (Acting Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN), 22 September 1954, in the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs publication, *The Question of West Irian in the United Nations, 1954-1957*, Jakarta, 1958, pp. 13-16.

movement for freedom in Irian, the Australian representative, Sir Douglas Copland, said that Australia approached the question “with the friendliest attitude towards Indonesia”, but added “We cannot feel that this is a matter of acute dispute, of injustice, of discontent on the part of the people concerned, or in any way causing a disturbance to peace that would require invocation of the United Nations Charter”.³⁴ Airing the issue, he went on, would not be in the interests of the West Papuans and would create tensions that did not currently exist.³⁵ Finally, Copland attacked Indonesia’s claim that WNG rightfully belonged to the Republic:

Nor do we think that the legal grounds have any real substance. We do not feel that there is a case. Nor can we feel from our knowledge of the Territory that ethnically, culturally or linguistically, the people of New Guinea have a close affinity with the peoples of Indonesia.³⁶

Like Tjondronegoro’s address, Copland’s defence, in its challenge to the idea that the dispute was dangerous, and particularly with its emphasis on WNG’s separateness from Indonesia, foreshadowed what was to become a common argument on the part of his country. A notably absent facet of the Australian thesis was any reference to the basis of the Menzies Government’s interest in the dispute: that of the perceived strategic importance of WNG. In fact, this element was to play an increasingly smaller role in public justifications of Australian policy, and it was a development that sprang from the internationalization of the struggle over WNG, combined with the growing influence of the anti-colonial bloc in the UN. The Australians realised that if they were to have any hope of fending off the Indonesian campaign in the UN over successive years, they would have to avoid basing their case primarily on something that could be pilloried as exemplifying imperialist *realpolitik*.

Despite Copland’s efforts, and a strong statement from the Netherlands representative, D. J. Von Balluseck,³⁷ the General Committee chose, by seven votes to three, with five abstentions, to recommend the inclusion of the WNG question on the Assembly’s agenda. During the Assembly’s consideration of this recommendation, Casey concentrated on Copland’s earlier contention that UN discussion would increase tensions. He said that the UN would, by inscribing the item, “saddle itself with a problem that is not going to be solved in the only way that Indonesia...wants it to be solved”, because “the Dutch do not intend to abandon their responsibilities or their

³⁴ Quotations from extracts of *The Canberra Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* respectively, 23 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

³⁵ ‘General Assembly, General Committee, Summary Records’ (hereafter GC), 92nd Meeting, 22 September 1954, in the UN’s *Official Records* (hereafter *UNOR*).

³⁶ *The Canberra Times*, 23 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

³⁷ See GC, 92nd Meeting, 22 September 1954, *UNOR*.

sovereignty.”³⁸ The only result would be to inflame relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands and Australia, whilst destabilizing a fragile SEA. This proved true enough, but it appears that many in the Assembly who were not obliged to support the Indonesian claim believed that a disturbance of the peace was already evident, and that the Republic therefore had a right to request discussion of the issue regardless of alleged consequences. This group, combined with the growing number who were motivated more by anti-Western sentiment and the politics of the anti-colonial bloc than views on the substance of the problem, enabled the Indonesians to easily attain the inscription of WNG on to the agenda with a vote of 39 to 11, with 10 abstentions.

Following the failure of the initial Dutch-Australian attempt to block Indonesian plans, focus again shifted away from plenary meetings of the General Assembly. In accordance with usual practice, the Assembly would not vote on an issue until it had received a report, which could contain recommendations, from one of its Main Committees – the relevant one in connection with WNG being the First (Political) Committee. Given that any member of the Assembly could be represented on this committee, the results of its deliberations were often reflected in the final plenary vote. Thus, although its decisions did not have the same authority as those of the General Assembly, they were of considerable importance.

In the interim between WNG’s inscription and the First Committee’s consideration of the question, the Netherlands and Australian delegations painstakingly constructed a resolution designed to counter the expected Indonesian one. The idea behind this was not to try and prevent the referral of the Indonesian resolution to the plenary session, which needed only a simple majority, but to establish another resolution that would add to the effect of many likely abstentions in a Committee vote, and consequently prevent the development of a large majority on which Indonesia’s resolution – and any future “fiercer” resolution³⁹ – depended for success in the General Assembly.⁴⁰ Here opposition came from an unexpected quarter. The British decided they would not back the move. The Dutch-Australian resolution stressed that the people of WNG should eventually be given the opportunity to determine their own future, and the UK felt this would create a precedent for UN interference in the administration of

³⁸ ‘General Assembly, Plenary, Verbatim Records’ (hereafter GA), 477th Plenary Meeting, 24 September 1954, *UNOR*. Casey also made a short comment on WNG during General Debate. See GA, 479th Plenary Meeting, 27 September 1954, *UNOR*.

³⁹ See conversation between Casey and Sir Stephen Holmes (British High Commissioner, Canberra), 5 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA.

⁴⁰ Conversation between Casey and A. M. L. Winkelman (Dutch Ambassador, Canberra), 29 October 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA.

non-self-governing territories. They were particularly fearful of the way such a resolution would affect the handling of the Cyprus problem and other British colonial questions to come before the UN.⁴¹ In a telegram from New York, the British Ambassador to the UN, Pearson Dixon, wrote:

From the United Kingdom point of view it is difficult to imagine a more damaging resolution. It would embarrass us in our colonial policy generally at the United Nations since it contravenes the basic principle that the United Nations has no right to pronounce upon the political affairs of non-self-governing territories. It would complicate our task in obtaining rejection of a draft resolution recommending self-determination for Cyprus....It would be in future virtually impossible for any colonial Power successfully to oppose the passage of similar resolutions about any and every non-self-governing territory.⁴²

Hence the harmonious spirit between the UK and Australia that had been in place since Churchill's assumption of office quickly melted as the issue impinged upon real British interests.⁴³

Some critics of Australian foreign policy might have expected Menzies and his colleagues to have repented rapidly, and gone along with the British suggestion that they simply vote against the Indonesian resolution.⁴⁴ This was hardly the case. When the British High Commissioner to Australia, Sir Stephen Holmes, came to plead with Casey on behalf of his Government, the Minister reiterated Australian motives behind the resolution and curtly told him that it was primarily a Dutch exercise and that the UK should concentrate on them.⁴⁵ Moreover, as recorded in his diary, Casey

reminded him that we hadn't had much co-operation from them on Dutch New Guinea. I'd asked Eden at least twice to let the Indonesians know that they (the U. K.) were not in favour of the Indonesian case on Dutch New Guinea, but so far as I knew they'd never in fact done anything about it.⁴⁶

Later, a New Zealand representative described Australian-British differences in New York as having reached the stage of "acrimony".⁴⁷ Eventually a compromise was

⁴¹ Cablegram 2795 from London, 3 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA.

⁴² Telegram 1110 from Pierson Dixon (UK Ambassador to the UN) to FO, 2 November 1954, in FO 371/112146, PRO.

⁴³ The Anglo-Australian split over WNG in 1954 has been adequately covered by Phelps, *op.cit.*, pp. 197-201, but, in an example of the limitations of histories based on the public record, was unknown to Haupt, *op.cit.*, pp. 136-40, and Viviani, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

⁴⁴ For UK advice, see Telegram 1110 from Pierson Dixon (UK Ambassador to the UN) to FO, 2 November 1954, in FO 371/112146, PRO.

⁴⁵ Conversation between Casey and Holmes, 5 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA.

⁴⁶ Casey, *Diaries*, 5 November 1954, MS 6150, Series 4, Box 27, Vol. 17, p. 206, NLA.

⁴⁷ Tanekaha (New Zealand representative to the UN, initials unidentified) to Clifton Webb (New Zealand Minister for External Affairs), 11 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA. In an example of this antipathy, the British referred to how Spender "bitterly attacked us behind our backs", while among themselves they complained of the "Australian failure to keep us informed of their intentions." Minute by unidentified FO officer, 17 November 1954, in FO 371/112148, PRO.

worked out in terms of the wording of the draft,⁴⁸ but the episode left a bad taste in the mouths of those involved, and demonstrated that the cultural and ideological similarities of the Liberal and Conservative Governments did not preclude the possibility of clashes similar to those between Spender and the Labour Government in 1950.

The US position was more consistent relative to Australian policy, as demonstrated by American activities from late September on. Though the Australians and the Dutch recognised US determination to abstain not only on the agenda issue, but also on any subsequent resolutions,⁴⁹ both persisted in their attempts to sway the Americans. The Australians had again, prior to the vote on inscription, encouraged Americans who were sympathetic to their cause – such as Under Secretary of State Bedell-Smith – to use their influence,⁵⁰ and in the period leading up to the First Committee's deliberations, Casey raised WNG with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at an ANZUS Council meeting. A record of this event shows that Casey again harped on the tensions that would result from the discussion of WNG in the UN, though he was less circumspect than he had been in the Assembly about the main reason for Australia's interest:

It would be a wise move to avoid what would inevitably be some bitter debate in the First Committee and in the Assembly. The Indonesians would not, as a matter of practical politics, be compensated by the Latin American vote for the loss of sound friends who were in a position to assist Indonesia. Mr. Casey reminded Mr. Dulles that he [Dulles] had on several occasions taken pains to impress on him the possibility of a Communist coup in Indonesia and the threat it would pose to our security. He suggested that this point of view of Mr. Dulles had relevance to the United States attitude on the Dutch New Guinea issue.⁵¹

Percy Spender, who had been called upon to work with the Australian delegation during the 9th Assembly, augmented Casey's emphasis on the strategic argument with an emotive appeal to traditional American sympathy for the principle of self-determination. Significantly, he tied this to a specific request:

It was difficult to see in these enlightened days how a million people could be handed over from one Government to another without thought as to their ultimate right of self-determination. Surely the United States could say that no action should be taken by the United Nations which affected in praesenti the right of self-determination of the peoples of Netherlands New Guinea...the Indonesian draft resolution should be resisted as being contrary to the Charter. He hoped that the United States could put forward certain propositions in Committee discussions which would make this apparent.⁵²

⁴⁸ See B. B. Hickey (Third Secretary, UN Branch, DEA) to Tange, 17 November 1954, and cablegram 2900 from London, 16 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 13, NAA.

⁴⁹ Cablegram 280 from A. Stirling (Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands), 8 September 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 12, NAA.

⁵⁰ Casey, *Diaries*, 17 September 1954, MS 6150, Series 4, Box 28, Vol. 17, p. 88, NLA.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 173.

Dulles had remarked politely that he would “reflect” on what Casey had said,⁵³ but the Americans stood firm. On 27 October Dulles cabled the US delegation in New York, stressing that the “reasons for taking [a] position of neutrality...continue [to be] valid and therefore our position will be maintained.” These reasons were succinctly re-stated by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Walter S. Robertson:

The U. S. has maintained a position of neutrality toward the dispute. This position has been adopted to avoid as much as possible offending the Australians, the Dutch or the Indonesians.⁵⁴

On 10 November, J. H. van Roijen, the Dutch Ambassador in Washington, approached Dulles with the request that the US support the Dutch-Australian counter-resolution.⁵⁵ In doing so, he drew attention to confirmation in the resolution of “the willingness of the Netherlands Government to give the inhabitants of West New Guinea the opportunity to determine their own future”, and expressed the hope that “the positive aspects” of the draft “would appeal to the U. S. Government”. Again the Americans were not to be moved, as Dulles’ rejoinder made clear:

After very careful soul-searching the U. S. Government had decided that it must continue to maintain its policy of strict neutrality in this New Guinea question although admittedly this was not a glorious posture. Certainly if only the welfare of the inhabitants of West New Guinea were concerned we would have to admit that development toward ultimate political self-determination would be better assured under the present rule. However...there were many other important factors involved.

In his explanation of these “factors”, Dulles revealed that the fears of a communist take-over in Indonesia evident in a National Security Council (NSC) Policy Paper of late 1953 were still foremost in the minds of American policy-makers.⁵⁶ He remarked that “there were...areas which we...were most anxious should not fall to the Communist side....[which] was the basis for our policy that we do nothing to push the Government of Indonesia off its delicate balance on to the wrong side”. Concern at the thought of distancing the Indonesians was shared at lower levels within the State Department. In a

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵⁴ W. S. Robertson (Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, State Department) to R. Murphy (Deputy Under Secretary of State, State Department), 3 December 1954, 756C.00/12-354, box 3748, RG 59, DF 1950-54, A2.

⁵⁵ Conversation between Dulles and J. H. van Roijen, (Netherlands Ambassador, Washington DC), 10 November 1954, in *FRUS*, Vol. XII, Pt 2, 1952-54, ‘East Asia and the Pacific’, pp. 474-76.

⁵⁶ NSC Policy Paper 171/1, “United States Objectives and Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Indonesia”, 20 November 1953, RG 273, A2. This was later approved by the President. (The function of the National Security Council, as established by the National Security Act of 1947 (Amended) was “to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security so as to enable the military services and other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters of national security.” Cited in H. M. Jackson, (ed), *The National Security Council: Jackson Subcommittee on Policy-Making at the Presidential Level*, New York, 1965, p. 296.

letter to the Assistant Secretary of the European Bureau, Livingston T. Merchant, Robertson had written:

I have supported our policy of neutrality...because I believe that that policy is politically sound. If this Government had supported the Dutch position in the General Assembly, we would...have weakened U.S. influence and prestige in Indonesia, and thereby helped to promote the very situation which we wish to prevent, namely, the growth of Communist influence in a critically important area of Southeast Asia.⁵⁷

In essence, US policy had become highly predictable by this time. The administration of Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower (elected in November 1952) had initially followed the path chosen by the previous Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, and by late 1954, this position was a firmly entrenched part of US Southeast Asian policy. Eisenhower's long reign as President, paralleled by Dulles' tenure at the State Department, meant that the conservatism of the US stand on WNG became protracted, despite the increasing pressure of a deteriorating situation in Indonesia. Still, at the time, and from the perspective of the dispute's protagonists, US policy could change in spite of its apparently rigid status. It was this belief – rather than a misunderstanding of the basis of US policy – that drove the Dutch-Australian coalition, and the Indonesians, to work incessantly for an alteration in the US attitude. At the same time, both groups, though seeing the influence on American neutrality of objectives in Europe, on the one hand, and SEA on the other, failed to realize the sheer strength of these opposing influences.

Apart from consideration of the wording of a counter resolution, the Dutch and Australian delegations spent much time before the First Committee debate looking for a sponsor for their resolution – something they believed necessary if an alternative to a pro-transfer resolution was to have any credibility. By the time discussion began, they had still not found a suitable country. Meanwhile, the Indonesians had put forward a resolution calling for the Netherlands and Indonesia “to resume negotiations, without delay, as provided for by the Round Table Conference agreement, with a view to achieving an early agreement on the political status of West Irian”. It also invited the Secretary-General to aid the parties in the pursuit of this aim, specifically by appointing a mediator if the Dutch and Indonesians agreed. The Secretary-General would then submit a report on negotiations at the next General Assembly. Tjondronegoro supported the resolution in his opening speech by arguing that the dispute was dangerous, and that the Dutch had been intransigent, but that there was still hope for peace if negotiations

⁵⁷ Roberston to L. T. Merchant (Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of European Affairs, State Department), 2 November 1954, 756C.00/11-254, box 3748, RG 59, DF 1950-54, A2. Sukarno had personally been pressing the US to change its stance. See, for example, telegram by H. Cumming (US

could take place with UN help.⁵⁸ He also argued that the Indonesian case was legally watertight, and that the question of WNG's ethnic and cultural differences was irrelevant considering Indonesia's heterogeneous make-up. The question was essentially one of freedom or the continuance of the "colonial-military" regime in Irian – a regime which had suppressed movements for liberation in the territory, and done little to promote development. In reply, Von Balluseck charged that there was no racial, cultural or historical link between the peoples of WNG, and that the matter was about "political ambition" for Indonesia, as opposed to Netherlands concern for Papuan interests.⁵⁹

Spender took the floor the next day. He predictably repeated many of the arguments used by his Dutch counterpart, though his speech was notable for two reasons. Firstly, it was particularly vociferous in its attack on the Indonesian position. He said that "Australia...did not accept that a threat to the peace existed in connexion with West New Guinea *per se*", but claimed the Indonesians had aggravated the situation by their rhetoric – which "sounded very much like a threat" – and through infiltrations into WNG.⁶⁰ Australia, he continued, had "friendly relations" with Indonesia, but the latter "should feel neither surprised nor resentful that all interests involved and all aspects would be exposed to the extent necessary". Part of this hard-hitting *expose* was a provocative analysis of the relationship between the legal and political aspects of the Indonesian petition:

A...point in the Indonesian case was the claim that the problem was in substance of a political and not of a juridical nature. A reason for that might conceivably be that in spite of its recital of legal grounds, Indonesia felt that its case was too weak to rest on legal grounds alone. Or perhaps the Indonesians were being more candid than they realized, and it might be justifiably concluded that their legal arguments should not be regarded as containing merit in themselves, but had been brought forward merely to bolster a political claim. If that was the case, then one began to see why the Committee might expect to hear of threats to the peace. The question was, who was making the threats?

A second significant aspect of Spender's discourse was his repeated reference, in contrast to earlier caution, to Australia's strategic interest in WNG. He did not neglect commenting on the Papuan right to self-determination, but the importance of WNG to the security of Australia was prominent, occupying much of his attention at the outset, and being one of the notes upon which he concluded: "Australia", he said, "felt its

Ambassador, Jakarta), 28 July 1954, in *FRUS*, Vol. XII, Pt 2, 1952-54, 'East Asia and the Pacific', pp. 456-57.

⁵⁸ Tjondronegoro's opening speech to the First Committee, 23 November 1954, can be found in *The Question of West Irian in the United Nations, 1954-1957*, pp. 35-72.

⁵⁹ See a summary of the address by D. J. Von Balluseck (Netherlands representative, UN) in *ibid.*, pp. 72-76.

⁶⁰ Emphasis original. 'General Assembly, First Committee, Summary Notes' (hereafter FC), 727th Meeting, 24 November 1954, in *UNOR*.

destiny and defence closely bound up with West New Guinea, which stood so close to it”, and it was for this reason that his delegation “viewed with utmost gravity the plea which had been brought before the Committee that the United Nations should endorse the claim that...sovereignty...should be transferred.”

There was some feeling in the DEA that Spender had “gone over the top” – and under the influence of this sentiment Casey apparently instructed him by cable to “calm down”⁶¹ – but there is little doubt his general approach was approved by Cabinet. Speaking in 1956, by which time Spender had been away from Canberra for even longer, James Plimsoll (Assistant Secretary, Geographical Regions Division, DEA) was able to remark that the Ambassador “still has authority” in a Cabinet of which “the bulk...is pro-Dutch and/or anti-Indonesian.”⁶² Menzies, formally and socially the dominant force in Cabinet, perhaps best expressed the view he and his colleagues would have had of Spender’s efforts when he later confided to Eric Harrison (the Australian High Commissioner to the UK): “I am, as you know, not unduly oppressed by the alleged or real sensitivities of our Asian colleagues.”⁶³

Toward the end of debate in the First Committee, a group of eight nations introduced an alternative draft resolution which expressed the hope that the Dutch and Indonesians would pursue a solution in accordance with the UN Charter, and requested that they report any progress at the 10th Assembly. Although it was something of a dilution of their proposal, the Indonesians accepted this draft, and withdrew their own. Nevertheless, the majority in favour of this plan was smaller than expected; it was passed by a vote 34 to 14, with 10 abstentions. The Australians had been pessimistic about the chances of preventing a two-thirds majority in the Assembly, but this result was heartening. Speaking in Canberra with a member of the Dutch Embassy, K. C. O. Shann, the Head of the DEA’s UN Branch, said he believed Indonesian attempts to win over enough members for success in the Assembly would be “beyond them”.⁶⁴ This was an accurate judgement. None of the operative paragraphs of the eight-Power resolution achieved more than the 34 votes gained overall in the First Committee, and the motion was thereby rejected.

⁶¹ See K. C. O. Shann (Head, UN Branch, DEA) to Tange, 26 November 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 14, NAA.

⁶² Sir Walter Crocker (Australian Ambassador, Jakarta, 1955-56), *Diaries*, 24 April 1956, mfm G20735.

⁶³ Menzies to Eric Harrison (Australian High Commissioner, London), 4 February 1957, in M2576/1, 38, NAA.

⁶⁴ Note by Shann on record of Conversation with H. C. Jorrison (Second Secretary, Netherlands Embassy, Canberra), 8 December 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 14, NAA.

The public Australian reaction to a successful end of an arduous UN campaign was muted. Excited by the failure of the Republic to move a step closer to acquiring WNG, Casey was at the same time anxious to minimize antagonism. A cable sent to New York after the Assembly vote, stated:

In any public comment [the] Minister will avoid any note of exaltation and [we] suggest you do likewise. The result will speak for itself.⁶⁵

Furthermore, in an end of year address Casey went out of his way to emphasize the importance his Government attached to friendship with Indonesia:

The main points of the foreign policy of the Australian Government were those of maintaining friendly relations with Indonesia our nearest neighbour. We differ with Indonesia over West New Guinea but we are determined not to allow that to obstruct our cooperation in other matters, indeed we have given every reason to want to live in harmony with our largest and closest neighbour. We have continued to give assistance under the Colombo Plan and have recently renewed a trade agreement.⁶⁶

In spite of these efforts, there can be no doubt that the 9th General Assembly contributed to a marked degeneration in Australian-Indonesian relations. The impact of face-to-face disagreement, not quite vehement, but often close to the bone, and widely reported in both countries, was to increase privately expressed resentment – particularly on the Indonesian side. Hanifah, for instance, was later to describe Spender’s speeches as having been “so “crude” and so inelegant that they harmed Australia”.⁶⁷ Likewise, Sunarjo said that “It was particularly wounding to see how Australia conducted its case in the U.N.”, and added that “Australia is in danger of missing the bus...because it is throwing away the friendship of her nearest neighbour”.⁶⁸

The continued growth of Dutch-Australian solidarity was a more positive product of the dispute for Canberra. The Australian and Netherlands delegations had worked closely in New York, and this added to the intimacy which had grown since the Dutch elections of 1952. Following the failure of the eight-nation resolution, Casey sent a message of congratulations to Luns, while Tange expressed the cordiality that had developed by thanking Dutch Ambassador A. W. Winkelman and his Embassy “very sincerely” for their “great assistance”, and by speaking of the “hard work...and day-to-day co-operation between our delegations”.⁶⁹ At a time when relations with the US over

⁶⁵ Cablegram 409 to New York (also to Jakarta and The Hague), 11 December 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 14, NAA.

⁶⁶ Extracts of speech by Casey in cablegram to Jakarta, 31 December 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 14, NAA.

⁶⁷ Crocker, *Diaries*, 9 June 1955, mfm G20735, NLA.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 13 June 1955.

⁶⁹ Letter from Tange to Winkelman, 14 December 1954, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 14, NAA.

WNG were uneasy, and were even a little tender with the British, friendship with the Dutch had reached a new high.

Taking a broad look at the events of 1954, it is possible to see that they set the tone for events until the end of 1957, when Indonesia brought WNG to the UN for the last time in the decade. The year had begun with rumours of an Indonesian offensive in the UN, followed by an intense campaign for support, and terse debate in the General Assembly – only to end in defeat for the Republic, and a consequent increase in bitterness, frustration, and tension in Indonesia over Irian. These results, and a changing domestic and international environment, were eventually to produce actions in Jakarta that were to change the course of the WNG dispute.

III

Indonesia's 1954 campaign of 'internationalization' showed not only the fully established positions of the Netherlands, Indonesia, Australia, the US, and the UK 'at work', it also brought together what would in hindsight be viewed as the dispute's typical 1950s features. Because of this, the year affords a representative overview of what Australian policy on WNG shows of Australian self-perception in the period prior to 1958. Here, close scrutiny of Australian actions shows not different convictions to those earlier exhibited, but, contrarily, that Australia still thought of itself as a middle power.

A fearless and largely careless attitude towards the Indonesian state was, of course, again displayed. Beginning with the attempt to destroy a possible Indonesian initiative among the Asian Prime Ministers at Colombo, the Australian Government reiterated that it was prepared to lock horns with the Indonesians – and this in spite of a growing awareness in Canberra that Irian was, in Jakarta, more a key issue than ephemeral.⁷⁰ This combative approach, and an accompanying disregard for its consequences on the bilateral relationship, was most poignantly demonstrated in the UN forum. The Indonesians were well aware of the Australian Government's position, but its attempts to demolish Indonesian arguments on a world stage were particularly irksome for its face-conscious Asian neighbours. Nevertheless, Spender – as a DEA eyewitness has described – "seemed to take a positive joy in hammering the

⁷⁰ In an example of this increasing awareness, Eckersley noted in late 1953 that "we have recently come to regard as a danger" the idea that Sukarno "means what he says" about WNG. Minute by Eckersley for Plimsoll, 4 August 1953, on cablegram 309 from Jakarta, 3 August 1953, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 7A, NAA.

Indonesians.”⁷¹ His only fear (shared by Cabinet) – and as opposed to the repercussions of Indonesia’s humiliation – was that Sukarno and his colleagues might be able to circumvent Indonesia’s impotence and irrelevance by tapping the anti-colonial movement in the UN.

Australia’s dominant posture towards its immediate region also, as before, had an effect on the way in which British and American opinion was handled. It was no coincidence that the Menzies Government’s self-assured actions in connection with Indonesia were directly paralleled by activities aggressively independent – and commonly demanding – of the USA and Britain. Spender, in spite of the more sympathetic outlook of the Churchill Government, thought little of disregarding strongly-expressed British advice; he did not, as he told the Americans, “see why Australia...should...be saddled with the responsibility for pulling H.M.G.’s chestnuts out of the fire.”⁷² The anglophilic Menzies may not have stated the problem in quite this manner, but where WNG was concerned, he agreed with the necessity of occasionally flaunting (if uncomfortably) UK desires. Certainly, he made no effort to intervene in the protracted and acrimonious debate between the two delegations in New York.

Australian attempts to push the Americans from neutrality towards the Dutch position came on top of months of lobbying along similar lines⁷³ – lobbying that had at times irritated officials in Washington.⁷⁴ Thus in continuing their ‘dripping tap’ campaign during 1954, the Australians were evincing a readiness not only to cut across an oft-repeated official position, but to risk a degree of ingrained exasperation with Canberra’s stand on the issue – an outlook axiomatically at odds with the notion that Australia was a pliable dependent. This point is reinforced by the fact that the Australians were aware of feeling in the State Department that denial of WNG to the Indonesians was aiding the cause of communism in the archipelago.⁷⁵

From a wide-angle perspective, the period from 1954 to 1957, which included three further Indonesian failures at the UN, revealed Australia at the height of its belief

⁷¹ A. Parsons (at the time, a member of the Australian delegation), *South East Asian Days*, Brisbane, 1998, p. 25.

⁷² Minute by Paterson, 15 November 1954, in FO 371/112148, PRO.

⁷³ See, for example, Casey’s request that the Americans make “a positive statement [to the Indonesians] that the Indonesian claim to Western New Guinea was not recognized by the U. S.” Minutes of ANZUS Council second session, 9 September 1953, box 3, Lot 55D388, RG 59, General Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs 1953, Miscellaneous Subject Files 1953, A2.

⁷⁴ Agitation over Australian remonstrances was no doubt reflected in an empathetic cable from H. F. Matthews (US Ambassador to the Netherlands) to Dulles: “I can well understand [the] Department’s wish that [the] New Guinea problem would just go away”. Telegram 1061 from The Hague to Dulles, 13 April 1954, 756C.00/4-1354, Box 3748, RG 59, DF 1950-54, A2.

⁷⁵ See cablegram 10 from Casey to Spender, 5 January 1952, in A1838/278, 3036/6/1, Pt 1B, NAA.

in itself as the main power south of Singapore. Continuing resistance to Indonesia, and a consistent preparedness to cut across and cajole the UK and (particularly) the US, was evidence of the fact that the Australian Government and its people had never been so confident that they could, by applying an old imperial model, deal with the post-War challenges thrown up by their immediate region. There were two basic reasons for this confidence. Firstly, nothing was seen to have happened in Indonesia that changed its status as a weak and unstable construction, incapable of contesting Australia's position in the foreseeable future. If anything, domestic turmoil in the country, which in late 1956 resulted in the effective demise of parliamentary democracy in the Republic, and the rise of division along geographical, ethnic, and religious lines, apparently made Indonesia less able than ever to pose an external threat. Secondly, the broad factors believed central to the maintenance of Australia's 'inner' and 'outer' spheres (that is, respectively, the area east of the PNG-WNG border, and WNG itself) – Anglo-American domination of mainland SEA, and the continued view of these two nations that they had interests in this area – were, in spite of various problems, apparently still in place.