Australia and the Palestine Question, 1947–1949:
A New Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

By 1947, the conflicting national aspirations of the Arab majority and Jewish minority within Palestine had developed into an intractable problem. The responsibility for the political future of Palestine fell upon the fledgling United Nations and thereby weighed upon the shoulders of all its constituent states. This was a time, however, when the nations of the globe were emerging from the shadow of a world war, and were re-evaluating their construction of foreign policy. In this thesis I utilise the Palestine Question as a prism through which to explore the nuances in the Australian conception of postwar diplomacy.
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First and foremost my thanks must go to Dr Glenda Sluga for her expertise, without which the writing of this thesis would have been considerably more difficult.

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Introduction

The Palestine Question arrived at the steps of the United Nations (UN) in April 1947, after the British Government came to the firm conclusion that it was incapable of solving the conflict between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine, over which the British had had been given a mandate by the League of Nations.¹ Widely regarded as an intractable problem, the international deliberation on the political future of Palestine was an early test of the capabilities of the newly created world body and the extent to which the principles advocated in its creation could, and would, be applied to a real life conflict.² This period marked a unique juncture at which pronounced internationalist fervour following the end of World War Two intersected with the looming threat of another conflict of global proportions and repercussions that was the Cold War. The creation of the UN itself embodied the beginning of a new approach to international relations, based on multilateral diplomacy, designed to address such global challenges facing peace.³ How the constituent nations of the UN would choose to incorporate this new approach into their national foreign policies remained to be seen. This thesis examines Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question in order to reassess its place in the history of Australian postwar foreign policy. In particular, my focus is on what this involvement reveals about larger foreign policy themes that are of concern to historians of Australian politics, namely the changing relationship of

¹ The term ‘Palestine Question’ is derived from the name of the ‘Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question’ that was established in 1947. In this thesis, the ‘Palestine Question’ refers to the period between 1947–1949, from the point at which Britain indicated it would hand over the consideration of the political future of Palestine to the UN until the conclusion of the 1949 session of the UN.
Australian foreign policy to British and American foreign policy aims, and, a question that those same historians rarely ask: what influence did the creation of the UN have on the development of Australian foreign policy?⁴

The Australian involvement in the Palestine Question was an early episode in Australia’s foray into the international sphere but it has not been significantly discussed in analyses of the development of a postwar foreign policy. Scholars who document Australia’s early participation in the United Nations have failed to evaluate, or even recount, Australia’s involvement in the situation in Palestine. For instance, Norman Harper and David Sissons in *Australia and the United Nations*, fleetingly mention Palestine as a problem that Australian diplomats believed had been justly resolved.⁵ Harper and Sissons, however, do not examine the key role Australian policy makers played in the UN discussions on Palestine. Comprehensive works that address the liberal internationalist nature of the Chifley Labor Government (1945–1949) that was in power throughout the duration of the Palestine Question have also failed to give more than a passing mention to Palestine. Ian Cumpston’s seminal *History of Australian Foreign Policy 1901-1991* refers to the Palestine Question only to establish a brief background to the Suez crisis of 1956, and even then, there is no indication that Australia was involved.⁶ Peter Edwards, in *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy 1901-1949*, cites Palestine as an example of “the reference of international issues to organs of the United Nations”

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⁴ Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, ‘New Histories of the United Nations’, *Journal of World History*, vol. 19, no. 3 (September 2008), p. 252. Sluga and Amrith argue that the history of the UN has been underutilised as a source of enrichment for diverse historiographies.
which he argues “became a theme” of Australian foreign policy. Edwards, however, fails to expand on this, and states only that Australians played a part in the creation of Israel. Other works such as Alan Watt’s renowned study of Australian foreign policy, *Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy: 1938—1965* and Christopher Waters’ *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s*, fail to address Palestine at all. This is despite the fact that both Watt and Waters are particularly interested in points of conflict between Australian and British diplomats, which were numerous throughout the duration of the Palestine Question. Evidently, Palestine has not been regarded as a sufficiently significant episode for the analysis of Australian foreign policy although, as I will show, it has much to tell us about the relationship of Australia to the British and to the UN in the immediate postwar era.

To the extent that there is a literature on Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question, it occurs in studies of Dr H. V. Evatt, the Australian Minister for External Affairs from 1941–1949. Evatt was deeply involved in the Palestine Question; in his own book, *The Task of Nations*, Evatt dedicates four chapters to Palestine, and he himself regarded his role in the admission of Israel to the United Nations as one of his greatest achievements. Most of his biographers, however, treat the Palestine Question as a prism through which to analyse his personal ambitions, rather than his foreign policy goals. For example, Kylie Tennant’s *Evatt: Politics and Justice* only

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8 Ibid.
10 Stewart Firth, *Australia in International Politics: An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. vii.
bothers with Evatt’s involvement on the Palestine Question to argue that he was inspired, above all, by an undying sense of justice for the “six million Jews [that] had died in Europe.”¹² For instance, she details Evatt’s insistence that Australia be a signatory on any UN decision to appoint a fact-finding committee on Palestine only to imply that his morality had motivated him to action in the wake of the Holocaust.¹³ Embroiled in an attempt to illustrate this morality, Tennant tantalisingly hints at, and yet fails, to explore the underlying foreign policy principles behind Evatt’s actions by ignoring, for example, Evatt’s pertinent struggle to maximise the voice of smaller powers in the UN Charter. Alan Renouf, in his work, *Let Justice Be Done: The Foreign Policy of Dr H.V. Evatt*, similarly concludes that “the explanation for Evatt’s attitude [on Palestine] is justice.”¹⁴ Both Tennant and Renouf draw reductive conclusions regarding Evatt’s involvement in Palestine without exploring in detail the international discussion on the issue.

Allan Dalziel, another early biographer of Evatt, hints a little more at the foreign policy implications of Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question. Dalziel notes that Evatt was proud of his contribution to the UN discussion of the problem although he “clashed with the British Government and with the anti-Labor Opposition in the Australian Parliament.”¹⁵ Such observations however, remain unexplored in Dalziel’s text—like Tennant, he mentions such clashes to argue only that Evatt’s commitment to the principle of justice overrode such concerns. Evatt’s foreign policy views on Palestine are not of interest in these works; rather, Palestine is treated as a looking glass through which Evatt’s personal motivations can be analysed. For

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¹³ Ibid., p. 211.
instance, Peter Crockett in *Evatt: A Life* presents a less favourable account of Evatt by
drawing on the Palestine Question. He argues that Evatt at one stage adopted the
American position towards Palestine “in order to win support for his election the
following year to the presidency of the General Assembly.”\(^\text{16}\)

Daniel Mandel’s *H. V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel: The Undercover Zionist*
presents a more nuanced view of Evatt’s role in Palestine by focussing only on the
Palestine Question.\(^\text{17}\) Mandel’s comprehensive work is a crucial source for this thesis
as he carefully details the proceedings of the various UN committees established to
address the issue of Palestine. His ultimate conclusions are, however, that Evatt was
motivated by his support for Zionism as well his overriding sense of personal
ambition.\(^\text{18}\) In formulating such a conclusion, Mandel follows a relatively discernible
pattern: he documents the clashes between Australian diplomats and their British and
American counterparts, and identifies the resultant benefits for the Zionists as well as
the authority subsequently accorded to Evatt. Like Evatt’s other biographers,
Mandel’s work progresses from the underlying assumption that Evatt acted in an
independent capacity and that his own concerns permeated through other diplomatic
considerations.

Another significant secondary source on the history of the Australian involvement in
the Palestine question is Chanan Reich’s *Australia and Israel: An Ambiguous*

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\(^{17}\) Daniel Mandel, *H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel: The Undercover Zionist* (London: Frank

\(^{18}\) Zionism is ethereal belief that Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) is the rightful homeland of the
Jewish people. It was transformed into a practical political movement by Theodore Herzl who
convened the first World Zionist Congress in 1897.
Its overall purpose is to trace the contours of Australian–Israeli relations from 1915–1967 by looking at Australian political, religious and media opinion on Israel. Reich’s book provides less detail on the intricacies of the UN discussions on the Palestine Question than is found in Mandel’s work but is useful in that it is not a biography of Evatt. As a result, he provides a greater emphasis on the overarching principles of the Department of External Affairs. Despite this, being a text concerned mainly with the bilateral relations between Australia and Israel, Reich ignores the foreign policy implications of Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question for Australia’s relations with the UK, the US and the UN.

In this thesis, I also look at the Palestine Question through an analysis of Evatt. Although he is not the focus of my study, his role is examined on the grounds that he undeniably played a crucial part in spearheading an Australian Palestine policy. Whilst Evatt may have had personal ambitions that shaped his judgements, I contend that this was but one deciding factor. I provide a new context in which to investigate the creation of an Australian Palestine policy by looking at the Australian understanding of the significance of the international sphere. In doing so, I argue that Evatt also acted as the Minister for External Affairs and that his actions, therefore, reflected key principles of the emerging Australian postwar foreign policy. Whilst existing studies of Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question discuss the Australian relationships with the UK, the US and the UN only to provide background context to their main preoccupations, I will use the Palestine Question to bring these relationships to the fore.

In this thesis, I examine the actions of diplomats within the Australian Department of External Affairs in order to ascertain the underlying principles of foreign policy that they reflect. This first requires an understanding of the agency such diplomats could exert and the way in which External Affairs functioned. Consensus has developed amongst historians that following Evatt’s inheritance of the ministerial helm on 6 October 1941, the department became his own personal fiefdom where he reigned supreme. Whilst Evatt dominated the construction of foreign policy, however, his views were not without implicit support from his Government and his Department. Chifley’s biographer has argued, for instance, that Evatt and Chifley shared “substantial identity of aim.” It will be seen that where Chifley had any particular standpoint on an issue on the Palestine Question, Evatt was duly informed. As Edwards argues, Evatt’s ‘free hand’ in foreign policy was based on Chifley’s tacit support. Within External Affairs, although Evatt’s subordinates were under his direct instruction, for the most part they too shared views aligned with that of their Minister. Two key Australian diplomats involved in the Australian consideration of the Palestine Question were John Hood, who was often the Australian representative on committees dealing with the Palestine Question, and John Burton, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs from 1947–50. Both Hood and Burton shared Evatt’s belief, for example, that postwar diplomacy should be based not on the formation of blocs but on international cooperation through the UN. Frederic Eggleston, Evatt’s legal advisor, had greater freedom to influence Evatt’s

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20 See, for example, Cumpston, *History of Australian Foreign Policy, Vol. 1*, p. 97; Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats*, p. 168.
25 Ibid., p. 2.
perspective. He believed, like Evatt, that diplomacy should be predicated on the just resolution of conflict rather than principles of expediency or pragmatism. Thus, whilst the construction of foreign policy was largely spearheaded by Evatt, he was not acting on his own impulse, as scholars of the Australian involvement in the Palestine Question have assumed—rather, his views broadly reflected that of his Department and his Government.

As Mandel writes, this set of diplomats including Chifley, Evatt, Burton and Hood, was as ‘internationalist’ a group of policy makers as could be expected in the global climate of the 1940s. The Chifley Government rejected the idea that Australia’s foreign policy should be directed by the United Kingdom. Rather, as Christopher Waters and Neville Meaney argue, the essence of the Chifley Government’s foreign policy was the application of the principles of liberal internationalism aimed at the establishment of the foundations for world peace through diplomacy rather than power politics.

These internationalist policy makers expended much of their energy on cultivating and propagating an Australian perspective on the Palestine Question. This thesis seeks

27 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 2.
28 Ibid., p. 15.
to explore the reasons behind Australia’s involvement in an affair far removed from her immediate strategic interests. At key moments, the Australian vision of a postwar world was manifest in the positions taken by these diplomats to the Palestine Question. The nuances of this vision, propagated by Evatt and his subordinates within External Affairs with the tacit support of the Chifley Government, will explored by examining the correspondence sent between the key Australian diplomats as well as that sent between those diplomats and their British and American counterparts. A key question this thesis will address is how External Affairs reconciled this vision of a postwar world with the traditional parochial concerns that marked Australia’s pre-war policy. Was this new vision idealistic in nature, or did it accommodate Australian strategic interests? Why was this vision seen as the future for Australian foreign policy? These questions will be explored by tracing the key developments in the Palestine Question and the ways in which Australian diplomats engaged with, and at times avoided, the different issues raised.

In order to provide the background from which the significance of the Australian engagement in the Palestine Question can be understood, the first chapter of this thesis begins by mapping out the prior involvement of Australia in the Middle East, with a specific focus on Palestine. It will demonstrate that World War Two highlighted the deficiencies in Australia’s key alliances with the UK and the US, and became the crucible in which a distinctly Australian Palestine policy was born. I continue with an examination of the significance of the war for the broad underlying principles of Australian foreign policy by tracing the work of the Australian delegation at the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organisation. From this basis, a study of the Palestine Question can help illuminate the extent to
which Evatt’s overall international philosophy influenced the practical construction of Australian postwar foreign policy.

The second chapter follows Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question up until the historic 29 November 1947 General Assembly vote in favour of partition that established the legal basis for the creation of Israel. I will assess the extent to which the Australian involvement in the Palestine Question reflected the Australian conception of a ‘new world order’ rather than any preordained views on Zionism or the plight of the Palestinian Arabs. This conception, manifest in the actions of members of External Affairs, will be contrasted with the British and the American understanding of international diplomacy that was expressed during discussions on the Palestine Question. In particular, I will look at the extent to which the UN affected Australia’s relations with both the UK and the US and the way in which Australian diplomats viewed the role of the UN in the formation of Australian postwar policy.

In my third and final chapter I will trace Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question after the partition decision of 29 November 1947. Following the UN ruling, vacillation from both of Australia’s Great Power allies threatened the realisation of partition. I will show that there were distinct differences in the nature of Australian diplomacy towards both the UK and the US in the wake of the historic UN decision and I will account for them in the new ‘international’ context that was gaining increasing importance at the time. From the developments in the Palestine Question, Australia emerged as a leader in the international discussion on Palestine and I will aim to discern why such leadership in the international forum was regarded by Australian diplomats as significant.
Essentially, this thesis reads the Australian involvement in the Palestine Question back into the history of Australian postwar foreign policy. By focussing on this early foray into international affairs, I seek to explore the way Australian foreign policy makers envisioned the future of international diplomacy in a postwar world.
Chapter I

Australia, Palestine and the Australian Vision for the Postwar World

The Australian involvement in the Palestine Question is somewhat surprising. A small nation with a population of only seven million, situated on the other side of the globe and with only a small Jewish lobby, for three years exerted considerable influence on the international discussion on the future of Palestine. This raises the question: why did Australian diplomats so adamantly demand a voice in regard to a conflict as intractable as that found in Palestine, when it did not directly impinge on Australia’s domestic concerns? In seeking an answer to this question, the prior involvement of Australians in Palestine and the nature of Australian foreign policy following World War Two must first be understood.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of Australia’s involvement in the Middle East and Palestine prior to the hearing of the Palestine Question in the UN. Successive Australian Governments had very little to say on the development of the conflict in Palestine, except to agree on the necessity of strengthening the British position. As the storm clouds gathered over Europe in the prelude to World War Two, however, the Lyons Government (1932–1939) and the Menzies Government (1939–1941) became staunchly anti-Zionist based on the understanding that Jewish aspirations would threaten the stability of the British position.31 As I will show, it was only in the context of the vicissitudes of World War Two that the implications of the Australian–British and Australian–American alliances entered the arena of Australian foreign

31 Reich, Australia and Israel, p. 8.
policy in the Middle East. The chapter traces the flowering of seeds of discontent with pre-war diplomacy and goes on to examine the extent to which Australian diplomats sought to find a solution in the embryonic United Nations. My main purpose here is to examine Australia’s involvement in Palestine prior to 1947 in order to provide both background and contrast for the history of Australia’s involvement in the Palestine Question from 1947–9. This contrast sharpens our view of the historically-specific underlying principles of Australian foreign policy during this short period, many of which were developed out of the crucible of World War Two.

AUSTRALIAN PALESTINE POLICY

International involvement in Palestine can be traced back to the beginning of the British Mandate over Palestine which was granted by the League of Nations in 1920 and came into effect in 1923.\(^{32}\) The British, however, inherited not only land but also an intransigent conflict between two peoples aspiring to create a national home in Palestine: the Jews who had begun large scale immigration to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, and the Arab community already residing there.\(^{33}\)

Following the granting of the British Mandate, Australian policy makers had no discernible view on Palestine and the rising tensions in Palestine, other than wholehearted support for the British position.\(^ {34}\) Although friendly relations had grown between the Australian soldiers stationed in Palestine and the Palestinian Jewish community during World War One, these did not develop political significance


\(^{33}\) The growth in Jewish immigration resulted from the increasing popularity of the Zionist movement following the convening of the first World Zionist Congress in 1897.

\(^{34}\) Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 8.
following the war.\textsuperscript{35} For example, after a violent episode in 1928 in which the British Mandatory Government of Palestine used force to interfere in a Jewish ceremony at the religiously significant Wailing Wall, the Brisbane Jewish community called on the Australian Government to convey their protest to the British Government.\textsuperscript{36} As Reich shows, rather than doing so, the Australian Government forwarded the protest to the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{37} The League at this time, however, was regarded critically by the principal creator of foreign policy, Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce. Despite indicating hope for its future, in 1923 Bruce stated, “Australia…does not think that the League…can ensure the peace of the world.”\textsuperscript{38} The forwarding of the protest to the League was indicative of a disinclination to confront Britain and predicated on the belief that the League would be powerless to act on such protest. As Harper and Sissons argue, Australian policy makers gave primacy to the British Commonwealth rather than to the League as an effective source of security.\textsuperscript{39} Further, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Sir H. F. Batterbee was informed rather apologetically that in forwarding the protest to the League, Australian diplomats were “merely acting as a post office in the affair.”\textsuperscript{40} Clearly, policy makers were extremely reluctant to express a sentiment at variance with their British counterparts even though the Union of Sydney Zionists and the Melbourne branch of the Australasian Zionist Federation similarly requested that the Australian Government convey their protest to Britain.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{36} Reich, Australia and Israel, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Cumpston, History of Australian Foreign Policy 1901, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{40} W.H to Batterbee, 1 March 1929, National Australian Archives, Canberra (hereafter AA), A981 Pal 8, Part 1.
\textsuperscript{41} Sampson to Bruce, 6 February 1929, AA A981 Pal 8, Part 1; Ward to Latham, 20 December 1928, AA A981 Palestine 8, Part 1.
In the lead up to World War Two, the Australian Government began to formulate its own policy with regards to the Middle East. Bruce, now the Australian High Commissioner in Joseph Lyons’ conservative Government, informed the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 6 December 1938, “we must not arouse the hostility of the Arabs in trying to pacify the Jews.” Further on 14 February 1939, Lyons himself specified to the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, that Australia was firmly opposed to the partition of Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews which, he argued, would be “politically unwise.” This was an opinion forged in the context of the emerging major war; Australia’s view was that Britain had to implement a scheme tolerable to the Arabs in order to avoid hostilities in the Arab Middle East. The British confirmed their rejection of partition on 17 May 1939, with the publication of a White Paper that heavily restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and stated unequivocally that the partition of Palestine was against British policy. The arrival into government of the pro-British Robert Gordon Menzies and the emergence of World War Two saw Australian policy makers become even more zealous in promoting this position than the British. During the war, the stability of communications with Britain, which could be threatened if relations in the Middle East deteriorated, was considered to be of prime importance. Thus, Menzies himself sent a direct cable to the British firmly expressing these views after being informed by Bruce that such action would be “helpful in stiffening their attitude.” The crux of Australia’s Middle East policy related to the role of the Middle East in the British

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43 Ibid.
44 Riech, Australia and Israel, p. 10.
46 Reich, ‘Australia and the Jewish Community of Palestine’, p. 182.
47 Bruce to Menzies, 3 December 1940, AA A981 Palestine 8, Part 6.
Imperial defence system. Although some diplomats, including Cyril E. Hughes, the Australian Trade Commissioner in Egypt, indicated sympathy for the plight of outnumbered Jews in Palestine, these opinions did not influence policy. Both the Lyons and the Menzies governments were of the view that the dictates of World War Two necessitated the strengthening of the British position and the maintenance of Imperial lines of communication; the conflict in Palestine was to be judged only with those factors in mind.

Following Hitler’s ascension to power in Germany in 1933, the emerging Jewish refugee problem exacerbated the conflict in Palestine and thus became a crucial concern of Britain. The Australian view on the issue was influenced by the racially discriminatory Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, otherwise known as the White Australia Policy. Although it was intended to prevent non-white immigrants from residing in Australia, a corollary of the policy was the need to maintain the racial homogeneity of Australia and thus the policy also became directed at other targets including Jews. As Paul Bartrop, one of Australia’s foremost authorities on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism argues, this policy was discernible in Australia’s participation in the July 1938 Evian Conference that was initiated by the US in order to discuss the establishment of a committee to facilitate the emigration from Austria and Germany of political refugees. At Evian, Australia’s representative, Thomas

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49 Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 11.
52 Ibid., p. 29.
White, infamously indicated that “Australia was not desirous of importing a racial problem by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration.”\(^{54}\) Although Australia reluctantly agreed to accept a quota of refugees from Europe following the Evian Conference, intake was stopped by the outbreak of war.\(^{55}\)

After the Holocaust, the Chifley Government adopted a ‘humanitarian’ Policy of Rescue which allowed up to 2000 survivors of the concentration camps who had family in Australia to be admitted into the country.\(^{56}\) This policy, however, attracted intense domestic criticism. Opponents of Jewish immigration questioned the wisdom of encouraging Jews to Australia at the expense of British settlers.\(^{57}\) Subsequently, the government made changes to severely limit the number of Jewish refugees arriving in Australia.\(^{58}\) The Australian reluctance to accept Jewish refugees both before and after the war puts paid to the contention of scholars such as Hilary M. Carey who argue that “Jews had always been considered to be part of White Australia.”\(^{59}\) It will be seen that the racially discriminatory policy of Australia towards Jewish refugees would play an important role in the construction of an Australian Palestine Policy once the Palestine Question was handed over to the UN.

\(^{54}\) Quoted in Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 15.


\(^{58}\) Rutland, ‘Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria’, p. 76.

WORLD WAR TWO

During World War Two, cracks began to appear in the understanding of Australian foreign policy makers that Australian security was best supported by upholding the British position. As David Horner has explained, although Menzies declared that Australia was at war “as a result” of Britain’s declaration of war against Germany, he was not a “blind, unthinking imperialist.”⁶⁰ Initially, Menzies attempted to delay the dispatch of Australian forces to the Middle East, as he sought reassurances from the British of their support against the rising Japanese threat in the Pacific.⁶¹ When he was instead informed that the British already had ships en route to collect Australian troops, he tartly responded, “we resent being told that shipping is already on its way…there had been in this matter a quite perceptible disposition to treat Australia as a Colony…it is for the Government of Australia to determine whether and when Australian Forces shall go out of Australia.”⁶² Despite the acrimonious exchange, by 1941 the Menzies Government had committed three divisions of troops to the Middle East, and only one to Singapore which was regarded as Australia’s main protection against Japanese invasion.⁶³ In fact, the British had even announced in June 1940 that “if Japan threatened British interests in the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand would have to rely upon the United States to protect them.”⁶⁴ Clearly, although rifts were appearing in the Australian–British alliance, in these early stages of war, the Menzies Government still regarded the defence of the British position as the best possible defence for Australia.

⁶² Quoted in Horner, *High Command*, p. 31.
As the war progressed, Australian diplomats began to dissociate Australian security from the British, and therefore the Middle East. There is a strong consensus amongst historians that the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 and the British surrender at Singapore on 15 February 1942 redefined Australian military strategy. This view is reinforced if we look at the Australian military involvement in the Middle East at this time. The day after the fall of Singapore, John Curtin, the new Labor Australian Prime Minister (1941–1945), known to be sympathetic to the American alliance, demanded that at least two Australian divisions return from the Middle East. A similar request made by Menzies following a siege of Australian troops in Tobruk had been refused earlier in the war by Churchill. However, when Churchill ordered the diversion of Australians to Burma, Curtin insisted, thereby forcing the capitulation of Churchill who grudgingly allowed the Australian troops to return home. As Horner notes, only by using the “ultimate weapon of [the] denial of her forces” was a small country such as Australia was able to influence the strategic decisions of her Great Power allies. Evidently, as the war progressed, Australian military interests became increasingly dissociated from the British position.

As Australian foreign policy makers began to focus on the war in the Pacific and the Japanese threat, the involvement of the Americans in the Pacific region became of key

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importance. For instance, the month after the fall of Singapore, Evatt arrived in the US searching for a greater voice for Australia in the direction of the war effort.\textsuperscript{70} He successfully fought for the establishment of, and representation on, a War Council in Washington in order to discuss the offensive against Japan.\textsuperscript{71} In the exigencies of a war which threatened the territorial integrity of Australia, American engagement in the Pacific was indeed a source of reassurance. As Christopher Thorne notes, in March 1942 American General Douglas MacArthur was received in Australia as if he had “come to save the maiden from the advancing dragon.”\textsuperscript{72}

The lasting ramifications of World War Two for Australian–British and Australian–American relations have been a subject of much debate. Scholars such as Michael Dunn and T.B. Millar have propagated a view that the British military defeats in the Pacific catalysed a shift in the orientation of Australian foreign policy from a reliance on Britain to a reliance on the United States as the guarantor of Australian security.\textsuperscript{73} This view has since been severely tempered by historians who argue that such a shift was not permanent. Scholars such as Roger Bell have shown that as the Japanese threat receded, the Australian Labor Government was concerned with restraining the American influence in the Pacific following World War Two.\textsuperscript{74} For instance, the controversial 1944 Australian-New Zealand Agreement spearheaded by Evatt specified that a regional defence system would be based on Australia and New Zealand, and declared that any wartime installations made in the region by other

\textsuperscript{70} Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938–65, pp. 63–5.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 65.
\textsuperscript{73} Michael Dunn, Australia and the Empire: From 1788 to the Present (Sydney: Fontana Books, 1984), p. 137.
\textsuperscript{74} Roger Bell, Australia and the United States in the American Century: Essays in International History (Perth: Network Books, 2006), p. 91.
powers did not form the basis for territorial claims. The Agreement was a clear statement that the two countries were cautious about the intrusion of the US into the South Pacific. The same policy was sustained by the Chifley Government, as was evident through Evatt’s refusal of a US request to use Manus Island in defensive installations in the Pacific, unless Australia could also jointly use other American bases in the region. Similarly, the American request to acquire Christmas Island was rejected. Indeed, consensus has since developed that, as David Lowe writes, “the honeymoon [with the US] was short-lived.”

The orthodox interpretation of Australia turning away from Britain has similarly been disputed by historians. David Day, for example, contends that whilst the events of World War Two did severely undermine the Australian–British relationship, this simply stimulated foreign policy makers to understand that “all options were open, not just the British one.” His contention that distinct Australian interests began to be formulated following World War Two is supported by Christopher Waters who argues that both the Curtin and Chifley Governments transformed the nature of the imperial relationship with the UK, and attempted to cultivate Australia’s status as “an independent player on the world stage.” James Curran, however, takes issue with the understanding that an ‘independent’ foreign policy emerged towards the end of the

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75 Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, p. 76; McIntyre, Commonwealth of Nations, p. 340.
76 Bell, Australia and the United States in the American Century, p. 82; Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, p. 77.
77 Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, p. 100.
78 Ibid.
81 Waters, ‘Creating a Tradition’, p. 38.
war. He argues that loyalty to the British Empire remained intact and that World War Two had only demonstrated that Australia “was part of a wider, dangerous world” in which security could only be found in alignment with British foreign policy. In Curran’s view, it was both self-interest and a long-standing tradition of pro-British sentiment that led Australian policy makers to pursue greater involvement within the British Empire. The essential question, therefore, as Lowe pinpoints, regards the nature of Australia’s involvement in postwar international relations: “was he [Evatt] charting a new regional role for Australia in the Commonwealth or in the embryonic United Nations?” In the following chapters I argue that at least in the case of the Palestine Question, the Chifley Government was more concerned with forging a role for Australia in the United Nations but that this did not preclude a desire to strengthen bilateral Australian–British relations.

Historians such as Lowe and Watt concur that it was the Great Power disregard for Australian views that played a formative role in shaping Australia’s postwar search for influence. Evatt himself recounted that “it was with no little anxiety…[that] we watched the gradual development of political and territorial understandings and commitments between the Great Powers, regarding which the smaller nations had either not been adequately consulted or had not been consulted at all.” For example, Australian concerns were not referred to during inter-Allied conferences held in 1943 despite the fact that several of these broached Pacific issues. The Cairo Conference

which took place from 22–26 November 1943 is regarded by historians as a particularly pertinent episode which catalysed Australian thinking on postwar organisation. The conference, attended by Churchill, Roosevelt and China’s Chiang Kai-Shek established, without consultation of Australia, that all of the islands in the Pacific seized by Japan since the beginning of the First World War would be taken from the nation.88

Such wartime diplomacy fostered a concern amongst Australian foreign policy makers to ensure that the Australian voice would be heard. Again, this was reflected in the changes in Australia’s Middle East policy following World War Two. An External Affairs assessment of the importance of the Middle East written in 1944, for example, spoke of the establishment of “machinery that will make available to the Australian Government information on developments in the area as seen from a specifically Australian as well as more general British point of view.”89 This need to establish a uniquely Australian view went hand in hand with the need to be able to influence affairs. Evatt himself stated in Parliament in September 1944 that the Australian Government intended to be involved in affairs in the region, including “the future of the mandated territories of Palestine.”90 This was to be achieved through seeking membership of any international organisations in which policy makers could “attempt to exert an appropriate influence in all fields of policy that may affect our interests.”91 Following World War Two, Australian diplomats were no longer content

89 Department of External Affairs (hereafter DEA) memorandum, ‘Australian Interests in the Middle East’, (c. 1944), AA A989 1944/735/401/1A.
91 DEA memorandum, ‘Australian Interests in the Middle East’, (c. 1944), AA A989 1944/735/401/1A.
with receiving secondary information from their British counterparts but were looking to promote an independent Australian view in the international sphere.

AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The growing importance among External Affairs members of the expression of Australian opinion motivated the actions of the Evatt-led Australian delegation to the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organisation (UNCIO) held at San Francisco. The conference worked from the basis of the Dumbarton Oaks draft of the UN Charter which had been created by the Great Powers. The battles waged by Evatt and the Australian delegation to stress the Australian viewpoint in the final version of the UN Charter illuminated the Australian vision of the postwar world.

At San Francisco, the Australian delegation attempted to both restrict the jurisdiction of the Security Council, comprising the Great Powers, and maximise that of the General Assembly, comprising all member states. One of the most significant campaigns of the Australian delegation at San Francisco was the battle to confine the use of veto in the Security Council to issues requiring enforcement action. The debate that ensued dichotomised proceedings; the Great Powers rejected the Australian proposal whilst considerable support for the Australian position was found among the smaller powers. Evatt was shocked, however, when discussions amongst the Great Power delegations revealed that there was a risk of a UN without the Soviet

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92 Ungerer, ‘The “Middle Power” Concept in Australian Foreign Policy’, pp. 540, 542.
93 Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, p. 81.
94 See, for example, Lee, ‘Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation’, p. 50; Watt, Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, p. 86.
Union, or of no UN at all.\(^96\) Although the campaign to confine the use of the veto was lost, the capitulation of the Australian delegation reflected the Australian prioritisation of a viable United Nations. It was clear that Australian diplomats envisioned a future in which Australia, within the forum of the UN, could gain influence as a leader amongst the smaller powers. For example, Evatt also championed a campaign to give the General Assembly the “widest possible powers.”\(^97\) The Dumbarton Oaks draft had specified that the General Assembly could consider ‘principles’ and ‘questions’ but that it could not make recommendations on specific cases and matters before the Security Council.\(^98\) By the end of deliberations, the Great Powers were forced to accept an Assembly with an almost unlimited scope, due to substantial work on Evatt’s part.\(^99\) In seeking to minimise the powers of the Security Council and maximise that of the General Assembly, the Australian delegation to UNCIO and Evatt in particular, were forging for Australia a domain in which Australian interests could best be heard.

From the view of the Australian delegation, one of the major issues of the San Francisco Conference was the matter of domestic jurisdiction.\(^100\) The Australian delegation walked a fine line; despite demanding that the General Assembly have the “widest possible powers,” Australia was at pains to prevent the intrusion of the world body into domestic affairs. Thus whilst emphasising the responsibility of the Security Council to intervene in acts of aggression, the Australian delegation was concerned to ensure that the Security Council was not empowered to make recommendations to the

\(^{97}\) Ibid., p. 92.
\(^{98}\) Ibid., p. 93.
\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 108.
attacked state as to the cause of the dispute. Historians including Harper and Sissons as well as Hudson agree that the Australian delegation had had the White Australia Policy in mind when formulating their position. This is substantiated by the fact that Australian delegates specifically mentioned the issue of immigration in speeches made at the Conference as an example of an area in which the UN could have intervened were it not for the Australian amendments. By the end of deliberations, Evatt was indeed successful in widening the scope of the domestic jurisdiction principle. Clearly, the Australian position was to broaden the jurisdiction of the world body so far as to maximise the potential for Australian involvement whilst carefully restraining it in order to protect distinct Australian interests such as the White Australia Policy.

Further, one of the key objectives of the Australian delegation at San Francisco was the expansion of the social and economic chapters of the Dumbarton Oaks draft. It was their view that peace could be attained through the removal of want; social and economic unrest was considered to be a cause of war. In line with this principle, Australia fought for and successfully secured the inclusion in the Charter of a provision that the countries of the UN should promote “full employment” rather than “high and stable levels of employment,” the phrase advocated by the US. The same sentiment was behind the Australian delegation’s espousal of the view that colonies should be placed under a scheme of trusteeship to ensure the advancement of all

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104 Ibid., p. 63.
107 Ibid., p. 68.
colonial peoples on the basis of justice.\textsuperscript{108} This view that the resolution of international issues on principles of justice would achieve peace would later be influential in the participation of Australia in the Palestine Question.

Meanwhile, by the end of World War Two, the British struggled to maintain their authority in Palestine. Tensions in the region escalated as both Arabs and Jews attempted to influence the British discussion on the political future of Palestine through acts of terrorism on British property.\textsuperscript{109} By the end of 1945, London had sent 80,000 troops to Palestine in order to maintain the peace.\textsuperscript{110} It was evident that the British no longer had control of the situation in Palestine, and the cost of maintaining the Palestine Mandate was being questioned by the British public at large.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, the UK Government announced on 14 February 1947 that the determination of the political future of Palestine would be submitted to the UN for consideration.\textsuperscript{112} This, in effect, was the point at which the ‘Palestine Question’ came to the fore of international politics.

To sum up, Australian involvement in the Middle East and in Palestine prior to the beginning of the Palestine Question was only minor. In the 1920s there existed no Australian policy on the Palestine, and Australian diplomats were content to simply support the British position. However, as World War Two approached, policy makers began to articulate a concern to uphold the strength of the British Empire in order to

\textsuperscript{108} Hudson, \textit{Australia and the New World Order}, p. 137.
supplement the defence of Australia. Maintaining Arab support in the Middle East, an area of key strategic importance to Britain, was, therefore, regarded by Australian diplomats as necessary. Thus, these diplomats became more zealous than the British themselves in their defence of the British policy to thwart Jewish migration to Palestine.

Further, from World War Two it was clear to Australian diplomats that both the pre-war policy of adopting the UK position in international affairs and alignment with the US was insufficient to ensure that Australian interests would be considered. Thus, the Australian perception of the Middle East began to change, and no longer was the region of significance to Australia only vis-à-vis Britain’s own geopolitical imperial interests. The Great Power disregard for Australian interests in the Pacific, evident in the series of Inter-Allied Conferences in 1943, indicated that a new forum needed to be found which would accommodate the views of Australia. The embryonic United Nations was regarded by Evatt as such a forum and thus the Australian delegation to UNCIO invested much of their energy in ensuring a role for smaller powers such as Australia in the construction of international policy. This was in itself a product of the broader thinking at the time; the San Francisco Conference was a high point in a wave of intellectual and popular anti-nationalist internationalism that had been brewing from the early 1940s.\textsuperscript{113} Through the Australian involvement in the Palestine Question it will be seen that the Chifley Government held a key conviction that the international sphere would best serve Australian interests.

\textsuperscript{113} Sluga, ‘Was the Twentieth Century the Age of Great Internationalism?’, The Hancock Lecture 2009, p. 166.
Chapter II
The Road to Partition: Tentative Steps in Australian Foreign Policy

On 2 February 1947, Acting UN Secretary-General Victor Hoo received a letter from the British ambassador to the United Nations, Sir Alexander Cadogen, requesting that “the question of Palestine” be placed on the agenda of the next regular session of the UN, which was to be held in September of that year. To expedite the settlement of the issue, the British recommended that the Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, first summon an Ad Hoc Committee to undertake investigative work and then report to the regular session of the UN. Thus began the first test of the willingness of all the constituent nations of the UN to apply the principles of the UN Charter to a real life conflict. For the Chifley Government, the Palestine Question was part of an ongoing test of the form of internationalism Australia would take in the postwar era: would Australian foreign policy makers emphasise alliance diplomacy and power politics given the vested interests of her greatest ally, Britain, in Palestine, or would the Chifley Government stress the principles espoused by the Australian delegation to UN?117

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115 Addison to DEA, cable, 8 March 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.
117 These forms of internationalism are discussed in Waters, ‘Creating a Tradition’, pp. 39–41.
The Australian involvement in the Palestine Question began even before the case was officially heard in the UN. From the moment the British indicated that they wished to relinquish their responsibility for the determination of the political future of Palestine to the world body, Australian diplomats began to take tentative steps towards a foreign policy independent of the British. These tentative, independent steps illustrated the Australian understanding of postwar diplomacy. I argue that Australian diplomats sought greater participation of smaller nations in international affairs and that the UN was regarded as the most effective means to achieve this. For Australian policy makers, the world body offered the opportunity to cultivate foreign policy relationships and the means to influence international discussions to protect key domestic interests.

**PRE-UNSCOP**

It was on 8 March 1947 that Australian diplomats were first informed about the intentions of the United Kingdom regarding the Palestine Question, and immediately, the British were given an early taste of a tentative but clear independent line on Palestine from Evatt.\(^{118}\) It will be seen that the giving up of the Palestine Question to international jurisdiction was regarded by the British as an expedient tactic to rid themselves of what was proving to be an intractable conflict. By contrast, I argue that the Australian position was based on the need to maintain the legitimacy of the UN and an advocacy of the role of smaller powers in international relations.

Firstly, it is interesting to note that External Affairs suggested that not only the question of Palestine, but also the financial status of the UN should be placed on the

\(^{118}\) Addison to DEA, 8 March 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.
UN agenda.\textsuperscript{119} This was quickly opposed by the British who argued “we do not think it necessary” and expressed eagerness to arrive at the quickest possible solution to the Palestine Question by confining the agenda to the single issue of Palestine.\textsuperscript{120} The Australian reply noted the need for efficacy yet expressed concern “at the repeated references by the Secretary-General to the financial position of the organisation, implying that the budget cuts...were seriously prejudicing the efficiency of the organisation.”\textsuperscript{121} The British argued that for the Assembly to receive a report on the financing of the UN or even to only discuss it informally would “extend [the] duration of session beyond what we consider desirable.”\textsuperscript{122} On the one hand, the British may have truly believed that the UN budget was “reasonable and should enable [the] organisation to deal satisfactorily with its present problems.”\textsuperscript{123} On the other hand, however, the continual references to the need for expediency with regards to the Palestine Question suggest that the British viewed the UN as a tool with which they could divest themselves of responsibility for the determination of the future governance of Palestine.\textsuperscript{124} By contrast, the Australian insistence on discussing the financial status of the UN reflected a concern of Australian foreign policy makers with the reputation of the organisation and its ability to handle international issues.

Further, Evatt objected to the British proposal to create an Ad Hoc Committee, and cabled Christopher Addison, the British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs,

\textsuperscript{119} DEA to SOSDA, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, 26 March 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{120} Addison to DEA, 2 April 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{121} DEA to Addison, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand and the Australian Delegation, New York, 11 April 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{122} Addison to DEA, 19 April 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
stating that “we consider it to be bad tactics.” Arguing that the status of such a committee could be challenged by the General Assembly, he wrote that the British proposition was outside the scope of the powers conferred on the Secretary-General, which were “clearly set out in Chapter XV of the [UN] Charter.” Evatt’s concern was with maintaining the legitimacy of the UN and abiding by its founding charter on which the Australian delegation to UNCIO had expended much energy. His criticism, however, was somewhat mitigated by the qualification he proffered in the opening of his cable to Addison in which he argued that the British proposition would “be a great blow to British prestige.” Whilst Evatt’s objection to the Secretary-General simply appointing an Ad Hoc Committee was quite tentative and was framed as an attempt to salvage the esteem of the British, clearly the legitimacy of the UN was a key concern of Evatt’s.

The United States maintained a view similar to that espoused by Evatt. They too were “doubtful of the legal validity of the proposal” for the Secretary-General to simply appoint an Ad Hoc Committee. Instead, the US recommended that an investigative committee be established at a special session of the General Assembly. In response, External Affairs noted “with interest [the] United States’ agreement with our view that an Ad Hoc Committee may not be regarded as satisfactory” and expressed support for the calling of a special session in order to create a fact-finding body.

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125 DEA to Addison, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, 17 March 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2. Addison was the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 3 August 1945–7 July 1947. He subsequently became the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations from 7 July 1947–7 October 1947, after which Philip Noel-Baker held the position until 28 February 1950.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Addison to DEA, 21 March 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
129 Ibid.
The similar views on the need to maintain the legitimacy of the UN by following correct procedure thus evoked early signs of agreement with the US on the Palestine Question.

Whilst the Australian opposition to the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee was justified by legal technicalities which were indeed later conceded by the British, objection to the proposed composition of an investigative committee was framed far less judiciously. Britain favoured the inclusion of the five permanent members of the Security Council in the proposed Committee, the justification for which was confined to one line: “it seems obvious that permanent members of the Security Council should be represented and they will probably expect this.”\(^{131}\) Clearly, Britain adhered to the traditional nature of power politics dominated by the Great Powers.\(^{132}\) By contrast, Evatt replied: “we believe…the Assembly itself should appoint a fact-finding committee.”\(^{133}\) As had been on display at UNCIO, a key tenet of Australian foreign policy was the refusal to allow postwar international diplomacy to be dominated by the Great Powers. Addison, however, avoided the substantive issue of composition and simply stated in his response: “we consider it essential that preparatory work should be done before the Assembly meets in September.”\(^{134}\) Similarly, Evatt did not reintroduce the point of conflict.\(^{135}\) The lack of Australian insistence on the composition of the investigative committee indicates that despite the differences between the Australian and British conceptions of postwar diplomacy, Australian

\(^{131}\) Addison to DEA, 8 March 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.
\(^{133}\) Addison to DEA, 8 March 1947, in Hudson and Way, eds., DAFP, Vol. 12, p. 16.
\(^{134}\) Addison to DEA, 21 March 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\(^{135}\) DEA to Addison, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, 26 March 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
diplomats were, as yet, unwilling to stress the issue. This would later change when the issue was discussed in the UN.

CREATION OF UNSCOP

On 28 April 1947, the special session of the General Assembly on Palestine that had been recommended by the US opened in New York.\textsuperscript{136} Once the issue of Palestine was in the forum of the United Nations, Australian diplomats became more willing to pursue an independent line in opposition to that of the UK. I argue that the UN was regarded by Australian diplomats as a forum in which the Australian voice could be influential as it was an arena in which foreign policy relationships could be cultivated to strengthen the Australian position.

The immediate issue at hand was the composition of the investigative committee. Australia motioned for a special committee consisting of eleven members with the exclusion of the permanent members of the Security Council.\textsuperscript{137} The opposition to the inclusion of the Great Powers was explained by the Australian representative to the special session, Colonel William Hodgson, who cited instances “where progress had been hampered rather than assisted by an attempt to secure prior agreement among the big powers.”\textsuperscript{138} The Australian view espoused by Hodgson reflected quite a different understanding of international relations from the UK. Whilst the UK had previously claimed that it “seems obvious” to include the Big Five in deliberations on Palestine, Evatt firmly held the belief that the Great Powers were inevitably preoccupied by “questions of prestige and spheres of influence,” and that smaller powers were,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{136} Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 28 April 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
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therefore, crucial in leading the way out of impasses caused by Great Power disagreement.\textsuperscript{139} Yet, it will be remembered that although Evatt had voiced opposition to the British scheme prior to the UN special session, he had not insisted on the point. The fact that this position was now persistently maintained by Hodgson under the auspices of the UN indicates that the intention of Australian diplomats was to support the UN in order to foster a forum in which the Australian voice could be heard.

Further, the UN was also viewed as a domain in which diplomatic relations could be cultivated to add strength to the Australian position. The Australian motion to exclude the Great Powers from the investigative committee, for example, was raised in the knowledge that the United States would firmly support it. As early as 14 April, External Affairs had learned that the US already favoured a committee comprising only the ‘neutral’ states.\textsuperscript{140} Despite this, the Australian delegation continued to seek confirmation of US accordance. On 7 May, Hodgson reported back to External Affairs that the delegates of the United States had once again “assured us privately that they would agree to a neutral committee of eleven.”\textsuperscript{141} The pursuit of US support for the proposal to exclude the Great Powers suggests that Australian policy makers regarded the world body as an arena in which foreign policy relationships could be promoted in order to further the Australian viewpoint.

The Australian delegation not only attempted to create a fact-finding committee comprised of ‘neutral’ powers that excluded the Big Five, but also attempted to gain representation on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), as

\textsuperscript{139} Evatt, \textit{The United Nations}, pp. 101–2.
\textsuperscript{140} Australian Embassy, Washington, to DEA, 14 April 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{141} Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 7 May 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
it was to be named. Historians have viewed this campaign to gain representation as a prism through which to analyse the underlying assumptions of Australian foreign policy with regard to Zionism. For instance, Mandel’s comprehensive study of Evatt’s role in the creation of Israel asks “Australia was vigorously campaigning for representation on UNSCOP; but with what end in mind?” Mandel answers his own question by arguing that Evatt harboured pro-Zionist principles and that he “presciently appreciated that UN procedure might offer opportunities to Zionism when the time arrived.” This view clearly suggests that for a small power like Australia to campaign vigorously for inclusion into UNSCOP, pre-existing opinions on the substantive issues must have existed. However, it is difficult to prove, as Mandel tries to do, that Australia’s campaign for inclusion was more about Evatt’s private principles on Zionism rather than his extremely publicised support for the participation of smaller powers in international affairs through the UN. I argue that the Australian position was based more on the Australian understanding of the new world order than on vested interests in Zionism.

There is evidence to support the view that Australian campaign to gain representation on UNSCOP was also predicated upon a desire to maintain a voice in international affairs. A ministerial memorandum, for example, dated 22 April 1947, declared that the “main purpose of Australian participation in session is to secure for this country a place on the body to report to the regular session.” Whilst such a statement does not conclusively preclude the possibility of Evatt having been motivated by a pro-Zionist attitude, it was quite in keeping with the Australian championing of smaller power

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143 Mandel, H.V.Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 76.
144 Ibid, p. 77.
nations that occurred at San Francisco in 1945 and was in line with the perspective of other smaller powers at this time. Further, in a cable to Hodgson, Evatt stated
“Australia should not stand for committee unless reasonably sure of election.”146 This does not quite fit Mandel’s image of a firmly pro-Zionist Evatt who desired participation on UNSCOP to further the Zionist cause. Rather, this suggests that Evatt wished to avoid the embarrassment of Australia not being elected, and is in alignment with the general view that Evatt aspired for greater Australian involvement in international affairs.147 This raises the question: once Australian diplomats carved for themselves a position from which they could influence international affairs, what principles would guide their formulation of a Palestine policy?

UNSCOP IN ACTION

The Australian proposal in the special session was successful, and on 15 May 1947, UNSCOP was established, comprising eleven members that specifically excluded the Big Five and included Australia.148 The Australian representatives on the Committee were John Hood and his alternate, Sam Atyeo.149 Hood’s participation in UNSCOP reveals that Evatt and other Australian foreign policy makers were keen to propagate their conception of a new world order which saw the preservation of the UN as being of utmost importance.150 As I have suggested, this view was regarded as compatible with a pragmatic consideration of Australian interests.

146 DEA to the Australian Delegation, UNO, 2 May 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
149 Reich, Australia and Israel, p. 22; Mandel, ‘Dr H.V. Evatt at the United Nations’, p. 139.
One of the first divisions to engulf the Committee did not involve discussion on the future of Palestine at all. Rather, it concerned the scheduled British execution of three Jewish terrorists, on which UNSCOP had been formally requested by the parents of the condemned men to intervene.\textsuperscript{151} Following protracted debate, UNSCOP eventually decided to convey the concern of some of its members to the UN Secretary-General.\textsuperscript{152} Hood, however, specifically requested that the minutes show he disapproved of this course of action.\textsuperscript{153} Hood’s opposition to intervening in the affair has been scantly treated by historians. Most fail to mention the incident at all though it attracted heated debate in the early proceedings of UNSCOP.\textsuperscript{154} Mandel recounts it only to illustrate that UNSCOP began in a “baptism of fire” and he fails to probe the reasons behind Hood’s adamant position.\textsuperscript{155} By contrast, Howard Adelman writes of Hood’s stance, “[he] believed this was a gross deviation from the terms of reference of the committee and an interference with those charged with the administration of the Mandate.”\textsuperscript{156} Adelman subsequently concludes that Hood’s was a “pro-British stance.”\textsuperscript{157} Such historians have not made enough of the engagement of Australian foreign policy makers of the period with the overlap between internationalism and domestic interest. Instead, I would argue that Hood’s actions also reflected a concern to uphold the legitimacy of the UN as well as a concern not to impinge on the domestic jurisdictions of nations that had preoccupied the Australian delegation to UNCIO.

\textsuperscript{151} UNSCOP 3, Hood to DEA, 30 June, 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.
\textsuperscript{152} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} See, for example, Reich, \textit{Australia and Israel}.
\textsuperscript{155} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
Adelman’s reductive conclusion that Hood was simply upholding a pro-British position in fact neglects what he identifies as one half of Hood’s explanation: that intervention in the scheduled execution of the condemned terrorists was “a gross deviation from the terms of reference of the committee.” In a cable to External Affairs, for example, Hood wrote: “our concern in this question has been with prestige and the credit of the Committee.”¹⁵⁸ Hood’s apprehension was a continuation of Australian policy from the beginning of the international consideration of the Palestine Question. Evatt, for example, had persistently called for the discussion of the financing of the UN, fearful that the efficiency of the world body was in question. He had also opposed the British recommendation for an Ad Hoc Committee on the grounds that it could derive no legitimacy from the UN Charter. Thus, Hood’s objection to intervention on behalf of the condemned terrorists was reflective of the consistent Australian attempt to maintain the legitimacy of the UN and cannot only be attributed to a pro-British outlook.

The memoirs of the Guatemalan representative to UNSCOP, Jorge Garcia-Granados, paint a rather different picture of Australian policy that is in agreement with the conclusions of Adelman. Granados concludes that the Australian position was a pro-British one, arguing that Hood was “concerned lest we step on Britain’s toes.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Granados’ contention certainly echoes in the official documents. In an External Affairs report written by Hood in August, after the conclusion of the special session, Hood complained, “some members (Yugoslavia, Uruguay and Guatemala) seem to regard the Committee as a kind of super Royal Commission charged with investigating and passing judgement…[on] the manner in which the Mandate has

¹⁵⁸ UNSCOP 3, Hood to DEA, 30 June, 1947, A1838 852/19/1/1.
been administered over the past twenty-five years.”\textsuperscript{160} The frustration expressed was grounded not only upon procedural concerns about the proper jurisdiction of UNSCOP, but also on a defence of the British. For example, the report continued that the Australian position should be to “support the United Kingdom in general…provided there is no conflict with our fundamental views.”\textsuperscript{161} Clearly, maintaining good relations with Australia’s traditional ally was still regarded as favourable and Australian policy makers sought to do so within the broader context of the UN.

Further, Hood’s reservations on interfering in the executions of the condemned terrorists were also aligned with the concerns of the Australian delegation at San Francisco regarding the issue of domestic jurisdiction. It will be recalled that in order to protect Australia’s controversial immigration policy, Evatt himself had played a pivotal role in an amendment to the draft UN Charter that limited the right of the Security Council to interfere in the domestic affairs of member states. Granados himself recounts that Hood’s specific criticism of intercession on behalf of the condemned terrorists was that the intervention in an internal administration of a country was unacceptable.\textsuperscript{162} Whilst Granados interprets this criticism only as an expression of pro-British sentiment, viewed in the context of Australia’s participation at UNCIO, Hood’s actions were clearly also an attempt to maintaining the domestic jurisdiction of states in the context of a burgeoning international sphere. Evidently Australian policy makers had a specific vision of the relevance of the new international order to Australia—the UN was to be supported insofar as it offered a

\textsuperscript{160} Second Annual Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations: Agenda Item Nos. 21, 22, 23- Palestine, pp. 7–8. AA A4311 663/1.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 19.
\textsuperscript{162} Granados, The Birth of Israel, p. 57.
stage from which Australian views could be espoused, and within its international framework, the protection of specific Australian interests would be fought for. The issue of domestic jurisdiction would again surface as UNSCOP reached its final deliberations.

As the deliberations of UNSCOP drew to an end, delegates began to vocalise their opinions on the political future of Palestine, with two possibilities garnering support: the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, or the establishment of a federal Palestinian state with safeguards for the Jewish minority. In early August, Hood informed External Affairs of his view that there were serious practical difficulties with partition. The response from Evatt was immediate. He instructed Burton: “tell Hood at once that he should not at this stage take any line against [the] partition of Palestine…[he] is there solely to report on events…they must be reminded that they are a fact finding body.” Subsequently, in keeping with Evatt’s instructions, Hood began to indicate that the Australian stance would be quite unique within UNSCOP. Whilst other members slowly began to announce support either for partition or for a unitary state, Hood refused to commit Australia to either proposal. At the final meeting of UNSCOP on 31 August, Hood abstained from the vote for either of the aforementioned schemes. Like the issue of the condemned Jewish terrorists, the discussion on the final UNSCOP report was another key moment in which the balancing of domestic Australian interests within the international framework was at stake for Australian foreign policy personnel.

164 UNSCOP 6, Hood to DEA, 7 August 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
165 Evatt to Burton, 10 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.
The reason for the Australian abstention and the neutrality enforced upon Hood has been subject to much debate. Adelman concludes that Hood’s abstention in the final vote reflected Evatt’s anti-Zionism, and it is this action that forms the crux of his contention that Australia was the ‘abortionist’ of the State of Israel. By contrast, Mandel posits that Evatt was pro-Zionist but sought neutrality on UNSCOP as a tactical ploy to appease the Arabs in order to secure for himself votes for the presidency of the 1947 General Assembly.167 Both scholars, therefore, conclude that Hood’s abstention was enforced by Evatt who was motivated by his personal views on Zionism. A focus on the new internationalist context, however, reveals other explanations that carried, at least, equal weight.

Historians have neglected the official Australian justification for abstention in favour of finding Evatt’s personal motives in forcing Hood to abstain. Hood justified his own abstention by arguing that the final determination of Palestine’s political future could only be made by the General Assembly, “which alone was the competent body to decide what was workable and what was not workable.”168 Hood argued that the report should present to the assembly “the whole range of arguments” which, therefore, did not require Australia to commit to either one of the proposals presented by the Committee.169 Although Hood had expressed a personal desire to vote against partition, his final abstention was in line with official Australian policy. As early as 6 June 1947, Evatt, in a statement on Foreign Affairs, had claimed: “the Australian policy in such matters has always been to pursue the principle of full preliminary investigation of the facts. It is the only means likely to lead the United Nations to

168 UNSCOP 12, Hood to DEA, 28 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.
169 Ibid.
impartial and objective decisions.”\footnote{Extract From Statement on Foreign Affairs Tabled By The Minister for External Affairs-6th June, 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.} Evatt himself wrote that “the practice of enquiry and investigation had become fairly well settled,” citing Security Council disputes in relation to Iran and Greece on which the Australian delegate had not made recommendations until there was full preliminary investigation of the facts.\footnote{Evatt, \textit{The Task of Nations}, p. 131.} In other words, Hood’s final abstention reflected a consistent practice of Australian postwar foreign policy makers, who consistently insisted upon the need for full investigation and due process in the UN to resolve international disputes.

Further, the issue of Jewish refugees in the final report also prompted much Australian concern. On 28 August, Hood informed External Affairs that the Committee intended to include a provision for “increased but controlled Jewish immigration in [the] transitional period [after the withdrawal of the Mandatory].”\footnote{UNSCOP 12, Hood to DEA, 28 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.} This issue elicited an immediate reply from External Affairs that stated: “it would not be desirable to be committed at this stage to the principle of increased immigration. Rather than give the impression that we are committed in the opposite direction…you should refrain from adopting any final attitude.”\footnote{Draft Telegram, DEA to Hood, 29 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.} The reasons for such unequivocal instructions were elucidated in an External Affairs report drafted in August, which is worth quoting at length:

“a solution which would attempt to force the inhabitants, against the will of the majority, to accept any alteration in the constitution of its population should be opposed. In fact from Australia’s point of view there would be a narrow line between the United Nations attempting to impose upon the

\footnote{170}{Extract From Statement on Foreign Affairs Tabled By The Minister for External Affairs-6th June, 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.} \footnote{171}{Evatt, \textit{The Task of Nations}, p. 131.} \footnote{172}{UNSCOP 12, Hood to DEA, 28 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.} \footnote{173}{Draft Telegram, DEA to Hood, 29 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.}
Palestinian Arabs an obligation to admit further Jewish immigrants and the United Nations attempting to open the doors of Australia to Asiatic immigration on the pretext that failure to do so might endanger the peace.”

The implication of increased Jewish immigration for Australia’s own immigration policy was crucial in the formation of a Palestine policy by the Department of External Affairs. Again it can be seen that Hood was instructed to protect key Australian interests within the framework of the United Nations.

Adelman cites such evidence to argue that consideration of the White Australia Policy resulted in an anti-Zionist stance that induced Hood to abstain on UNSCOP’s final vote, rather than support partition. Mandel, however, counters that partition would have obviated concerns about impinging on domestic jurisdiction as Jewish immigration would affect a Jewish state, with a Jewish majority “rather than… an undivided Palestine with an Arab majority.” Neither scholar, however, addresses the context in which immigration was mentioned in the correspondence between Hood and External Affairs during the investigations of UNSCOP. Hood had informed External Affairs that the provision for increased Jewish immigration was to be included in a “chapter setting out certain matters on which common ground agreement has been found in the committee.” That is, it would not have been included in either of the recommendations for partition or for a unitary state, but rather as a generic principle agreed upon by UNSCOP. By this reasoning, were partition not accepted, a

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175 Rutland, ‘Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria’, pp. 73–4. [pp. 69–79]
178 UNSCOP 12, Hood to DEA, 28 August 1947, AA A1838 852/19/1/1.
provision for increased Jewish immigration would have challenged the domestic jurisdiction of a federated Palestinian state with an Arab majority. Evidently, Australian policy makers were opposed to any aspects of the UNSCOP report insofar as they challenged the domestic jurisdiction of a majority population. This was a stance taken with Australia’s own immigration policy in mind.

On 31 August 1947, the members of UNSCOP signed the report that they had produced over the course of two and a half months. The report contained two competing proposals for the future Government of Palestine. The first, agreed to by a majority of seven members, recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state and the placement of Jerusalem under the authority of the UN. The second, agreed to by a minority of three members, recommended the creation of an independent federal state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. The Australian vote, cast by John Hood, was the only abstention. Approximately two weeks later, the UNSCOP report would be one of the major agenda items of the General Assembly at Lake Success.

**AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

The regular Session of the General Assembly began on 16 September 1947 and the international reluctance to come to a decision on Palestine was immediately evident as, on 23 September, the Palestine Question was submitted to an Ad Hoc Committee for further consideration. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, comprising all member states, was charged with examining the UNSCOP report in

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180 Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 22.
181 Ibid., p. 34.
182 Ibid.
order to propose final recommendations for the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{184} The pertinent Australian involvement in the affair was to continue with the election of Evatt as chairman of the committee on 25 September.\textsuperscript{185} As has been suggested before, the consistent Australian effort to uphold the legitimacy of the UN was itself pragmatic. In what follows I will demonstrate that Evatt’s actions as chairman epitomised the fact that involvement the UN allowed Australian policy makers to influence proceedings to protect key Australian interests.

Evatt’s election as chairman has been offhandedly treated by most scholars. Mandel, for instance, describes Evatt as having agreed “to stand for what was in effect a consolation prize” after he lost his campaign for the presidency of the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{186} Aside from this comment, Mandel attributes Evatt’s standing for the role to the personal characteristics of the Minister who he claims “was not one to turn down a challenge.”\textsuperscript{187} Evatt’s decision to stand for election as chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, however, can offer insights into the nature of the Australian foreign policy that he spearheaded as Minster for External Affairs. In his own account of events, Evatt recounts being informed by Oswaldo Aranha, the newly elected President of the General Assembly, that “the future of the Assembly depends on the success of the Palestine [Ad Hoc] Committee.”\textsuperscript{188} Although we might disregard Evatt’s flattering depiction of his decision to stand for chairman as a challenge he undertook in order to protect the reputation of the UN itself, in more objective

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., p. 248; Evatt, Task of Nations, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{186} Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 117. Chanan Reich, on the other hand, offers nothing about the election, stating only that it occurred on 25 September 1947. Adelman similarly has no remarks to make on his election.
\textsuperscript{188} Evatt, The Task of Nations, p. 130; Granados, The Birth of Israel, p. 247. Granados recounts a “chorus of refusals” from the Latin American delegates who had been offered the vice chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee, based on the understanding that the difficulty of the Palestine Question made the vice chairmanship too great a responsibility to harbour.
hindsight, his decision to stand was, indeed, a significant one. Evatt’s acceptance of the role not only reflected his concern for a viable and reputable UN. As I will show, his decision to become chairman was one that allowed him to successfully manipulate proceedings to protect Australian interests.

The Ad Hoc Committee began its work on 27 September 1947. Through the course of the general debate, the views of the Great Powers slowly became apparent. On 11 October, the United States representative, Herschel V. Johnson announced that the US would support the majority plan for the partition of Palestine with a few modifications to the UNSCOP recommendation. Two days later, Semyon K. Tsarapkin of the Soviet Union also announced in principle support for the partition of Palestine. Despite these developments, when the US and Sweden jointly proposed that the committee proceed on the basis of partition, Evatt “strongly opposed it from the chair,” although he himself acknowledged there was a “complete absence of any support for the minority proposal of UNSCOP.” Instead, he requested that the committee proceed by appointing three sub-committees: Sub-Committee One to hash out details of the majority partition plan, Sub-Committee Two to propose an analogous plan based on the Arab proposals for a unitary Arab state in Palestine, and Sub-Committee Three to conciliate between the Arabs and Jews.

Evatt’s decision to proceed in this manner, rather than to take what Mandel refers to as the “easiest, predictable course” by proceeding along the lines of partition, has attracted significant scholarly attention. Mandel again postulates that Evatt was

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189 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 125.
190 Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 14 October 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
191 Granados, The Birth of Israel, p. 250.
193 Evatt to Burton, 26 October 1947, AA A9420 1.
attempting to curry the support of the Arab states in his bid for the 1948 Assembly presidency.\textsuperscript{194} This idea remains feasible inasmuch as Evatt’s proposing of sub-committees appeared to temporarily keep the Arab proposals alive. It carries less weight, however, if we consider that the vote for the 1948 presidency would only occur the following year, by which time the Australian support for partition was clear.

Mandel further argues that Evatt “never provided…a convincing explanation for his conduct.”\textsuperscript{195} Of course, Mandel believes this to be the case given his thesis that Evatt had always harboured a pro-Zionist stance and had, therefore, adamantly favoured partition from the beginning. However, Evatt himself provides an explanation for his decision that is quite consistent again with the participation of Australian diplomats in the Palestine Question up until that point. Evatt argued that the committee had a duty to consider in detail the various alternatives to partition so that the final proposal recommended to the General Assembly was one which had been arrived at after careful deliberation.\textsuperscript{196} He continued, “if we now committed ourselves to the majority report…there would be no opportunity for consideration in detail of the various alternatives.”\textsuperscript{197} Again, the legal Evatt reigned supreme; due process was his concern, and as chairman, he was able to ensure this occurred.

It must be noted that Evatt’s own recount of events does not entirely truthfully portray his opposition to the proposal put forward by the US and Sweden to proceed on the basis of the partition plan. Evatt revealed to Burton on 26 October that it was the US that had proposed “to refer [the] detailed consideration of majority plan to sub-

\textsuperscript{194} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{196} Evatt to Burton, 26 October 1947, AA A9420 1; Evatt, \textit{The Task of Nations}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{197} Evatt, \textit{The Task of Nations}, p. 136.
Committee[s].‖ Evatt, however, presented the suggestion as his own, allowing the US to appear to have attempted to make partition the basis of discussions, thus appeasing its significant Jewish lobby. It is this fact that leads Mandel to contend that Evatt was not only attempting to curry favour with the Arab states, but also with the US, in order to strengthen his future bid for the 1948 presidency. An examination of the establishment of the sub-committees, however, again reveals further explanations that Mandel has not taken into account.

The selection of sub-committees was left for Evatt himself to decide. Thus, he constructed Sub-Committee One with members only in favour of partition, and Sub-Committee Two with members only in favour of a unitary state. In Evatt’s own Task of Nations, he reveals that he was bombarded by an unnamed delegate who wished to change the composition of Sub-Committee One. Later on, in conversation with Joseph Linton, the Israeli Minister in Sydney, Evatt would divulge the identity of the mentioned delegate: Herschel Johnson of the US. The US delegate had attempted to blunt the drive for partition by requesting the replacement of Guatemala and Uruguay, two known pro-partition delegates, with France and Brazil, whose delegates had “expressly declared that they did not desire to serve on either Committee.” Evatt adamantly refused the request and threatened to “announce from the rostrum that an attempt had been made by the Americans to put improper pressure on the President.” Why did Evatt refuse this US request to replace certain members of the

198 Evatt to Burton, 26 October 1947, AA A9420 1.
199 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 130.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid., The Task of Nations, p. 140.
202 Linton Diary, 20 January 1952, Archive of Australian Judaica (AAJ), Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
204 Linton Diary, 20 January 1952, AAJ.
Committee whilst secretly granting them their wish to create sub-committees?

Evidently, he cannot simply be said to have been trying to maintain US favour.

Rather, consideration must turn to Evatt’s purported reasons: he established the sub-committees to maintain the principle of due process as the only way, he believed, to uphold the UN’s reputation. This explains his refusal of the US request to change the composition of Sub-Committee One, which was an attempt only to delay the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee.205

All these persistent efforts by Australian diplomats to protect the legitimacy of the UN and to be involved in international affairs only make sense if we consider the perspective that the world body would allow Australia to influence policies in a manner that accorded well with Australian interests. In The Task of Nations, Evatt recounted that attempts were made by delegates within the Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the problem of Jewish refugees and displaced persons.206 The suggestion was even raised by Sub-Committee Two for “all countries [to] take their fair quota of displaced persons.”207 Evatt, however, ruled that the proposals for the future government of Palestine did not require the resolution of the Jewish refugee issue, thereby avoiding the issue entirely.208 Evatt presents the ruling as judicious by arguing that it was “not strictly relevant to the Palestine question.”209 Other reasons for Evatt’s position, however, can be found upon consideration of the domestic anti-Jewish refugee feeling that arose in Australia following World War Two.

205 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 133.
206 Evatt, The Task of Nations, p. 133.
207 Ibid., p. 134.
208 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 148.
It will be recalled that after the Holocaust, the Policy of Rescue which allowed limited Jewish immigration to Australia on humanitarian grounds, had incited significant domestic opposition. As has also been noted, Hood had adamantly opposed intervention in the execution of Jewish terrorists and had also been explicitly instructed not to agree to any provision for increased Jewish immigration into Palestine so as to avoid setting a dangerous precedent with which Australian immigration policy could be challenged. In this case, however, domestic jurisdiction would not have been challenged as the proposal was for countries to agree to a Jewish intake. Rather than protecting the legal basis for the White Australia Policy, Evatt, aware of the anti-Jewish refugee feeling in Australia, was in fact implementing the racist policy itself.

The question of Jewish refugees was not the only issue Evatt, as chairman, dismissed from discussion. As Granados notes, a major question that confronted the Committee was whether there would need to be an “external enforcing authority” to implement the UN’s recommendations. In fact, Granados had proposed that a group of three to five small nations contribute armed contingents until the independence of an Arab and a Jewish state in Palestine could be realised. Prior to the commencement of the Ad Hoc Committee, Addison had also unequivocally informed External Affairs that the UK would not implement any solution that was not agreed to by both the Arabs and the Jews and that, “it would be necessary to provide some alternative authority to implement it.” It was abundantly clear, however, that no solution could be reached

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210 For a detailed account of this anti-Jewish refugee feeling in Australia, see Rutland, ‘Postwar Anti-Jewish Refugee Hysteria.’
212 Granados, The Birth of Israel, p. 249.
213 Ibid.
214 Addison to DEA, 20 September 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
that would appease both the Jews and the Arabs. As proceedings continued, British pressure strengthened and on 16 October Addison cabled Chifley directly and stated rather bluntly, “the Assembly should not vote on the nature of the settlement for Palestine independently of measures to implement it.” Of course, this is exactly what occurred. Why then, was the issue of enforcement avoided?

Evatt addressed the matter of enforcement in *The Task of Nations* where he wrote that the establishment of enforcement machinery would have “misconceive[d] the true functions of the General Assembly.” The General Assembly, he argued, had “no executive authority apart from its power to regulate its internal administrative machine.” Evatt, however, was not only espousing his own understanding of the legal nuances of the UN Charter, but also the wishes of the Chifley Government. As early as 1 October, Evatt had been forced to deny an accusation made in the House of Representatives that “British troops would no doubt have to enforce [the] Palestine solution.” Although this statement referred to British soldiers, the implication was clear: Australian troops too, should not be committed to Palestine. In fact, on 21 October, this implication was made explicit when Chifley was questioned in the House of Representatives as to whether Evatt “has been informed of the decision of the Government that in no circumstances will Australian troops be sent to Palestine…[in] an international force?” Chifley responded that Evatt was aware of the stance of the Government, and regardless of the truthfulness of Chifley’s claim,
Evatt was certainly made subsequently aware of the Government’s position as he was forwarded the exchange.\(^{222}\) Thus, in opposing the discussion of enforcement mechanisms from the chair, Evatt was keeping in line with the views of his government. He triumphantly reported back to Burton: “no question arises of any contribution by Australia…to military or political or any other force in Palestine.”\(^{223}\) Evidently Evatt was aware that he, as chairman, had successfully dodged a bullet that would have challenged a key principle of Australian foreign policy.

On 25 November, the resolution of Sub-Committee One was amended and approved by the Ad Hoc Committee.\(^{224}\) The resolution endorsed the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state with the placement of Jerusalem under a special international regime.\(^{225}\) Authorised by the Chifley Government to support the partition plan, Evatt cast the Australian vote in favour of partition from the chair.\(^{226}\) In the Ad Hoc Committee, however, partition commanded one vote short of a two-thirds majority that would be required in the General Assembly.\(^{227}\) Evatt subsequently urged Aranha to influence the Latin Americas to support the partition plan, arguing that “the choice…is now between a complete washout and a positive solution.”\(^{228}\) From the Australian perspective, the rejection of partition would have been less a disaster for the Jewish people seeking a national home in Palestine, and more a disaster for the authority of the UN.\(^{229}\)

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\(^{222}\) Palestine memorandum for the Secretary, 24 October 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.

\(^{223}\) Evatt to Burton, 15 November 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.

\(^{224}\) Australian Delegation, UNO to Burton, 26 November 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.

\(^{225}\) Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 34.

\(^{226}\) Questions Without Notice, House of Representatives, 2 December 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.

\(^{227}\) Mandel, *H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel*, p. 147.

\(^{228}\) Evatt to Lie, 27 November 1947, Evatt Collection, *United Nations–Miscellaneous*.

\(^{229}\) Ibid.
On 29 November 1947, history was made as a two-thirds majority of the Plenary Session of the General Assembly voted in accordance with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee.230 Thus, the plan for partition was officially endorsed by the United Nations.

It will be remembered that an External Affairs report written in August had declared that the United Kingdom should be supported in general, “provided there is no conflict with our fundamental views.”231 The various conflicts between the Australian and the UK position by this stage of the Palestine Question clearly illustrates that the Australian understanding of postwar diplomacy did indeed fundamentally conflict with that of the British. The Australian conception of the new world order placed the United Nations at the fore of diplomacy and international relations. The world body was regarded as the domain in which the Australian voice would best be heard and therefore the maintenance of its authority became a distinct Australian interest. Other domestic considerations were to be advocated within the framework of the UN and by being active in the organisation, Australia could influence matters in a manner that accorded well with Australian interests. By contrast, the world body was regarded as only as an expedient by the British rather than as the future for postwar diplomacy. This fundamental difference led Australian diplomats to tentatively challenge the UK position on more than one occasion, resulting in a growing understanding with the US.

230 Australian Delegation, UNO to Burton, 30 November 1947, A1068 M47/17/1/2.
231 Summary of the Special Session of the United Nations Assembly, AA A4311 663/1.
Chapter III

The Aftermath of Partition:
The Emboldened Australian Stance

The 29 November decision [in shorthand] indicated that the United Nations was willing to make difficult decisions on particularly intractable conflicts, but it far from guaranteed the future of Palestine. It will be seen that even as Australia remained firmly pro-partition, support for the implementation of partition was less than forthcoming from Britain and America, as each in fact attempted to prevent its realisation upon reconsideration of their strategic interests. This chapter will trace the Australian involvement in the Palestine Question following the passage of the partition decision in the General Assembly. I will explore the ideological and pragmatic reasons for the distinctive Australian stance in the absence of support from both of Australia’s Great Power allies, focusing in particular on its significance for Australian–British relations.

PALESTINE COMMISSION

Prior to the adjournment of the General Assembly on 29 November, the Palestine Commission, consisting of Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Phillipines, was established and charged with the responsibility of implementing partition. In order to prepare for the withdrawal of the Mandatory and the establishment of provisional Arab and Jewish governments, it had been intended that the Commission leave for Palestine immediately after the UN decision of 29

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November.\textsuperscript{233} The UK, however, was at odds with this intention. Rather than allowing the Palestine Commission to enter Palestine to undertake preparatory work, in December 1947, the UK proclaimed that they would “do all in our power to secure that [the] Commission does not arrive in Palestine before we are ready to hand over.”\textsuperscript{234} In their view, Arab governments would not “make trouble while we are still in charge” and thus “it would be intolerable if [the] Palestine Government had to share authority with [the] UN Commission.”\textsuperscript{235} Essentially, the UK refused to allow the Palestine Commission entrance into Palestine in order to lay the foundations for partition. The UK position caused much tension between Australian and British diplomats and revealed that the Australians, following the stance of Evatt, were willing to attack the UK position in order to uphold the findings of the UN.

Australian diplomats expressed a scathing response to the UK refusal to allow the Palestine Commission to undertake preparatory work within Palestine following the 29 November decision.\textsuperscript{236} Evatt highlighted the fact that the partition plan had already been amended to accommodate the surprise UK announcement on 20 September 1947 of an early withdrawal from Palestine, and he argued that if the British were to deny the Palestine Commission entrance to Palestine, “an almost inevitable result of this would be to bring into contempt the authority of the United Nations and its Commission.”\textsuperscript{237} His words were intentionally critical and he was well aware of their potential repercussions; as per Evatt’s wishes, Burton instructed Hood to “observe and report in full on [the] dangerous situation likely to arise” following the sending of

\textsuperscript{233} Granados, \textit{The Birth of Israel}, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{234} Noel-Baker to DEA, 6 December 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{236} Mandel, ‘A Good International Citizen’, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{237} Evatt to Noel-Baker, 16 December 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2; Evatt, \textit{The Task of Nations}, p. 127.
Evatt’s cable.\textsuperscript{238} Similarly, at a meeting of High Commissioners in London, Australia’s Jack Beasley challenged Hector McNeil, the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, when McNeil proclaimed that Britain would not contribute to any international force in Palestine even if the Palestine Commission was to be permitted entry.\textsuperscript{239} Beasley argued that a refusal to contribute to such a force would constitute a veto of the UN decision for partition.\textsuperscript{240} It will be remembered that in the early stages of the international discussion of the Palestine Question, opposition to British policies had been tentative and were tempered by claims that the Australian position was predicated on upholding British ‘prestige.’ The assertiveness on display following the 29 November resolution was unusual for the Australians, and there had been no evidence of it prior to the decision of the General Assembly, despite Australian support for partition during the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee. Now that partition had been endorsed by the UN, Australian diplomats became more assertive in their criticisms of the UK in order to uphold the findings of the world body.

By contrast, Britain was happy to ignore the UN decision, and on 30 January, without consultation of the Palestine Commission, the British announced that the Mandate would terminate on 15 May 1948.\textsuperscript{241} The only template for the future governance of Palestine the UK had in mind was the Palestine Commission, a body they themselves had not allowed to undertake preparatory work.\textsuperscript{242} As Richard Jasse argues, for the British, the UN was to be supported only to the extent that it concurred with their

\textsuperscript{238} Burton to Hood, 16 December 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
\textsuperscript{239} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241} Granados, \textit{The Birth of Israel}, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{242} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 161.
position.\footnote{243} It was this fundamental difference in views that explains the Australian dissent from the British stance in the Palestine Question.

**TRUSTEESHIP**

As the deadline for the British withdrawal from Palestine drew closer, another more serious attempt to derail partition came in the form of the United States’ proposal to place Palestine under a trusteeship, which was inspired by the emergent Cold War.\footnote{244}

Trusteeship, that is, the administration of a dependent area by a state responsible to an international organisation for that administration, was a key function of the UN.\footnote{245} Australia had even been a signatory on a proposal for the UN Charter to refer to trusteeship, which had been absent from the original Dumbarton Oaks draft.\footnote{246} The goal of the international trusteeship system, as developed at San Francisco and enshrined in the UN Charter, was the attainment of self-government or independence.\footnote{247} In the case of Palestine, however, it was clear that both the Jews and Arabs had the proficiency for self-government.\footnote{248} Thus, whilst UNSCOP had produced two reports recommending either partition or the creation of a unitary federal state, the committee had been unanimous in calling for the end of the British mandate and the creation of procedures leading to the independence of Palestine.\footnote{249}

As I will show, the issue of trusteeship illuminated the differences in the view of

\footnote{249} Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 192.
postwar diplomacy held by Australian diplomats and their American and British counterparts. I argue that due to the 29 November resolution, Australian policy makers were emboldened to defend the UN decision against the vacillation of the Great Powers.

On 19 March 1948, the United States representative to the Security Council, Warren Austin, called for the suspension of action on partition in favour of a temporary UN trusteeship in Palestine. The proposal was also enthusiastically adopted by the UK. Thomas W. Lippman, specialist on Middle Eastern Affairs and US foreign policy, explains that the onset of the Cold War meant that the US was increasingly unwilling to allow the Soviet Union a foothold in the Middle East. Mandel concurs as he writes, “[the US] believed that trusteeship with Soviet disapproval was better than having 10,000 Red Army troops on the ground to enforce partition.” Indeed, as early as December 1947, External Affairs had been informed by the British that “the United States would greatly dislike the idea of a Soviet force in Palestine.”

Similarly, Philip Noel-Baker, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations who had replaced Addison, indicated that the British were also suspicious of Soviet intentions in Palestine as he warned External Affairs that the “primary aim of the Soviet Government is probably to debar the United Kingdom…from maintaining their strategic position…[which] seems to them to lie in encouraging partition.”

Australia’s Great Power allies were thus already propagating a foreign policy outlook

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251 Noel-Baker to DEA, 1 April 1948, AA A1838 8522/20/2 Part 5.
254 Noel-Baker to DEA, 6 December 1947, AA A5954 2255/2.
255 Noel-Baker to DEA, 1 November 1947, AA A1068 M47/17/1/2.
that viewed the world in a dichotomous way; on the one hand there was a Soviet bloc and on the other, there was the US and her supporters. For both the US and the UK, restraint of the Soviet position was crucial in the context of the emerging Cold War.

The Australian Government, by contrast, maintained that Cold War politics could best be resolved through cooperation on the world body rather than through division into political blocs.\textsuperscript{256} Thus, the Anglo-American view that the Soviet Union should be restrained was rejected by Australian foreign policy makers.\textsuperscript{257} Ralph Harry, the Australian First Secretary in New York, for example, informed the Jewish Agency that Australia disapproved of the US opposition to the sending of Soviet troops to enforce the partition decision in Palestine.\textsuperscript{258} Evatt, in a cable forwarded to the US mission to the UN, similarly criticised the US attempt to revert to trusteeship for Palestine as a “tendency in international relations for…policies based on strategic considerations and power politics,” whilst he emphasised that the Australian policy with regard to Palestine was moulded with “a view to a settlement based upon right and justice.”\textsuperscript{259} Although this was the view Evatt was championing to US diplomats, it was a view consistent with that espoused by the Australian Acting Counsellor to the UN division of External Affairs, Keith Shann. Shann issued a memorandum on Palestine arguing that “consideration of possible strategic interests either in terms of future allies, military bases, or oil, is likely to distort the picture.”\textsuperscript{260} His conclusion was that “we should proceed on the assumption that the objective is to arrive at a just and workable settlement…stability in Palestine is most likely to ensure the

\textsuperscript{256} Lee, ‘Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation’, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{257} Meaney, ‘Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming Cold War’, p. 316–7.
\textsuperscript{258} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{259} DEA to Australian Delegation, UNO, 12 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
\textsuperscript{260} ‘Palestine memorandum’, 6 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
maintenance of peace and security.”261 The Australian view was that partition was indeed a ‘just and workable settlement,’ as it had been arrived at by the General Assembly following a full preliminary investigation of the facts.262 This was aligned with Evatt’s struggle at UNCIO to expand the social and economic chapters of the UN charter, which, as it will be recalled, was predicated on the belief that the best way to achieve peace was to resolve international conflicts on principles of justice.

In defence of the original partition decision, Australian diplomats challenged the support of both the US and the UK for trusteeship. In private cables with Noel-Baker, Evatt accused Britain of being unsupportive of partition, arguing that this was interpreted as “signs of weakness” which encouraged the Arabs to resort to violence.263 This elicited a heated response from Noel-Baker who refuted Evatt’s accusation, contending that the only signs of weakness were those “demonstrated in [the] resolution itself.”264 This was a personal attack on Evatt, who had of course spearheaded the partition resolution, and a sign of deteriorating Australian–British relations. Evatt, however, maintained his position publically, and on 22 March, he released a press statement that condemned trusteeship in which he attacked both the US and the UK by arguing, “had the great powers who supported the [partition] proposal…adhered firmly to it there probably would have been little difficulty.”265 Evatt argued that any decision reached after “there has been full enquiry and fair debate” should not be set aside and that “to throw the solution into the melting pot again may be very damaging to the authority of the United Nations.”266 Evatt’s strong

261 Ibid.
262 Evatt, Task of Nations, pp. 131, 168.
263 DEA to Noel-Baker, 3 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
264 Ibid.
265 Full text quoted in Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, pp.171—3.
266 Ibid.
stance against both the UK and the US was in stark contrast to that exhibited by
Australian diplomats when they had continually sought to attain US support for their
proposal to exclude the Big Five from UNSCOP earlier in the deliberations on the
Palestine Question. The belief that partition offered a just resolution to the conflict in
Palestine and the need to uphold the decision in order to maintain the authority of the
UN thus emboldened Australian diplomats to oppose the views of both of Australia’s
Great Power allies.

Despite Evatt’s publicised opposition to the reconsideration of the Palestine Question,
on 1 April 1948, the Security Council adopted the US proposal to request a special
session in order to formally introduce the idea of trusteeship.267 On the day the
Australian delegation to the UN was informed that the special session would be held,
Hood cabled External Affairs and warned: “it is clear the United States will make a
strenuous effort to line up support and will take advantage of Bogota Conference to
line up Latin Americans.”268 Hood was referring to a conference between the US and
the Latin American states regarding the establishment of a multilateral security
pact.269 Hood’s concern was pre-empted by Evatt, who had already cabled the
Australian representatives in Chile and Brazil, requesting that the foreign ministers of
both nations should have personal copies of Evatt’s 22 March press release.270
Clearly, it was believed by Australian policy makers that diplomatic brokerage could
be gained by participating in international fora. Hood, for example, was convinced

267 Australian delegation, UNO, to DEA, 1 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
268 Australian delegation, UNO to DEA, 2 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
270 Evatt to Australian Legation, Santiago, repeated to Australian Legation, Rio De Janeiro, 2 April 1948, AA A1838 852/20/2 Part 5.
that “delegations not committed to support of [the] United States are, we believe, looking to Australia for a lead following Minister’s statement.”

Despite what had initially been regarded as a serious setback to the partition plan, the US proposal for trusteeship failed to gain significant support. In fact, in light of serious objections in the special session, the American proposal was never formally placed on the UN agenda. The only result of the special session was the appointment of Count Bernadotte of Sweden as United Nations Mediator, charged with the task of attaining a peaceful solution in Palestine. Thus, the 29 November decision to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state remained in force.

**THE CREATION OF ISRAEL**

With the failure of the US’ proposal for trusteeship, partition looked set to occur despite the Palestine Commission’s lack of preparation. When the British withdrew on 15 May 1948, Arab forces with contingents from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia invaded Palestine, instigating the First Arab-Israeli War. It was in the midst of this war, on 16 May 1948, that David Ben Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. The future of the Jewish state, however, was still far from certain and the issue of boundaries formed the basis for yet another clash between the Australian viewpoint and those of the British and the Americans. On this issue, the assertiveness that had been on display during the question of trusteeship was continued, and again the Australians took the lead in

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271 Ibid.
273 Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 37.
challenging the policies of both the UK and the US. I will show that the crux of the Australian desire to be involved in the Palestine Question was to gain the status to not only be heard but also to be informed on international affairs. It will be seen that Australian diplomats came to regard the UN rather than the Australian-British alliance as being the best method to achieve this.

Following the proclamation of Israel, the United Nations was concerned with procuring a permanent cessation of violence. The UN Mediator, Count Bernadotte, put forward proposals in an attempt to design such a peaceful settlement. In his final plan before his assassination on 17 September, Bernadotte proposed significant territorial adjustments to the initial scheme for partition that favoured the Arabs.\(^\text{277}\)
The British gave “whole-hearted and unqualified support” to his report and informed External Affairs that “the United States Government…reached conclusions regarding territorial settlement in Palestine which are very similar to our own.”\(^\text{278}\)

The UK, with the support of the US, subsequently submitted a resolution on the basis of the Bernadotte plan to the 1948 regular session of the UN.\(^\text{279}\) Evatt, however, indicated that as was the case on the issue of trusteeship, Australia would be willing to challenge her Great Power allies in order to uphold the original findings of the UN General Assembly.\(^\text{280}\) Evatt informed Burton: “the Bernadotte plan as [a] starting point is quite out of the question.”\(^\text{281}\) In fact, the Australian delegation submitted a

\(^{277}\) Noel-Baker to Evatt, 23 September 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\(^{278}\) Ibid.; Garnett to DEA, 15 September 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\(^{279}\) Williams (the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Canberra) to Chifley, 22 September 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1; Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, pp. 200–1; Smith, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, p. 203.
\(^{280}\) High Commissioner’s office, London to DEA, 24 September 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\(^{281}\) Evatt to Burton, 9 November 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1. This was forwarded to Beasley two days later: Burton to Beasley, 11 November 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
conflicting resolution for the establishment of a Boundary and Mediation Commission that would decide the boundaries of the future Jewish and Arab states in conformity with the original partition resolution.\textsuperscript{282} Clearly, the Australians wished to implement the decision of the General Assembly rather than proceed from the recommendations of Bernadotte. The UK criticised the Australian proposal on the grounds that the Commission would be restricted to a solution based on direct negotiation, to which Hood retorted, “the logic of events, the present position in Palestine and common sense all point to the need for a real effort by the United Nations along these lines.”\textsuperscript{283} The Australian position was bolstered by yet another abrupt reversal of policy from US policy makers, who withdrew support for the Bernadotte plan.\textsuperscript{284} The UK subsequently acquiesced and implemented amendments to their resolution that were in alignment with the Australian approach.\textsuperscript{285}

The Australian response to these changes in the UK position reveals that a key goal of Australian foreign policy makers was not only to be heard but also to be informed of developments in international affairs and in British policy. Rather than being pleased with the newfound UK acceptance of the Australian approach, Evatt expressed frustration at the lack of forewarning from the UK of its “somersault.”\textsuperscript{286} He instructed Beasley to voice the opinion that the “United Kingdom had not only misled us as to their intentions…they then today proceeded to concur in virtually our approach without previously informing us.”\textsuperscript{287} Following this expression of frustration, however, policy makers subsequently sought to strengthen communication

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{282} Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 22 November 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\item \textsuperscript{283} Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 26 November 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Louis, ‘British Imperialism and the End of the Palestine Mandate’, p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{285} Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 1 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{287} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
with Australia’s traditional ally. For instance, at a High Commissioners Meeting on 17 December, Beasley voiced the view that Australia desired increased Commonwealth consultation.288 The Australian concern was raised successfully and Beasley “received general support for a special meeting of High Commissioners in [the] new year to consider practical measures for increased consultation.”289

Throughout the developments of the Palestine Question, however, it became increasingly clear that the UN, rather than the UK, offered a more effective forum in which Australian policy makers could seek greater international involvement. In private correspondence with Burton, Evatt indicated that although the revised UK position was in accordance with that of Australia, it was to be voted on in advance of the Australian resolution, thereby discomfiting Australia as well as the delegations who offered support for the Australian approach.290 To prevent such embarrassment, Hood called for the committee to prepare a single text instead of various alternative resolutions.291 When this was rejected, he strained Anglo-Australian relations further by proposing all substantial parts of the Australian resolution as amendments to that proposed by the UK.292 The UK voted against all amendments.293 The fact that the British manoeuvre, which had the potential to embarrass the Australian position in the UN, was regarded by the Australian delegation as sufficient justification for further antagonising the UK illustrates the growing importance of the UN forum for policy makers, rather than that offered by the British.

288 Beasley to DEA, 18 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
289 Ibid.
290 Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 1 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
291 Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 3 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
Confirmation that the UN rather than the UK could allow Australia a greater voice on international affairs was found during discussions on the composition of the Conciliation Commission, as the proposed Boundary and Mediation Commission was to be named. The Australian position, enunciated in a statement by Hood in the First Committee of the UN, was that the composition of the Conciliation Commission should be determined by the General Assembly, as had been the case with UNSCOP.294 Alternatively, the Canadians, with the support of the British and the Americans, submitted a proposal for a three person Commission to be chosen by the permanent members of the Security Council.295 Although the Canadian proposal was passed, “support for [the] inclusion of Australia...had been apparent” from other members of the committee.296 In the end, however, the Committee was comprised of the United States, France and Turkey.297 It was the UK that had insisted on the inclusion of Turkey instead of Australia on the premise that “the wishes of Arab states...must be given weight.”298 Beasley, at the Commonwealth High Commissioners meeting, expressed his displeasure at the British manoeuvre.299 The fact that Australia desired a position on the Commission was verified by Evatt’s instructions to Beasley the following month: “you should point out...that we would have been elected to the Commission on Palestine but for Bevin’s insistence that Turkey should be preferred to Australia.”300 Throughout the international consideration of the Palestine Question, Australian diplomats consistently campaigned for representation on subsidiary bodies of the UN, often to the displeasure of the British.

294 Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 10 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
295 Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 6 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
296 Australian UN delegation (Paris) to DEA, 13 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
297 Ibid.
298 Ibid.
299 Beasley to Burton, 18 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL

At the same time that the UN was considering the proposals of Bernadotte, Israel was attempting to consolidate its international status. On 17 May 1948, External Affairs received a request from the Foreign Secretary of the Provisional Government of Israel for Australia to grant recognition to the new state. The subsequent consideration of this request reveals that whilst the UN was becoming of greater importance for Australian policy makers, in the absence of conflict between the interests of the British and the resolutions of the UN, Australian diplomats remained eager to maintain favourable relations with their traditional ally. This was more an enthusiasm, however, to cultivate bilateral relations with the UK rather than with the British Commonwealth in its entirety, predicated upon the belief that the alliance would confer diplomatic benefits to Australia.

As I have shown, when the decisions of the UN were at odds with the views of the UK, Australian policy makers prioritised their support for the world body on the understanding that it offered the best platform from which Australian interests could be advocated. When Noel-Baker in May 1948 exerted considerable pressure on the Commonwealth states not to recognise Israel, however, the Australian response was one of complete support. Noel-Baker argued that recognition should be withheld to salvage relations with the Arabs and postulated that “our policy will of course be considerably impaired if any Commonwealth Government grants immediate recognition, even de facto, to the Jewish State.” Evatt was exceedingly placatory and his response began with the assertion that, “we fully understand your point of

301 Shertok to DEA, 17 May 1948, AA A1838 851/12/3 Part 1.
view,” adding, “it is most important that we act together.”

It was apparent, however, that External Affairs favoured the recognition of Israel. Evatt, for instance, attempted to assuage British frustration that Transjordan, a key Middle East ally of the UK, had been denied membership of the UN by insinuating to Noel-Baker that following the recognition of Israel, Transjordanian membership could be forthcoming. Further, External Affairs had not believed it necessary to “act together” with the British when they had favoured trusteeship or when they had wished to adopt the Bernadotte proposals. The crucial difference, however, was that whilst trusteeship and the adoption of the Bernadotte plans were in opposition to the original partition decision of the General Assembly, the recognition of Israel had not been explicitly included as a feature of the partition plan. By denying recognition to the State of Israel, Australian policy makers were able to appease the British whilst not contravening the decisions of the UN.

The Australian position on the recognition of Israel illustrated that some policy makers were less concerned with the British Commonwealth than with the bilateral alliance with the UK. On 1 June, Evatt presented a submission to Cabinet requesting that Israel be recognised, arguing that although the situation in Palestine was still tenuous, the Provisional Jewish Government was exercising effective control over the area accorded to them by the UN. South Africa had already dissented from the British position and had accorded de facto recognition to Israel on 24 May. Further, the Australian High Commissioner in Wellington, Roden Cutler, had reported to

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304 Ibid.
305 ‘Submission for Cabinet: Recognition of the Jewish State’, H.V. Evatt, 1 June 1948, AA A1838 851/12/3 Part 1; Smith, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, pp. 200–1. As time elapsed, it became apparent that the local Jews would not be overcome by the Arab invasion.
External Affairs in late May that the New Zealand Government were “very much inclined to recognise the *de facto* Provisional Government of Israel,” though they were “unlikely to make [an] early announcement and may delay until after Australian decision is known.”307 Evidently, the Australian recognition of Israel would have accrued substantial Commonwealth support, and could have paved the way for the Commonwealth states to unite in favour of recognition and thus pressure the UK into following suit. Despite the support of both Chifley and Evatt for the recognition of Israel, however, Cabinet decided to approve recognition only if “agreement [could] be reached” with Great Britain.308 Cabinet’s refusal of Evatt’s request suggests that for some Australian foreign policy makers, maintaining favourable relations with the UK rather than the British Commonwealth at large was of utmost importance.

As more countries began to recognise the State of Israel, the Australian stance towards the UK became increasingly inimical and reflected the fact that the Australian support for the British position had been predicated upon the understanding that the alliance with the British would confer diplomatic benefits to Australia.309 Although the UK maintained that recognition should be withheld by Commonwealth members, Evatt was spurred into action by the Canadian announcement of *de facto* recognition of the Provisional Government on 26 December 1948.310 Evatt cabled Burton on the same day, demanding that he announce recognition of the State of Israel “as soon as possible.”311 This time his request was rejected by Chifley, who argued that “no

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307 Cutler to DEA, 26 May 1948, AA A1838 851/12/3 Part 1; Cutler to DEA, 28 May 1948, AA A1838 851/12/3 Part 1.
309 Day, *Pearl Harbour to Nagasaki*, p. 52. Day argues that following the Second World War, Australian foreign policy makers sought to re-establish for Australia a greater place in the British Empire based on pragmatic concerns that included the need to restrain the United States in the Pacific.
decision will be taken until [the] Cabinet meeting late in January.” 312 This was despite the fact that Chifley, as it will be recalled, had supported Evatt’s first approach to Cabinet requesting permission to recognise Israel. Although Chifley supported Evatt’s position, he was unwilling to challenge the decision of policy makers within Cabinet, who clearly held different views to External Affairs as to the importance of aligning with the UK. However, when Evatt was informed by Beasley on 19 January 1949 of the imminent British recognition of Israel, his response was no less than hostile. Evatt demanded that Beasley find out precisely when the UK Government would accord recognition and that Beasley “insist that United Kingdom does not steal a march on Australia in recognition of Palestine.” 313 After having upheld their desire for non-recognition, Evatt expected Australia to be allowed to recognise Israel before Britain. Beasley was also instructed to point out that Australia had been strongly in favour of recognition eight months prior but had refrained “at their persistent and almost incessant request.” 314 The indignation expressed reflected the fact that postwar Australian diplomacy was focussed on attaining influence; acquiescence to the views of the UK hardly meant a return to the imperial fold of the pre-war years.

Finally, on 27 January 1949, the Australian Cabinet approved the recognition of the Jewish state, to be announced simultaneously with the UK Government. 315 Both Chifley and Evatt released press statements justifying the Australian decision in which they each referred to Australia’s “unwavering support [for] the decisions of the United Nations.” 316 Evatt went further to argue that “the legal basis of Israel is

312 Ibid.
314 Ibid.
315 ‘Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 27th January 1949 at 11am’, p. 4, AA A2703 194.
unassailable” as it “rests on the decision of the United Nations Assembly of 1947.”

Although Cabinet permitted only simultaneous announcement, Australian policy makers not only highlighted their faithfulness to the UN, but also the independence of Australian action from that of the British. This was reflected in the act of recognition itself. The de jure recognition of Israel accorded by Australia was an irrevocable acknowledgement that the state existed according to international law. By contrast, the British offered de facto recognition, which only provisionally acknowledged the existence of the state and had the potential to be revoked. Thus by offering de jure recognition, the first of its kind from a Western nation, Australian diplomats were stealing the thunder from the British, showing that Australia was an independent player on the international stage, guided only by the principles of the UN.

THE ADMISSION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Following the proclamation of the State of Israel, Israeli diplomats not only attempted to attain recognition from states, but also from the United Nations. Israel’s application for UN membership was heard by the Security Council on 3 December 1948. The Security Council rejected the application, however, due to intense British opposition and thus the Israeli case was not heard in the General Assembly. A subsequent application was lodged in late February 1949. Australia’s views on the admission of Israel to the UN illustrates that tensions with the British on the Palestine Question shaped subsequent Australian policy and confirms that the authority of the decisions of the UN fuelled the assertiveness of Australian foreign policy makers.

320 Mandel, H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel, p. 207.
321 Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 3 December 1948, AA A1838 191/2/1.
323 Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 28 February 1948, AA A1838 175/9/1 Part 1.
Even following the recognition of Israel by both Australia and the UK, the UK Government were reluctant to allow Israel admission to the UN. The Australian response to this reflected the disillusionment felt due to the fact that the British had prevented Australia’s inclusion on the Palestine Commission and had almost accorded recognition to Israel in advance of Australia. Chifley brusquely stated that Australia would favour the admission of Israel and hoped that its application “will be treated on its merits and will be divorced from other considerations.” Chifley was clearly critical of the UK position, insinuating that it was based on the strategic desire to placate the Arab states. Similarly, Burton instructed the First Secretary in New York, Arthur Tange, to take the position that Australia would support the application of Israel for membership, “regardless of bargains.” Although Australian diplomats had refrained from recognising Israel for eight months due to British pressure, they were not prepared to capitulate once more and deny Israel entry to the UN. On 4 March, the Security Council approved a resolution for the General Assembly to favourably consider the admission of Israel, a decision on which Britain had abstained. Following this, Australian frustration at the prior machinations of the British was evident in the fact that it was Hood who, on 6 May, moved a joint resolution to the UN General Assembly submitted by Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Haiti, Panama, the US and Uruguay, officially recommending admission. This resolution was

325 Burton to Prime Minister’s Department, 1 March 1949, AA A1838 175/9/1 Part 1.
328 Australian Delegation, UNO to DEA, 6 May 1949, AA A1838 175/9/1 Part 1.
adopted by the General Assembly on 11 May, thereby making Israel a member of the United Nations.\textsuperscript{329}

Further, it will be remembered that the Australian Cabinet, in June 1948, ruled that the Australian recognition of Israel was only to occur with the support of the UK Government. Cabinet members had been unwilling to fracture relations with the British on an issue that British diplomats had expressed clear opposition to. In December 1948, however, Cabinet indicated that “recognition would be reconsidered after the admission of Israel to the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{330} Of course, Australian recognition of Israel was able to precede Israel’s admission to the UN on account of British recognition. However, the fact that international opinion had the potential to undermine the adherence of Cabinet members to the British position indicates that the assertiveness of Australian policy makers was fuelled by the authority of UN decisions.

**JERUSALEM**

By the time Israel was admitted to the United Nations, the Jewish state had already reached armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon and Transjordan.\textsuperscript{331} World attention then turned to the problematic issue of Jerusalem and its international status.\textsuperscript{332} The insistence of Australian diplomats on the issue was greater than had been previously shown on the Palestine Question. In fact, Australian diplomats maintained a position contrary to all its traditional allies: the UK, the British

\textsuperscript{329} Reich, *Australia and Israel*, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{330} Tange to Cumes, 10 December 1948, AA A1838 191/1/4 Part 1.
\textsuperscript{331} Mandel, *H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel*, p. 234.
Commonwealth and the US. In the following section I will demonstrate that this assertiveness was also fuelled by pressing domestic political concerns.

The provisions of the 29 November 1947 partition plan for the city of Jerusalem to be established as a special international regime under the authority of the United Nations had attracted consensus at the 1947 session of the General Assembly. However, in the subsequent Arab-Israeli war, Jerusalem became partitioned between Israel and Jordan, as Transjordan renamed itself in April 1949. As a result, neither Israel nor Jordan wished to surrender Jerusalem to international control. In this context, support for the full internationalisation of Jerusalem began to unravel in 1949. In August, the United Kingdom indicated that although full internationalisation was preferable, the “partition of Jerusalem for administration purposes with international supervision, particularly of the Holy Places” would be accepted. This idea of subjecting only the Holy Places to international control gained increasing international support and was formalised in the draft statute for Jerusalem, produced on 27 September by the Palestine Conciliation Commission that had replaced the functions of the UN Mediator. Despite this, on 18 November, the Australian UN delegation put forward a draft resolution proposing that all of Jerusalem be internationalised, in concurrence with the original UN resolution. The US was completely opposed to the Australian suggestion, arguing that it was impracticable, whilst the UK and other Commonwealth members including Canada and New Zealand were “not

enthusiastic.” When the Australian resolution was passed in the Political Committee of the UN on 7 December, this was done despite the opposition of both the US and the UK, the two Western powers most involved in Palestine. Further, it was passed without Commonwealth support: South Africa opposed the resolution whilst New Zealand, Canada and India abstained. Two days later, the General Assembly also voted in favour of the complete internationalisation of Jerusalem.

The Australian championing of full internationalisation without the support of her Great Power allies or the British Commonwealth can be attributed to the pressures exerted by the domestic Catholic constituency on the Chifley Government. An External Affairs statement released after the reaffirmation of the full internationalisation of Jerusalem in the UN proclaimed that “the Australian proposal…had received the whole-hearted support of religious leaders.” This reference hinted at the pressure felt by Australian diplomats from Catholic representatives, who firmly and vocally adhered to the original scheme for the full internationalisation of Jerusalem. The Apostolic Delegate, for instance, explicitly informed Evatt that “the Holy See still maintains that only full internationalisation of the City of Jerusalem and not a mere international control over the Holy Places can be of lasting effect.” Numerous letters were also sent to Evatt from parishes around Australia to the same effect. It was clear that the Australian position was being formulated with respect to this pressure, especially in light of the fact that elections

340 Ibid.
341 Ibid., p. 270.
343 Apostolic Delegate to Evatt, 24 September 1949, Evatt Collection, UN–Correspondence.
344 See, for example, the letters contained in AA A1838 175/1/2/2/1 and in Evatt Collection, UN–Correspondence.
were due to take place in Australia late in 1949.\textsuperscript{345} For example, Abba Eban, Israel’s Ambassador to the UN wrote of Evatt, “it was known that the elections in his country would be tightly fought and that the Catholic vote was of some importance.”\textsuperscript{346} It was such domestic considerations that motivated Australian diplomats to pursue full internationalisation although it has been labelled by contemporary historians as “abstract and unrealistic,” and was, in fact, never implemented.\textsuperscript{347}

In summary, the 29 November UN decision was seen to confer legitimacy to the plan for partition and thereby emboldened Australian foreign policy makers to challenge the views of both the UK and the US more adamantly than before. This assertiveness was fostered by an ideological belief that partition, being a resolution of the General Assembly that was arrived at after full preliminary investigation, offered the only just solution to the Palestine Question. This was also aligned with the understanding that the UN offered the best domain for Australia to be involved in international affairs, thereby making the legitimacy of the UN a key Australian interest. Whilst support for the UK was not foreclosed by Australian adherence to the UN, it became clear that the diplomatic benefits of support for the UK were becoming increasingly outweighed by those reaped in the UN arena. This need to attain influence on the international stage in order to secure Australian interests was the driving force behind the construction of an Australian Palestine Policy.

\textsuperscript{345} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, pp. 260–1; Reich, \textit{Australia and Israel}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{346} Mandel, \textit{H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel}, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{347} Wasserstein, \textit{Divided Jerusalem: The Struggle for the Holy City}, p. 168.
Conclusion

The international resolution of the Palestine Question was mired in the reluctance of the world community to come to a conclusion on what had been deemed an irresolvable conflict. Great Power machinations hindered proceedings as Britain and the United States, the two Great Powers most involved in Palestine, became increasingly concerned with the emergence of the Cold War and attempted to circumvent the findings of the United Nations. It was Australia that time and time again emerged at the forefront of discussions in order to propel the UN to firstly arrive at a just conclusion and secondly to enforce its original decisions. By reading the Palestine Question back into the history of Australia’s postwar foreign policy, this thesis has uncovered the underlying principles that drove Australian policy makers to emerge as leaders in the UN discussions on Palestine.

The involvement of Australia in the international resolution of the Palestine Question was not an organic development. The seeds had already been sown at the San Francisco Conference to establish a new international organisation. The growing importance of the international sphere motivated Australian diplomats to consistently seek representation on issues that bore no direct relevance to Australia on the presumption that participating in the United Nations would allow Australia to garner diplomatic capital with which Australia’s voice could be heard internationally. My study of the correspondence amongst Australian diplomats and between these diplomats and their British and American counterparts, as well as official documents from the period, however, shows that participation in the United Nations was not only
predicated on a pragmatic consideration of Australia’s interests but also on an
idealistic understanding that world peace would be best assured through the just
resolution of conflict. This balance of pragmatism and idealism culminated in
Australian diplomats fighting to uphold the legitimacy of the United Nations by
consistently advocating the need for due process and the importance of maintaining
the original decisions of the world body that had been arrived at after full
investigation and deliberation.

It is also true that the Australian position on the Palestine Question was formulated
with a consideration of what was upheld by those same diplomats as key Australian
interests. These interests were often shaped by the Chifley Government’s estimation
of the tolerance of the Australian people, to the exclusion of the minor internal Jewish
lobby. For example, an immediate concern was the need to protect both the theoretical
and legal basis of White Australia by maintaining the right of states to claim domestic
jurisdiction, as well as to ensure its practical application by preventing the migration
of Jewish refugees into the country. Similarly, an understanding of the wishes of the
rather large Catholic constituency clearly shone through in key moments of
Australia’s involvement in the settlement of the Palestine Question. Through their
involvement in the international proceedings, Australian diplomats were able to
manoeuvre around these issues in a manner that accorded well with Australian
interests.

Although the UN formed the crux of the Australian conception of the new world
order, the relationships of Australia with the US and particularly Britain were also
kept clearly in mind. Where there was no conflict between British requests and the
resolutions of the UN, Australian policy makers were keen to maintain favourable relations with their traditional ally, based on the understanding that an Australian-British alliance would confer diplomatic benefits onto Australia. Importantly, even as the UK remained a significant domain for Australian policy makers, the UN was considered the key forum in which the views of Australia would be heard. From the beginning of the international consideration of the Palestine Question, Australian diplomats displayed their willingness to defend the principles of the UN to the detriment of relations with the UK, a willingness that was emboldened by the historic partition decision which substantiated the Australian position.

Australian diplomats propagated their views on the Palestine Question with great vigour although it was a problem far removed from the great majority of Australian society. At key moments, the official Australian stance reflected a unique conception of the relevance of the new world order for Australia and the keen desire to secure a voice in international affairs. Through a refined analysis of the Australian involvement in this incident, the Palestine Question can be written into the history of Australia’s entry into the postwar forum of international politics and a burgeoning twentieth century ‘international society.’
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