
UNIT 7 UNITED STATES

Structure

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

Australia and the United States share similar historical backgrounds, similar culture and language, and by implication, similar belief systems and share a common democratic political culture as well. Both Australia and the US are immigrant societies. Both are settled predominantly by people from Britain and several others from other European countries. Both have adopted carefully crafted practices to encourage restricted immigration from Asian countries. In this sense, however, Australia is much younger than the US. European settlement in Australia began when the US had already achieved independence. There were thirteen colonies in the US, which came together to form the United States of America with a federal constitution operative from 1789. The European settlement in Australia that began a year earlier in 1788 finally led to establishment of six colonies, which today constitute part of the Commonwealth of Australia. Significantly these Australian colonies were being set up at a time when the Americans were indulged in westward expansion. When the British Government adopted an act to establish the Commonwealth of Australia in 1900, the United States had already emerged as a major power on the world stage in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war of 1898, which enabled the US to become a colonial power. When Australia passed the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act on 9 October 1942, which officially established Australia's complete autonomy in internal and external affairs of the country, the US was in the process of emerging as a superpower on the world stage.

This historical background illuminating the fact that both Australia and the United States are relatively young actors in world affairs also provides the reason as to why the interactions between the two have a much younger history. Except the fact that three American colonists were crew members aboard Captain Cook's ship, the Endeavour, in 1770 that led finally to British claim over Australia, there is little else to write about relations between the US and Australia until at least the World War I. However, Australians were very much well aware of the United States and borrowed a great deal from the American Constitution while drafting and crafting the Constitution of Commonwealth of Australia. Federalism, a bicameral legislature, named House of Representatives and Senate, staggered system of Senatorial election and the principle of electing members to the House of Representatives are all patterned after the US Constitution.

However, in matters of foreign policy and international affairs, Australia actually began to play a role only since the outbreak of World War I and contributed to British and American war efforts against the enemy countries. Australia, however, came closer to the United States only in the wake of World War II. The rapid advancement of the Japanese forces in the Asia Pacific region, which ultimately made Australia the target of Japanese shelling, generated a threat perception in Canberra, which would culminate in closer strategic ties between Australia and the United States. A little before the Paul Harbour incident, the Australian Cruiser Sydney was sunk in November 1941. Soon after the US entry into the Second World War, Australians also

fought valiantly and sacrificed more than 1700 lives to protect Malaya. Australian territory, such as Darwin, Wyndham, Broome, Sydney and others came under Japanese shelling.

It is significant to note that Australia, which traditionally relied on the British for its security, began to change course and rely on the US soon after Washington decided to join World War II. The British weakness exposed during the war, Japanese advances in Southeast Asia and the high expectations from the US contributed towards Australia's decision in late December 1941 to look up to the US as the protector. Prime Minister John Curtin of Australia declared on 29 December 1941 that "Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom [for security]... Australia can go and Britain can still hold on. We are, therefore, determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its key-stone, which will give our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy."

7.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading the unit, you should be able to understand:

- the evolution of Australia's relations with the US culminating finally in the formation of a military alliance between the two after the World War II, as part of latter's strategy of containing communist influence and Soviet expansionism in the region, in the form of ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, US) treaty in 1951;
- Australia-US military, strategic, political and economic cooperation during the cold war period including Australia's participation in the two US initiated deadly wars (Korean and Vietnam) as an ally;
- the post-cold war bilateral relations between the two countries in the areas of promotion of democracy in the world, maintenance of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and combating international terrorism; and
- the Security cooperation between the two countries after 9/11 terrorists' attacks on the US, and Australia's commitment to participate in the US's war against terrorism, it was clear when it jointed US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

7.3 ALLIANCE FORMATION

The dropping of the atomic bombs on two Japanese cities, surrender of Japanese forces and end of World War II did not erase a sort of Japanophobia that affected countries like Australia and several other smaller countries in the Asia Pacific. The United States at this time was increasingly concerned about the expansion of Communist influence and the Soviet power and influence rather than the possibility of reemergence of Japan as powerful entity. The existential problem posed by communism to the US clashed with the psychological apprehension of Australia and other Asian countries that Japan could return, like Germany did to Europe after World War I, to hunt them militarily.

Thus the US desire for a peace treaty with Japan surprised as well frightened to some extent Australia and Southeast Asian countries. Washington wanted a soft peace treaty with Japan in the wake of successful Communist victory in the Chinese civil war and the North Korean communist aggression and non-communist South Korea. The idea was to rebuild Japan as a counterweight to rising Communist influence rather than punish Japan and push it to the Soviet lap. Australia had little to fear from either the Soviet Union or from communism. Canberra, like many other regional countries, pleaded for a treaty forbidding Japanese rearmament and stipulating war reparations. However, the diplomatic negotiations between Australia and the US finally led to US assurances against any future Japanese aggression. Keeping in mind the expanding communist influence, however, Washington considered it important to enter into an alliance with Australia and New Zealand, which could in time come handy to tackle the threat of communism.

The Australia-New Zealand-US (ANZUS) Treaty of 1951 thus was born out of Japanophobia in the South Pacific and Washington's concerns over communist expansionism. The ANZUS security treaty was concluded at San Francisco on September 1, 1951, and entered into force on April 29, 1952. The treaty required the signatories to recognize that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of them would endanger the peace and safety of the others. It obliged them to consult one another in the event of a security threat and, in the event of armed attack, to "meet the common danger in accordance with their respective constitutional processes."

Significantly, the text of the ANZUS Treaty mentioned nothing about Japanese threat. It also remained silent about any communist threat. Treaties of this kind generally avoid stipulating exact threats and keep the options open for the signatories to adjust with future unforeseen scenarios. Threat perceptions of member countries are understood and adequate leeway is left for necessary interpretations of the treaty to suit the changing circumstances.

The Australian Government expected to take advantage of this treaty and new alliance relationship with the US to maintain peace and stability in the South Pacific region and ensure Australia's security against any external threat in the future. But many Australian opposition leaders and commentators felt that ANZUS was actually a "pay-off to the Japanese Peace Treaty" and that it did not "give us anything" that "we have not already got." There was feeling that Australia could not have been attacked by any power without jeopardizing peace in other areas under US responsibility and that Washington would not have any other option but to come to Canberra's rescue. Still others felt that ANZUS did not commit the US well enough and that American commitment fell far short of its commitment to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

7.4 COLD-WAR COOPERATION

While feeling secured and to some extent satisfied with the new alliance relationship with the United States, Australia became an American partner in waging the Cold War against the former Soviet Union and for some years even against China, especially during the era of Sino-Soviet cooperation. The Cold War, which began in Europe, soon spilled over into Asia beginning with the emergence of Communist China, moving on to the Korean Peninsula witnessing North Korean invasion over South Korea and culminating in years-long crisis in Indo-China and war in Vietnam. Canberra was quick in contributing to UN forces led by the United States to repel communist aggression in Korea. Australia was, in fact, the first country to announce it would do so after the United States and contributed about 17,000 troops to the first ever UN force to repel aggression. It was, nonetheless, clear that Australia did so at the behest of the United States and would not have done so without American participation in it. After two years and 17 days of heavy fighting in the Korean Peninsula, 1,263 men of the Commonwealth forces were killed and a further 4,817 were wounded, while the US lost 33,000 men. Australian casualties numbered more than 1,500, of whom 339 were killed. Almost half a million South Koreans died as a result of the war, and an unknown number of North Koreans and Chinese. Australia also sent troops to assist in putting down the communist revolt in Malaya during 1948-60. It then assisted in combating the Indonesian-supported invasion of Sarawak in 1963-65.

More controversial in relative terms was Australia's involvement in Vietnam War. It was not an UN operation. It demonstrated Australia's desire to be a real American ally. During the fateful days of America's military involvement in the Vietnam War, Australia actively remained on the side of the US and dispatched substantial military forces to fight along with the American forces. More than 40,000 Army personnel, more than 4,000 air force personnel and more than 12,000 Navy personnel from Australia served in Vietnam War. More than 1,000 Australians – military and civilians – were killed and several thousands injured during the war.

While Australian Army was deeply involved in the jungles of Vietnam, the Royal Australian Navy's role in the Vietnam War was also extensive. Australian destroyers sailed nearly 400,000 miles in the course of the war and fired more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition. The converted aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney carried about 16,000 Australian troops as the famed 'Vung Tau Ferry'.

The Menzies Government and its conservative successors offered several justifications for sending first Australian 'instructors' and then, in May 1965, combat troops to Vietnam. Reflecting the US Government

line, it was argued that defending democracy in the region was important. But most systematic and serious public explanations held that it was in Australia's national interest to involve the United States in Southeast Asia and that Australian participation in the Vietnam conflict would encourage this. It was also often argued that communist takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and the region and that crisis in Indo-China was part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Australia's involvement in Vietnam, it was contended, amounted to an "insurance policy" and was a "down payment" for US helps if Australia were ever attacked. The Labor Party opposed conscription the dispatch of troops to Vietnam. But it was limited. The Conservative and the Labour Party members did not differ much on three key issues of foreign policy: American alliance, opposition to Communism, and the common determination to keep Australia safe and inviolable. It is important to note that anti-Vietnam war sentiments did not expand in Australia until it happened in the US. From modest and marginal origins in the mid 1960s the campaign against the Vietnam War became a mass movement during the early 1970s coinciding with similar movements in the United States.

There were occasions during which Australia took a different position from that of the US during the Cold War. One of such examples is provided by the Suez crisis of 1956, which was sparked by an unhappy sequence of events that led Egyptian President Abdel Nasser to abruptly nationalize the Suez Canal. Australia took an active role in an international effort to diffuse the crisis. Prime Minister Menzies headed an international mission to Cairo with a view to convincing Nasser that the canal should be kept under an international body associated with the United Nations. The Australian effort failed soon after US President Dwight D Eisenhower declared that his government would not support any use of force against Egypt. Defying the US, Britain and France joined Israel and began to bomb Egyptian installations. Australia did not militarily join the anti-Egyptian force, but provided open political backing and voted against a resolution at the UN condemning the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt. Menzies' position surprised many of his countrymen. Australia had sided with the US by entering into a trilateral alliance with the US and New Zealand merely five years ago. Britain was kept out of this alliance. And yet, on a crucial issue involving military force, Australia sought to support the British and the French rather than go along with the US position.

However, this incident did not rupture the relationship with the US. France and Britain were also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Israel was a special ally. Moreover, the conflict was not between the US and others. Consequently, this incident had limited implications for Australia's relations with the United States. On most occasions, Australia managed the relationship with the US in such a way that differences were minimal and convergence of interests was the maximum. In fact, when ANZUS was in trouble in mid-1980s due to New Zealand's strong position on nuclear issues and the anti-US overtones of its position, Australia adopted a policy that would keep the US commitment to the security of Australia and saw to it that ANZUS did not dissolve. The ANZUS Treaty in 1951 still remains Australia's only formal security treaty alliance. Australia joined coalition forces in the Persian Gulf conflict in 1991, in Afghanistan in 2002, and in Iraq in 2003 and carried out its alliance responsibilities.

7.5 POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS

The Australian-American relations in the post-Cold War era have been more intense, positive and close than even during the Cold War years. Despite the alliance relationship, Australia did not always see eye to eye on every issue of international importance with the United States. It does not do so now. But as the cold war ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the world entered into uncertainties of a changing international political and scenarios, Australia and the US continued to be partners for peace and development. This is remarkable in view of several differences between the United States and the European countries and to some extent between other traditional Asian allies of the US, such as Japan and South Korea.

Australia, in contrast to other American allies, has maintained more robust, more friendly and less conflict-ridden relations with the US. There are largely four areas of bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the post-Cold War era. These are: promotion of democracy in various regions of the world, maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region, prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and combating international terrorism.

Promotion of Democracy

Both the United States and Australia are time-tested democracies. The US has had a long tradition of promoting democracy in the countries around the world, especially if it is in keeping with the American national interests. There are several examples where Washington has preferred to maintain cordial ties with undemocratic regimes and in certain instances has even provided protection to authoritarian and dictatorial regimes against internal and external threats. Australia is a middle power and it has several limitations to influence regime changes abroad except in the South Pacific. Like the US, it has also tolerated, done business with and at times protected undemocratic regimes in its neighbourhood.

However, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, a new realization has dawned upon both the Australians and the Americans that promotion of democracy alone can be the best antidotes against terrorism. Consequently, Australia has begun to actively cooperate with the United States to promote democracy in selected countries, especially in the Muslim World, to deal with Islamic extremism, militancy and terrorism. Such cooperation can be found particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Maintenance of Asian Peace and Stability

Australia is one of the two white countries in the Asian continent. It has more cultural affinity with the West than with the Orient. For several years in the post-World War II period, Australian economic interactions were also mostly with Europe and America. Similar was the experience of the United States, which despite a strong military presence in the Asia Pacific was economically, politically and culturally more oriented towards Europe than Asia. But the slow and steady process of evolution of American as well Australian economic engagement in Asia, especially since the emergence of Asian tiger economies, revival of Japanese economic might and the rise of the Chinese economy led to substantial change in the foreign policy outlook and orientation of the two countries.

Australia was fully with the United States in its fight against Communism in Asia during the Cold War and it has continued to be with the US in the post-Cold War era in order to protect its economic interests in the region. Australia and the US are full dialogue partners of ASEAN, co-members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and the ASEAN Regional Forum and in addition, Australia has allowed without any hesitation to maintain its military facilities on its territory. It has also become an active partner in America's development of a Missile Defense System for the region. All these policies are aimed at preventing conflict and protecting trade and investment interests in the region. The United States and Australia both seek to assign a security role to APEC Forum and ARF and are working together to turn the ARF, the region's pre-eminent forum for security dialogue and cooperation, from being a forum for confidence building to a body that can promote preventive diplomacy.

Preventing Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Australia has for long cooperated with the United States in promoting non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Both Australia and the US are members of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), Australia Group of Nations, Nuclear Suppliers' Group, Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and have worked together through the Cold War years to stop further proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and missile developments.

Australia has found it easy for supporting the US policy on non-proliferation, because it does not have any nuclear weapon power in its neighbourhood and it enjoys US protection under the ANZUS Treaty. Significantly, Australia always sided with the US policy even if on certain occasions it conflicted with non-proliferation goals. For instance, while declaring South Pacific as Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, Canberra assisted in crafting the treaty in ways that would not create hurdles for movement of nuclear-powered US ships. When New Zealand too issues with the US on nuclear issues and demanded transparency in movement of US battleships carrying nuclear weapons, Canberra decided to side with the US.

In the post-Cold War era, Australia was firmly with the US in the efforts to comprehensively prevent any further nuclear test explosions. The two countries coordinated their policy approaches throughout the negotiations process in the United Nations' Conference on Disarmament. When India expressed its inability

to support the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) on the ground of its discriminatory nature and subsequently felt compelled to conduct a series of nuclear tests in 1998, Australia along with the United States vehemently criticized Indian nuclear tests. When the US Senate refused to ratify the CTBT, however, Canberra had little option but to maintain a careful silence, face the reality and merely express its unhappiness. Australia, despite an official policy of strong opposition to WMD proliferation, largely toes the US policy. Consequently, it abandoned its anti-India rhetoric and policy after Washington took steps to forge ahead with a strategic partnership with India in the post-Pokharan II period.

The concerns over the proliferation of WMD or its technology continue to hunt the world leaders. The nuclear ambition of two states designated by the United States as part of an axis of evil, namely North Korea and Iran, has generated hectic diplomatic efforts tinged with tough warnings. Australia once again has thrown its hat into the ring in support of the United States to ensure that North Korea and Iran remain non-nuclear nations.

Australia also supports wholeheartedly an initiative proposed by US President George Bush on Proliferation Security Initiative that has now garnered the support of more than sixty countries and built up its operational strength in just two years. The fear of WMD falling into the hands of the terrorists has convinced many countries the need for providing a practical and informal arrangement among countries to cooperate with each other in intercepting and disrupting illicit WMD trade, their delivery systems and related materials. Washington and Canberra are together in making efforts to make life harder for proliferators and would-be proliferators.

7.6 9/11 AND AFTER: COMBATING TERRORISM

The single most important area of security cooperation between Australia and the United States since the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon Building in Washington DC is obviously combating international terrorism. Several countries in the world have been victims of terrorist violence for decades, but Australia was relatively immune to this threat. The situation is no longer the same. As Australia sided with the US both militarily and financially to wage the war against Al- Qaeda, it also became a target of terrorist violence. Since 11 September 2001, Australia has been working with the United States and others to confront terrorism and terrorist networks, making arrests and hindering their access to financial and other resources.

An Australian Government White Paper, issued in 2004, said: "The Australian Government is firmly committed to the global campaign against terrorism. This is in Australia's national interest. We made the choice to join our international partners in taking the fight to the terrorists to protect our country, our people, our way of life, our values and our freedom. This is not an easy task, nor one that will be over quickly. But it is our only option for peace and security. So we will support this campaign with vigour and determination for as long as it takes."

Australia's alliance with the United States is a key plank of its international counter-terrorism strategy. Canberra looks at it as "fundamental" to its security and that of the Asia - Pacific region. Australia views that the United States "should not be left to bear the burden in the campaign against terror" and that Australia would contribute to America's global efforts in a wide range of ways, including through military action, law enforcement and intelligence on terrorism developments in its immediate region. The United States, on the other hand, provides essential military, intelligence, law enforcement and economic resources to the fight against terrorism that Australia draws upon to protect its interests. The Australian White Paper acknowledges that "Our access to these resources, especially the United States' vast intelligence assets, helps us monitor terrorist threats to Australia's security and put in place appropriate counter- measures. Our capacity to confront transnational terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah and Lashkar e-Tayyiba, would be significantly diminished without access to these resources."

Military Intervention in Afghanistan

When the United States took a decisive step to eliminate the Taliban Government from Afghanistan for sheltering Osama bin Laden and his organization and wipe out the Al Qaeda presence from that country,

Australia stood behind the United States. Indeed, for the first time in about half a century of the existence of ANZUS, Australia invoked the provision of this alliance treaty and contributed troops for military operations and supported the US-led international coalition in the destruction of Al Qaeda's main terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, stripping the group of its principal base. The Australian Army operated as part of the international coalition in Afghanistan for almost a year performing a range of missions. It continues to maintain a military presence in that country. While the Australian military provided vital support to the US-led coalition, the country's diplomatic network, maintained by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, also aided in various other ways to ensure peace and stability in the post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The Fight against Terrorism in Iraq

When the US President George Bush turned his gun against Iraq's Saddam Hussein regime after major military operations in Afghanistan were successful in Afghanistan, Australia once again sided with the US. Despite anti-war demonstrations in several places around the world, including in the US and Australia and the lack of the backing of the United Nations, Washington decided to militarily intervene in Iraq with the help of a coalition of willing partners. The goal was indubitably removal of Saddam regime from power. Australia, like Great Britain, proved to be one of the most willing partners to assist the United States in its Iraq adventure. It contributed military forces to the US-led coalition and continues to maintain a military presence in Iraq. The Australian Government has firmly backed the Bush Administration through thick and thin in Iraq. Australia has modestly assisted the US efforts in Iraq through the initial chaos in Iraq, subsequent insurgency and the current efforts to enable the Iraqis to run their own administration under a new constitution.

Currently, Australian perception holds that Iraq presents the international community with a crucial contest of will in the campaign against terrorism. Whatever may be the earlier debate and accusations about Saddam Hussein's links with Al Qaeda, Canberra feels that now Al Qaeda and other international terrorist groups have made Iraq their battle field. Foreign terrorists, it argues, have joined Iraqi insurgents in launching violent attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces and civilians with a view to using violence and intimidation, to defeat Iraqi and international efforts to achieve a successful transition to stability and more representative government in Iraq. Like the United States, Australia does not believe that Iraqi insurgents are determined to fight back the occupying coalition force led by the United States.

Both the US and Australia have come to believe that Iraq now represents a test case for success or failure of the war against terrorism. It is argued that a terrorist-inspired breakdown in civil order in Iraq would have serious security implications, would undermine stability in the Middle East and likely to give rise to serious humanitarian problems; and would "give the terrorists an operational base and a propaganda advantage, reinforcing their determination to purge Western influence from the Muslim world." The eradication of terrorist activity in Iraq would, conversely, be a major win for the global war on terrorism.

7.7 SUMMARY

Australia has enjoyed one of the most-friendly bilateral ties with the United States since the days of World War II. The political differences have been consciously kept at bay and not allowed to rupture the cooperative aspects of both political and security ties. Unlike many other alliance partners of the US in the Asia Pacific region, such as the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea and Japan, Australia has been able to host American military and intelligence installations with little or no major domestic opposition.

Australia and the US are also important economic partners. The US is the richest country in the world and Australia in comparison is a much smaller economy. But the US is extremely important for sustenance and growth of the Australian economy. During the Cold War years, Australia did not allow certain economic differences with the US to come on the way of its cooperative ties. After the end of the Cold War, the economic differences have widened, particularly in the area of agricultural subsidies, where Australia has more common cause to defend with the developing world. But such differences are neither unique nor strong enough to strain and rupture relations.

The United States is the largest source of Australian imports, second largest destination of its exports and the largest foreign investor in Australia. The bilateral Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), which entered into force on 1 January 2005 is the second FTA the U.S. had negotiated with a developed nation. It substantially liberalizes an already vibrant trade and investment relationship. Both countries also share a common economic philosophy and maintain their commitment to liberalizing global trade. They work together very closely in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and both are active members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

In addition to vibrant economic cooperation, a number of U.S. institutions conduct scientific activities in Australia because of its geographical location, large land mass, advanced technology. Under a 1960 agreement renewed subsequently, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) maintains in Australia one of its largest and most important research programmes outside the continental United States.

The economic cooperation, scientific collaboration and even vast educational exchange programmes have further contributed to a robust alliance relationship Australia maintains with the United States. The Australian desire to adopt an Asian identity is sometimes misunderstood as its efforts to cut itself off its traditional ties with the West. Australian trade and investment relations with Asian countries are growing at breath-taking speed and thus has substantial stake in the peace and stability in the continent. Australia offers itself as the most trusted ally of the US in the Asia Pacific region and this scenario will continue deep into the 21st Century.

7.8 EXERCISES

- 1) Scrutinize the historical incidents responsible for bringing about cooperative relations between Australia and the United States.
- 2) Describe the factors responsible for pushing Australia to establish an alliance relationship with the United States.
- 3) How do Australia and the United States cooperate in preventing further proliferation of Weapons of Mass destruction?
- 4) Examine Australia's role in America's war against international terrorism.
- 5) How do you assess Australia's current and future relations with the United States?

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