

H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXII-26

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INTRODUCTION BY PRISCILLA ROBERTS, CITY UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

It is both a pleasure and an honour to write the introduction to this round table. For years, I have recommended to graduate students working on M.Phil. and Ph.D. theses that they should take advantage of the wealth of material in Australian archives to incorporate new insights drawn from these resources into their own research, to the point where some wrongly concluded that I must be Australian rather than British. I did so in part because some years ago, I myself had the good fortune to receive fellowships from the National Library of Australia and the Australian Prime Ministers Centre in Canberra, to pursue research on Australia's leading foreign policy think tank, the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), and the links between that institution and Australia's more formal policymaking apparatus. I spent several months in Canberra and even gave a public lecture, where the audience included the then head of the AIIA, who reminisced slightly wistfully about the years when the prime minister of the day—quite possibly Gough Whitlam, who had longstanding family ties through his father to the organization—habitually dropped in at the AIIA office.

My stays in Canberra and visits to libraries in other cities gave me a new appreciation of just what rich archival resources for the study of international affairs during the entire twentieth century and beyond are hidden away in Australian repositories. I also came to realize that Australia's engagement with the rest of the world was multifaceted and wide-ranging. Australia's diplomats and foreign policy elite, many of them schooled at Oxford or Cambridge and sometimes, too, at leading universities in the United States, enjoyed the entrée to top policymaking circles across the Anglosphere and beyond. Often admitted to the confidence of counterparts from the United Kingdom, their fellow dominions, assorted Commonwealth countries, the United States, and various nations in the Asia-Pacific region, they enjoyed a vantage point as observers that could give them access to valuable inside information on what transpired beyond their own borders. Many of these insights were included in copious reports back to the Department of External Affairs (later rechristened the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), with additional valuable nuggets preserved in personal rather than official papers. To date, geographical distance has meant that exploring the riches of these materials in depth has been largely though by no means entirely a privilege reserved for Australian-based researchers.

Making at least a selection of such documents readily available in print—and, more recently, online—is a well-tryed means of ensuring that a wider audience can consult and use some of the most significant materials hidden away in archival folders and boxes. In 1971, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade emulated the foreign ministries of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, and launched an extensive publications programme. Sixteen hefty volumes of documents, providing chronological coverage of Australia's foreign policies from 1937 to 1949, were followed by a further twelve on specific topics. The majority of the second tranche, which was supplemented by a steadily growing number of historical monographs, focused upon high-profile issues of the 1950s to the 1980s. Only two documentary tomes, comprising letters to Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce written in the later 1920s by Richard G. Casey, Australia's first diplomatic officer in London, and F. L. McDougall, Australia's representative on the London-based Empire Marketing Board, dealt with the earliest years of the Department of External Affairs, when it was still part of the office of the prime minister.¹

Valuable and enlightening though these two volumes are, these runs of correspondence fall well short of giving the full story of the early years of what was then Australia's Department of External Affairs. A prequel to the original series was much needed. For Australia as for much of the rest of the globe, the First World War represented a key turning point, prompting a new sense of national identity that thereafter grew steadily stronger. The period extending from the peace negotiations following the end of this conflict to the outbreak of full-scale war between Japan and China in 1937 was a time when Australia began to assemble a corps of diplomats and bureaucrats specializing in international affairs, to create what would become a distinctive foreign policy trajectory designed to promote specifically Australian interests, and to face up to

¹ "Documents on Australian Foreign Policy," n.d., Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Website, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/history-of-australian-diplomacy/Pages/documents-on-australian-foreign-policy>. All the documents from these volumes can be downloaded via a link on this website.

dilemmas that would continue to preoccupy and perplex Australian leaders throughout much of the twentieth century and beyond. The formation of the ‘Pacific Branch’ in 1919 in the Prime Minister’s office, managed by E.L. Piesse, followed by the more formal re-establishment within the Prime Minister’s Department in 1921 of the Department of External Affairs, marked the true beginnings of a discrete Australian foreign affairs agency.

The appearance in 2019—coincidentally also marking the centenary of the Paris Peace Conference, where Australia’s Prime Minister William “Billy” Hughes was a notable personality—of the first of two volumes covering the years spanning the aftermath of the First World War to 1936 is therefore particularly welcome. (The second, already I believe at the copy-editing stage, will be published in 2021.) In multiple respects, this volume is a model of its kind. The book itself is a beautiful piece of workmanship, printed on acid-free paper produced “using fibre supplied from plantation or sustainably managed forests” (iv). The editorial board overseeing this series has been particularly fortunate in securing the services as editor of Emeritus Professor James Cotton, a leading scholar of Australian international affairs, who possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of this subject and the relevant archival and printed sources in Australia and beyond. Cotton has displayed indefatigable enterprise in tracking down both documents and illustrations. The volume is illustrated with 16 pages of photographs from a decidedly eclectic range of sources from across Australia and elsewhere, ranging as far afield as the Library and Archives of Canada and the League of Nations records in Geneva. Its other contents are equally wide-ranging. It is an exemplary reference work that also offers pointers for further research.

Cotton’s selection and meticulous editing of 451 documents—inevitably only a sampling of the full archival record—make navigating this collection far easier than would otherwise be the case. While the majority of the documents included are, as one would expect, drawn from the National Archives of Australia (NAA), a substantial number come from assorted collections in the National Library of Australia, among them the papers of Prime Ministers William Hughes and Joseph Scullin, and their subordinates E. L. Piesse and F. L. McDougall. The fact that so many documents were absent from the official files sent to the National Archives is testimony to how ad hoc and unsystematic the conduct of Australia’s foreign affairs remained in these early years. The editor has also drawn on the papers of the Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson at the State Library of South Australia in Adelaide, the papers of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George in the House of Lords in London, and the archives of the League of Nations in Geneva.

Faced with the formidable undertaking of covering an entire decade in just one volume, Cotton wisely decided to divide the anthology thematically into eight sections, each preceded by an informative introduction written by himself, carefully referencing the specific documents chosen. The interlocking different sections dovetail elegantly with each other, working in counterpoint to provide a broad comprehensive picture of the dilemmas and opportunities Australia sought to address in the aftermath of what was then known as the Great War.

In the interwar years, Australia’s leaders confronted the perhaps irresolvable conundrum of how best to balance the priorities of the broader British Empire, of which their country formed an integral part, with the particular strategic concerns and economic needs of Australia itself, for security against external threats and markets for its products. This necessitated creating machinery for closer coordination of policy and decision-making among the constituent parts of the British Empire and Commonwealth, an objective that prompted the convening of an imperial conference in 1923, a meeting that focused in addition upon the economic concerns over markets and trade that were particularly close to Bruce’s heart. Yet simultaneously, pressures for greater dominion autonomy were increasing, with Ireland, South Africa, and Canada taking the lead. Australia was represented in the successive imperial conferences called in 1926 and 1930 to hammer out the details of the arrangements that effectively granted all the dominions the right to take decisions—including choosing whether or not to join Britain in going to war—and run their affairs independently of London.

As early as 1921, Australia was forced to recognize that for the British government in London, keeping the often unpredictable United States on side loomed far larger than did dominion interests. Initially, Hughes would have preferred to maintain the Anglo-Japanese alliance treaty concluded in 1902, an agreement that was due for renewal in 1922. With Japan representing the most serious strategic threat Australia (and New Zealand) faced within the Pacific, the prime minister pragmatically regarded the alliance as the best available safeguard against potential Japanese expansionism. In 1920, this

outlook left Hughes greatly at odds with his Canadian counterpart Arthur Meighen, who argued bluntly that Canada could not afford to offend the United States, its powerful neighbor. Since American officials were deeply suspicious of Japan and opposed any renewal of the alliance, Meighen believed the British Empire should jettison the agreement. Australia lost the argument.

Although Australian representatives did ultimately take part in the Washington conference, summoned by U.S. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes in 1921 to negotiate an international accord on naval disarmament and the Pacific that substituted in some respects for the now defunct Anglo-Japanese alliance, their inclusion came as something of an afterthought on the part of the British government. When the wishes of the United States conflicted with Australian preferences, as occurred over whether the Royal Navy should continue to modernize and upgrade its fleet by replacing existing vessels, something Australia supported, British Premier David Lloyd George bowed to American desires to freeze the status quo. Yet the conference was not one long succession of disappointments for the Australians. They were more successful in using this meeting to pressure Japan—and indeed China—to drop opposition to the ‘White Australia’ immigration policy that largely excluded any further Asian settlement in the country.

Following the First World War, moreover, Australia sought to expand its territorial reach in the surrounding region, winning League of Nations-sanctioned mandates over the Pacific islands of Nauru and what had been German New Guinea in December 1920. During the Washington Conference, Japan raised the question of whether German New Guinea should be a Class B mandate, which would mean that nationals of other League of Nations member states besides the supervising mandatory state would be entitled to economic access on equal terms to the mandate, as opposed to a Class C mandate, where the administering power could run the area “as integral parts of its territory,” imposing tariffs and restrictions on immigration. Australia succeeded in keeping its mandates in Class C. The British also won the right to expand and upgrade their Singapore naval base, an issue of major strategic importance to Australia and New Zealand, even though ambitious plans to develop the Singapore facilities subsequently fell victim to budgetary constraints. The ambivalent status of Australia as a Pacific power was perhaps symbolized by the fact that the signatories of the concluding February 1922 Nine-Power Treaty, whereby the assorted Pacific powers recognized each other’s existing holdings and interests in the region, included Japan, China, the United States, and Great Britain, as well as France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal, all of which possessed significant colonial territories, but neither Australia nor New Zealand.

Despite underlying strategic vulnerabilities, in the period covered by this volume, Australia was assertive in trying to extend its regional footprint. One substantial section offers detailed insights into the nature of Australian administration of the country’s new Pacific mandates. During and after the First World War, Prime Minister Hughes campaigned assertively for Australia to have a controlling role in the British Empire mandate of Nauru, a valuable source of phosphate. Besides agreeing to appoint an Australian administrator for Nauru, initially for five years, in 1919 Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand drafted, in Cotton’s dry words, “a detailed plan for the extraction and disposition of the island’s phosphate deposits, but made very few references to the inhabitants, their rights or progress” (486). The British Empire acquired and transferred to the British Phosphate Commission, a body owned by these three powers, the assets of the Pacific Phosphate Company, thereby assuring Australian agriculture plentiful supplies of phosphates. Australia also insisted on administering what had been German New Guinea. Mandatory powers were obliged to submit annual reports on territories under their administration to the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), which had been established in 1921 by the League of Nations. Over the following decade, the Australians gradually became more expert in tailoring their accounts to address the sensitivities of their recipients at the League of Nations, but this strategy failed to prevent repeated criticisms by knowledgeable observers over the conditions of the indigenous populations of these mandates. Australian officials were, it seems, generally somewhat defensive over their record in these territories.

Occasional local difficulties in mandate territories proved no deterrent, however, to another sustained and ultimately successful Australian campaign to acquire jurisdiction over much of East Antarctica, extending a claim originally made by Britain in 1908. Efforts to do so pre-dated the First World War, with Douglas Mawson, an Australian geologist, raising the British and Australian flags across broad swathes of Antarctic territory between 1911 and 1914. Acquiring substantial parts of Antarctica became a significant preoccupation of British imperial policy from early 1920 onward. In the later 1920s,

Casey became a staunch backer of plans to launch another Antarctic expedition, led by Mawson, that—while purportedly primarily a scientific enterprise—was in reality designed to claim a large tranche of the continent for Australia, an objective that was achieved in 1933.

Moves to expand Australia's regional territorial authority went in tandem with growing international presence and visibility. Australia was a founding member of the newly established League of Nations, sending high-level delegations to each of the organization's sessions, and also of the International Labour Organization. A number of Australians held mid-level positions within the bureaucracies of these new international bodies, which offered them opportunities to gain valuable training and experience in foreign affairs. The documents selected illustrate that, in terms of taking on new commitments or diluting its own independence, Australia was nonetheless somewhat skittish, wary of adhering to the Geneva Protocol or the Optional Clause of the statutes of the Permanent Court of International Justice, which might have compelled it to submit international disputes to arbitration. Here, the fact that Australian foreign policy was often subsumed in that of the broader British Empire provided convenient cover for Australia's homegrown disinclination to compromise its own autonomy.

The experience of sending troops to Europe and the Middle East during the Great War—and in Bruce's case, joining the British Army and seeing military service at Gallipoli—apparently left top Australian political leaders decidedly unwilling to do so again. During the 1922 Chanak crisis, Prime Minister Hughes was deeply reluctant to see Australia drawn into hostilities between Greece and Turkey, speaking disparagingly of Greek fighting abilities while praising Australia's former Turkish adversaries. He also complained that Australia learned about British decisions with implications for all the dominions after rather than before these were made.

One major theme of this volume is the emergence of not simply the architecture of the bureaucratic institutions needed to conduct the country's foreign affairs, but also of a cohort of Australians who were equipped with sufficient knowledge, expertise, and vision to undertake this task. In the formative decade covered by this volume, the institutions were slowly coming into being, even if many of the personnel were still somewhat ad hoc. By and large, Australians acquitted themselves well, even if they were often learning on the job. In these early years, the making of Australian foreign affairs was dominated by a small number of individuals, some of whom already possessed a vision of what their country might be and accomplish, while others were steadily developing their skills. Some, Bruce and Casey, the diplomat Keith Officer, the economist F.L. McDougall, and the lawyer Sir John Latham, were still in the relatively early or at most middle stages of what would become lengthy and influential careers in international affairs, in Australia and beyond. Their contributions extended far beyond the timespan within this volume's covers.

This was also an era when individualists, even mavericks and eccentrics, found niches within the Australian foreign policy apparatus. One such fascinating character whom Cotton highlights is the Italian-Australian General Gustavo Ramaciotti, a former lawyer and theatrical manager who spent thirty years serving in the Australian military, retiring as a major general in 1920 and returning to Italy. Although he held no formal appointment, during the mid-1920s Ramaciotti sent the Department of External Affairs well-informed political and economic reports on Benito Mussolini's Italy, one of which Cotton includes in this collection. Casey requested additional carbon copies of the former soldier's reports, which in itself offers evidence that he thought the intelligence they contained valuable.²

An editor's job involves tough decisions. No collection covering a decade and sometimes even more in one volume can ever include all the documents that deserve to make the final cut. One noticeable omission in this volume is Australian involvement in the early years of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a transnational non-governmental organization and federation of foreign policy institutes that was founded in 1925. Australians—together with attendees from New Zealand and Canada—were present at its inaugural conference in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1925, and the British Foreign Office even

² Document 94, "Letter, Casey to Ramaciotti," 27 May 1927, and Document 95, "Report by Ramaciotti," 30 September 1927, in Cotton, ed., *Australia and the World 1920-1930*, 220-221; also C. Neumann, "Ramaciotti, Gustave Mario," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ramaciotti-gustave-mario-8149>.

sent a lengthy report on this gathering and also on earlier preparatory meetings to the various dominions. The Australian group at the first conference submitted a report of their own to Leo Amery, the British Colonial Secretary, copied to their own government. Two further conferences, in Hawaii in 1927 and Japan in 1929, took place during this volume's timespan, with the Australian participants taking a leading role in persuading the recently founded British think tank, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), to join this new grouping and send sizeable and prestigious delegations to its 1927 meeting and those that followed. The IPR helped to make Australian elites more conscious of the Asia-Pacific, subsidized research and writing on the region, and was also important in terms of networking across national and even racial boundaries. Given the presence in the National Archives of Australia of a substantial file of documents relating to the IPR's early years up to 1931, the inclusion of a few key items might have added an extra dimension to the volume's information on other Australian non-governmental organizations focusing on foreign affairs, such as the League of Nations Union.³ But this is a minor caveat. Given the formidable job of assembling an anthology of this scope, no two individuals will ever make exactly the same choices.

Six outstanding scholars from Australia, Canada, and Britain have written reviews for this roundtable, all from their different angles highly appreciative of this collection. They address a wide range of specific topics, including the individual contributions to Australian of the three prime ministers (William Hughes, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, and Joseph Scullin) who were in office during the period covered here, together with their subordinates; the tensions between nationalist demands for sovereignty and the conflicting claims of membership in the Empire and Commonwealth; the assorted forums where Australian governments sought to pursue their country's interests, including within the British imperial framework, the League of Nations, and the Asia-Pacific region; the double-headed nature of Australian colonialism, with the country both itself a settler colony, a relatively small potato within the broader British Empire/Commonwealth, and a power seeking to establish quasi-colonial authority over its mandates and even Antarctica; the post-First World War creation of Australia's bureaucratic foreign policy apparatus; and relations with the United States. All these commentators offer percipient insights, which one hopes will lead readers of this roundtable to explore in greater depth the outstanding riches this collection has gathered together.

And also, if they are lucky, to become better acquainted with the underlying wealth of resources related to the international history not just of the 1920s but of the entire twentieth century that are housed in Australian archives. Throughout that century and beyond, Australia was an often under-rated actor on the international stage. The nation's physical location—as some Australian officials liked to say, for them China and the rest of the “Far East” constitute Australia's “Near North”—made its representatives particularly sensitive to Asian issues, especially insofar as these bore on Australia's strategic and defense position. From at least the Second World War, when Australia found itself heavily dependent militarily upon the United States rather than its British imperial patron for protection against Japan, the country found itself performing a balancing act between its ‘great and powerful friends,’ two weightier states, neither of which it wished to offend. This was particularly the case in situations when American and British policies diverged, as they did over diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China from 1950 to 1972. The same pattern held over intervention in Vietnam during the 1960s, a decade when Britain's withdrawal from defense commitments east of Suez and the economic impact upon British Commonwealth states of the United Kingdom's decision to join the European Economic Community did much to dilute pro-British sentiment and identification in Australia. Australia's diplomats and its other foreign policy actors were fixtures in high-level policymaking circles in the United States, the British Commonwealth, and much of Asia, with significant redoubts in international organizations and Europe.

³ See File A981, ORG 93 Organisations. Pacific. Institute of Pacific Relations General 1921-1931, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra. This file has been digitized, and is available on the NAA website through the RecordSearch catalogue. See also Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations in war and peace, 1919-45* (New York: Routledge, 2002), ch. 3; Paul F. Hooper, *Elusive Destiny: The Internationalist Movement in Modern Hawaii* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), ch. 5; James Cotton, *The Australian School of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43-44, 57-62, 106-109.

The pervasive Australian external presence translated into copious reporting back to Canberra. Some of this focused upon Europe, especially as the Cold War developed. The United States was, not unnaturally, a constant preoccupation. But so too was Asia. Over 3,000 NAA paper files, for example, deal with aspects of the Colombo Plan. Japan, Indonesia, India, and China each generated well over 10,000 files. Even when individual military service and immigration records are eliminated, the output was formidable. In the decades when Australia's diplomatic relations with mainland China were non-existent, the latter country's internal developments and external relations gave rise to well over a thousand files. While some focused upon high-profile topics, such as China's relations with the Soviet Union, the possible admission of China to the United Nations, or potential recognition of the Communist regime by the United States or Australia, for example, others were somewhat specialized. One is indeed left wondering whether even the U.S. State Department would have devoted entire files to such subjects as "Communist China - Relations with Upper Volta, 1965-1974," or "Malta - Relations with Communist China, 1964-1978."⁴ At least where Asia was concerned, for Australian diplomats, granular detail was the order of the day. A skeptic might even speculate whether the proliferation of paper and reporting reflected a leisurely lifestyle in sometimes remote locations.

The NAA is in most respects an outstanding archive, a national treasure that deserves to be the pride of the Australian government and people. The one real difficulty for would-be researchers is the existence of a serious bottleneck, in terms of examining files and opening them to general use. Every year, official files from Australian government agencies are transferred to the NAA and listed in the catalogue. Unfortunately, this does not mean that they are automatically available for public consultation. Before access is granted, most require examination by an archivist to ensure that sensitive information is not released. In many cases, especially with such materials as immigration and service records, which are often requested by family historians who wish to chronicle their own and their relatives' past, this is relatively straightforward and can be swiftly accomplished. Files bearing on international issues are often considerably more complicated and time-consuming, with many created by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and its predecessors referred back to the originating agency before they can be made available in whole or at least in part. It is not recent decades alone that are problematic: the catalogue lists hundreds, probably thousands of files dating back as far as the 1960s, 1950s, and even 1940s that are "not yet examined." The process is very much client- and demand-driven, with most materials opened upon the request of a would-be user.

As early as 2014, the NAA itself was receiving approximately 40,000 requests per year for the examination of records, with a backlog of 12,453 applications that had not been cleared within the normal 90-day processing period. Some of these dated back to 2009.⁵ By 30 June 2018 the backlog was 25,942; one year later, it had fallen to 23,197.⁶ Respected Australian scholars have complained that delays in processing are delaying the timely completion of books and theses on Australian history during the 1970s and 1980s and on such sensitive issues as immigration policy, while graduate students are reluctant to embark on dissertations that need to utilize records that have been released but not yet examined. Yet others note that in the seven years between 2012 and 2019, a period when in each January the records for two years rather than one were being

⁴ File A1838, 3107/40/123, Communist China - Relations with Upper Volta 1965-1974, NAA; A1838, 43/1/4/3 PART 1, Malta - Relations with Communist China, 1964-1978, NAA. The first of these files is listed as "Not Yet Examined" and the second as "Closed" and "Withheld pending adv."

⁵ Philip Thomson, "National Archives' Crackdown on Massive Backlog," *Canberra Times*, May 2, 2014, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6141471/national-archives-crackdown-on-massive-backlog/>, accessed September 20, 2020.

⁶ "National Archives of Australia Annual Report, 2018-2019," <https://www.transparency.gov.au/annual-reports/national-archives-australia/reporting-year/2018-2019-14>, accessed September 20, 2020.

released, the NAA lost 74 jobs and its budget failed to match the rate of inflation, to the point where it was “starved of funds.”⁷

By August 2020, the Assistant Director General of Archives was expressing apprehension that, unless the NAA succeeded within the next five years in digitizing over 220,000 hours of tapes and millions of pages of documents, including 850,000 First World War service records, these materials would deteriorate to the point where they could no longer be preserved. Digitizing magnetic tapes was, he noted, a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. He also suggested that existing staffing constraints meant that, while the NAA received 40,000 examination requests annually, it only had the manpower to handle around half this number.⁸

I should perhaps declare a personal interest here. I have in the past requested the examination of numerous files related to China held by the NAA, and am, I suspect, one of those historians responsible for at least an appreciable fraction of the remaining arrears. In 2019, facing a still continuing backlog, the NAA decided to extend the standard 90-day deadlines for these requests if individuals submitted more than a certain number, and to give priority to users who submitted only a few requests. I felt unable to complain, because I realized the institution was facing financial and personnel pressures beyond its control. There is as yet, it seems, no convenient algorithm that can scrutinize these records and decide whether or not they should be released. Good old-fashioned humans still have to do the work. In practice, archives staff have continued to process and in most cases open significantly more files than the bare minimum mandated under this new system. Every few days, I receive an e-mail notification that further files have been examined and opened, at least in part. In at least one case, NAA personnel gave special priority to one file I particularly wanted. As always, I have found their professionalism and helpfulness extremely impressive, especially given the additional difficulties created this past year first by major wildfires and then by Covid-19.

The NAA is one of its country’s under-recognized glories, a national institution in which Australians ought to take as much pride as they do in the Australian War Memorial less than two miles away. Hidden away in its vaults are splendid and unique resources, offering unparalleled insights into global affairs since the early 1900s. At present, the sheer bulk of records is overwhelming the capacity of the NAA to process and open them. Despite being listed in the catalogue, with a new batch added each year on the first of January, huge swathes of files with irreplaceable information on Australia’s role in the modern world are still effectively closed to research. This situation is not irreparable. In the United Kingdom National Archives, files are processed before opening them to researchers, with the annual—currently biannual—opening of another year’s records invariably prompting newspaper stories on some of the more topical or scandalous tidbits. But such preparatory work requires two scarce commodities: staff time and money.

The state-of-the-art new building of the National Archives Preservation Facility in Canberra is a welcome step in the right direction. In an ideal world, its opening would be accompanied by a comprehensive program to examine, make publicly available, preserve, and if possible digitize the records entrusted to it, observing the highest possible standards, and ultimately perhaps constructing a unified database that could search the text of all its digital holdings. The NAA has already digitized and made freely accessible through its RecordSearch catalogue a number of important resources, such as the papers of Prime Ministers Harold Holt, Gough Whitlam, and Malcolm Fraser, as well as large numbers of historic service records, together with many specific files requested by individual researchers. Such an ambitious initiative would of course carry a substantial price tag. One can only hope that Australia’s political leaders and perhaps, too, its corporate donors and foundations come to realize and value just what a treasure trove of under-appreciated and often inaccessible information on their country’s past

⁷ Max Kowlowski, “Books, PhDs under Threat as Scholars Fear National Archives ‘Starved of Funds,’” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 7, 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/books-phds-under-threat-as-scholars-fear-national-archives-starved-of-funds-20190705-p524e7.html>, accessed September 20, 2020.

⁸ Dominic Giannini, “Thousands of Hours of Archives Could Be Lost by 2020: NAA,” August 3, 2020, About Regional Website, <https://aboutregional.com.au/thousands-of-hours-of-archives-could-be-lost-by-2025-naa/>, accessed September 20, 2020.

dealings with the world is hidden away in the NAA's vaults and storage facilities. Meanwhile, for the inter-war years, let us welcome the documents in this volume and happily anticipate those in its soon-to-be-released companion.

Participants:

James Cotton (Ph.D., London School of Economics) is Emeritus Professor of Politics, University of New South Wales, ADFA, Canberra. He was a Procter Fellow at Princeton University, and also studied at the Beijing Language Institute. He is the author of over 200 publications in political science, international relations and history. Among his 16 books are: *Asian Frontier Nationalism* (Manchester University Press, 1989); *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order* (Routledge, 2004); *The Australian School of International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and *Australia and the World 1920-1930: Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* (UNSW Press, 2019). His next book is: *The Australians at Geneva*.

Priscilla Roberts is Associate Professor of Business and Co-Director of the Asia-Pacific Business Research Centre at City University of Macau. Her many publications in twentieth-century international history include two recent edited collections, *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong University Press, 2016); (with Odd Arne Westad), *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s: Global Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); the two-volume set *The Cold War: Interpreting Conflict Through Primary Documents* (ABC-CLIO, 2018); and (with Spencer C. Tucker and others) the five-volume set *The Cold War: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection* (ABC-CLIO, 2020). She is currently working on a study of Anglo-American Think Tanks and China Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Carl Bridge is Professor of Australian History at King's College London. He is co-editor of *The High Commissioners: Australia's Representatives in the United Kingdom, 1910-2010* (Federation Press, 2010); and *Australia and the United Kingdom, 1961-1975* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010). He is an editor of and contributor to *Australia in War and Peace, 1914-1919*, a forthcoming volume of the Documents on Australian Foreign Policy series for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra.

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Michael Cox is Emeritus Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Founding Director of LSE IDEAS. He is the author, editor and co-editor of over twenty books including works on the USSR, the end of the Cold War and the US role in the world system. His most recent books include a new edition of E.H Carr's, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (Palgrave, 2016); a 3rd edition (with Doug Stokes) of his best-selling volume *US Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2018); and a collection of his essays, *The Post-Cold War World* (Routledge, 2019). He has also recently brought out a new centennial edition of John Maynard Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Palgrave, 2019), and has also just finished working on a new edition of E. H. Carr's 1945 classic, *Nationalism and After*, which will appear in 2021. He is now working on a new history of the LSE, entitled *The "School": LSE and the Shaping of the Modern World*.

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REVIEW BY CARL BRIDGE AND BART ZIELINSKI, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

'The best of Two Worlds'? Australian Diplomacy in the 1920s

Hughes correctly interprets the prevailing sentiment that Australia can have the best of two worlds - one in which she is an independent nation ... and the other ... in which she figures as a small part of a mighty Empire.⁹

A scholar once wrote of the 'yo-yo variations' in Australian foreign policy in the British dominion period as it veered from a default position of total dependence on British advice to its first tentative steps towards independence.¹⁰ More recently, others have characterised this Cinderella era as one in which Australia's ambiguous suspension between empire and nation suited the interests of a small self-governing country embedded in a more powerful, if declining, imperial system.¹¹ The decade of the 1920s was quintessentially the high tide of this Britannic moment in which Australia sought both to establish something of an independent international personality while also paying due attention to the benefits of membership of the British Empire/Commonwealth. The competing tensions are well-represented in this generous and impressive selection of Documents which gives us better insight into this forgotten decade than ever before.

All of the familiar landmarks are here: membership in the fledgling League of Nations; the Chanak crisis (in Part 5); the New Guinea mandate; the on-again-off-again building of the Singapore naval base, but not the navy to use it (see Parts 1, 4, and 7, especially Docs. 30, 145, 149, and 354); the Washington Treaties; the Locarno Pact (also in Part 5); defence of the 'White Australia' policy (especially Parts 2, 5, and 6); immigration schemes and the blueprints for an integrated imperial economy, and even for a while an imperial polity (Parts 4 and 7); and finally the bedding down of constitutional equality in the Balfour Declaration and the Statute of Westminster. There are also some less familiar themes: Australian women delegates at the League of Nations (Docs. 184-5); the claiming of the Australian 'quadrant' of Antarctica; the New Hebrides and Solomons (Docs. 311-314); and the erratic building of an increasing, if patchy, ganglion of sub-diplomatic international trade representatives and League *fonctionnaires* (Parts 2 and 7).

Three strong prime ministers argued for Australia's interests in these years, Billy Hughes, S.M. Bruce, and James Scullin. They fought something of a rear-guard action against their Canadian, Irish and South African opposite numbers who, after the failure of South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts' plans for a tighter imperial federation, pushed successfully for a looser imperial system wherein the dominions functioned as 'freely associated' autonomous units, as recognised by the Balfour Declaration in 1926 and the subsequent Statute of Westminster in 1931 (Doc. 327). The Australians dubbed these fellow dominion prime ministers as, in Hughes's terms, 'constitutional tinkers' and made the telling point that no paper arrangement was needed as the First World War and the Versailles peace treaty had demonstrated the living sovereignty of the dominion parliaments beyond doubt, as did their separate membership of the new League of Nations (p.15; also see, for example, Docs. 24, 26, 328, 339).

⁹ National Library of Australia, Novar Papers, MS696/1561-4, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson (Governor-General of Australia) to Walter Long (British Colonial Secretary), letter, 19 December 1919.

¹⁰ J.R. Poynter, "The Yo-Yo Variations: Initiative and Dependence in Australia's External Relations, 1918-1923," *Historical Studies*, 14:54 (April 1970), 231-49; see also W.J. Hudson, "The Yo-Yo Variations: A Comment," *Historical Studies* 14:55 (October 1970): 424-429.

¹¹ For example, Carl Bridge and Bernard Attard, eds., *Between Empire and Nation: Australia's External Relations from Federation to the Second World War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001); and more broadly, John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chs. 8-11.

Australia failed to convince its fellow dominions (bar New Zealand) to contribute to a common imperial navy in 1921 and subsequently refused to put its money directly into the building of the Singapore naval base, preferring to spend it on its own fleet (Doc. 15). A related, momentous event in 1921 (and into 1922), was the Washington Naval Conference, duly acknowledged and well documented in this volume (Part 3). It raised, once more, questions of dominion representation. Despite Australia's new international status and recognition, which had emerged from the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, in Washington Australia's voice was relatively muted in a British Empire delegation context. Australian defence interests in the Pacific were key, also rooted in the British Empire, via the old Anglo-Japanese Alliance before the Conference, and the Washington arrangements thereafter. Though we are not told in this volume, the ten-year-old but apparently obsolete HMAS *Australia*, the Australian flagship and only capital ship ever to serve in the Royal Australian Navy, was scuttled in 1924 as a direct outcome of the Conference's arms limitation logic.

After Washington, Japan was the predominant naval power in the Pacific and the British navy (and therefore Australia) would rely on the uncertain support of the navy of an increasingly isolationist United States to counter Japanese naval might. The implicit Australian strategic paradox regarding Japan -- the maintenance of friendly relations with Tokyo for peace and prosperity in the Pacific while maintaining a racially discriminatory immigration and trade policy -- was thus consciously omitted. The Japanese racial grievance, while aired, was not tested and remained on the backburner throughout the 1920s.

On the constitutional front, in 1930 Scullin followed Irish precedent and appointed the first Australian as Governor-General over palace murmurings to the contrary (Docs. 361-362); and, after a decade of shilly-shallying from the states' attorneys-general Australia finally ratified the Statute of Westminster in 1942 (Part 7). Much inconsequential inter-dominion quibbling about the possibility of a common imperial citizenship produced one minor victory against the 'White Australia' policy when the few Indian citizens resident in Australia were granted voting rights in 1925. On the trade and development side, Bruce and his extremely energetic lieutenant, F.L. McDougall (who features prominently) pursued their holy trinity of 'Men, Money, Markets,' securing a £34m assisted immigration deal (Docs. 164-167) and lobbying hard if ultimately in vain for empire free trade (see, for example, Docs. 161 and 369).

Much is revealed in this collection of the activities of the next tier of foreign policy makers, the senior advisers and proto-diplomatic trade representatives, who kept the wheels of the machine running. E.L. Piesse wrote sage memoranda on Japan, the New Guinea mandate and Pacific affairs more generally (see, for example, Docs. 6, 37-42, 53, 283). Professor Harrison Moore expertly navigated the murky legal waters of dominionhood and the 'divided crown' (see, for example, Docs. 339-340). R.G. Casey was Bruce's eyes and ears, and much more, in the Cabinet secretariat in London (working from inside the system so as not to breach the diplomatic unity of the empire). McDougall was the trade guru. Douglas Mawson masterminded the effort in Antarctica. And Walter Henderson (Casey's stablemate) gave expert advice on international legal matters from the Locarno Pact to all manner of League affairs (Docs. 224, 227, 245).

Then there were the international representatives. Besides the familiar succession of High Commissioners in London and Trade Commissioners in New York, there were Australians embedded in the League secretariat, the International Labour Organisation, and the British Foreign Office. A handful of federal politicians were blooded at Geneva, among them Attorney-General Littleton Groom, who (as we learn) exceeded his brief over Permanent Court of International Justice matters (Docs. 218-220) and was severely reprimanded. There were short-term, often part-time trade envoys and honorary consuls in France, Italy, Japan, and right across the Asian rim of the Pacific, all of whom are identified here. Some of this was ad hoc and on the cheap but still effective to a degree. It would be some ten years before fully-accredited diplomats were appointed to the United States, Japan, China and Canada.

A fascinating dimension of Australian internationalism in the 1920s is detailed in Australia's duties as a mandatory power over ex-German New Guinea through the League of Nations and its Permanent Mandates Commission (Part 6; see, for example, Docs. 280-281). The Australian administration's exposure to the international community and various imperial powers through relevant talks, negotiations, and sessions throws a searchlight on the country's international engagement. In juxtaposition to Australia's 'internal' administration of its colony of Papua (mention of which is rather limited here), were

Australia's new commitments and the many diplomatic lessons learnt via the League and thus outside the British imperial framework. Arguably, the League's oversight meant that New Guinea was better served than Papua by its Australian administrators. Beyond this, Australia's views regarding the (British) Solomon Islands and (Anglo-French) New Hebrides also get some mention.

The story of Mawson's mission to acquire the vast segment of Antarctica which sits below Australia is explored in detail (Part 8). The French and Norwegians were in the area, and from the mid-1920s Mawson lobbied Bruce to agree to mount an expedition (Docs. 384-385), which was eventually labelled the British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition, and jointly funded, which first sailed in 1929-30 (Doc. 433) and began a process which eventually led to the legal claim in 1936.

There are some areas under-represented or even omitted. There is little on the vital business, at the core of the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom's work, of loan raising in the City of London. And surprisingly nothing on the sale by Bruce and facilitated by Casey of that jewel in Hughes' Great War crown, the Commonwealth Shipping Line, which made financial sense in wartime but ran at a considerable loss in the peace. And international readers might puzzle about why cables suddenly begin to emanate from Canberra rather than Melbourne from 1927, as we are not told of the move to the new capital.

If there is a message inherent in this Janus-like 'best-of-both-worlds' Britannic moment it is that Australia's leaders, pre-eminently Hughes and Bruce, were adept at working the angles available to them in Australia's relatively dependent position. This was as a small to middling power that was economically, financially, and strategically dependent on the empire of which it was a part and the yet-to-be-tested League which held out further hope of multilateral solutions. These canny Australian statesmen were too shrewd to pursue the chimeras of isolationism and independence.

REVIEW BY NICHOLAS BROWN, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

In 1999, Stuart Harris, who served as Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs from 1984 to 1988, noted the necessity for Australia's diplomats to refine skills in "persuasion," given their inability to convincingly threaten or bribe other states in pursuit of national interests.¹² The first external appointment as Secretary of that department since World War Two, coming to the job as a specialist in agricultural and resource economics, and overseeing the amalgamation of the trade portfolio into a new Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1987, Harris understood what was required of diplomatic authority in changing times. The same point, if less candidly expressed, has informed the characterisation of the ways in which, as a "middle-ranking power" in a post-Cold War world, and as a nation with a less than settled regional identity, Australia has had to work at securing whatever reputational leverage it can as a "good global citizen."¹³ "Punching above our weight" has become a chorus in commentary on Australia's international influence, centring on skills of advocacy, even if qualified by an awareness of the shifting institutional conditions for that performance, and by the question of appropriate relativities given the stakes Australia defends.¹⁴ A number of formulations have been rehearsed of how or where Australia fits in wider schemas of international affairs: developed or developing; Western outpost or Asian partner; a country deserving 'differentiated targets' in international protocols according to particular economic circumstances; a champion of protectionism among the relics of empire or for the liberalisation of trade for nations sharing a reliance on agricultural exports, itself a product of contested settlements as well as comparative advantage – this list could go on.

Go on, and stretch back. Among the most engaging themes (from a historical perspective) or preoccupations (for the actors of the time) to emerge from James Cotton's collection of documents relates to similar issues as they arose in the foundational stages of Australian foreign policy. There are the constant objectives, the access to power, the relationships and assurances a relatively new nation sought to consolidate in the even newer world of international affairs emerging after World War One. Through the 1920s, as this book shows, Australia was testing what 'empire' might mean given new formulations of the status of British dominions (about which not all dominions agreed), or the connections between national priorities and the emerging "moral force" (301) of the League of Nations. But there was also the pressure to craft the individualised competencies required to exercise such persuasion. In addressing that need, Australians were conscious, even deeply self-conscious, of the scant, lean resources available to them. Among much else, this volume captures this awareness, the attempts to address it, and the ways in which international policy and the personas cultivated to advance it were often interdependent.

Diplomatic history has been energised recently by close attention to the crafting of diplomatic performance "not exclusively ... as a means of foreign policy" but as "a historical phenomenon ... in its own right."¹⁵ These documents reflect formative aspects of these processes for Australians. In 1956 George Kennan was perhaps being deliberately archaic in describing

¹² Stuart Harris, "Australian Change and Adaption," in B. Hocking (ed.), *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation* (London: Macmillan, 1999): 23-39, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27317-1>.

¹³ See John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism: Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52:3 (December 1998): 309-328, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357719808445259>.

¹⁴ See Mark Thomson, "Punching Above Our Weight: Australia as a Middle Power," *Strategic Insights* 18 (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2005), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/strategic-insights-18-punching-above-our-weight-australia-middle-power>; Michael Fullilove, "Time for Australia to Stop Punching Below Our Weight," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 July 2014, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/time-australia-stop-punching-below-its-weight>.

¹⁵ Markus Mösslang and Torsten Riotte, eds., *The Diplomat's World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6563.2010.00288_61.x; see also John Zameca, ed., *British Officials and British Foreign Policy* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990).

himself as a “diplomatist” (those he defined as “practicing [a] ... thankless, disillusioning and physically exhausting profession as a permanent livelihood”).¹⁶ The term had been in marked decline since the end of the nineteenth century, as evaluations of the customs of diplomacy have been replaced by assessments of its proficiencies. But it appeared in the reports E. L. Piesse – shortly after his appointment as the first director of the Pacific branch of the Prime Minister’s Department – provided of his extended tour through the Dutch-East Indies, French Indo-China, Hong Kong, China and Japan in 1919-1920. “Effectively [the head] ... of Australia’s first foreign office,” Piesse hoped to engage all relevant experts and practitioners in an assessment of the threat of Japanese imperialism and of the ways in which Australia should respond to it.¹⁷ In Japan the “diplomatists” Piesse conversed with assured him that Australia scarcely figured in comment or debate, although “the possibility of war with America is a daily topic of discussion” (137). Himself a man of extraordinary abilities – Hobart born, educated in mathematics at Cambridge, drawn into military intelligence on his return, then studying Japanese so that he could cut through the inherent racism that clouded Australia’s anxious gaze northwards – Piesse sought to ensure that his government was better informed on regional affairs. But whether Australia should attempt to craft its own ranks of “diplomatists” was another question.

As Cotton notes, Piesse was “one of the best informed Australians of the time” (100) and his is one of several striking, distinctive voices heard in this collection: figures of a transitional phase in which the tensions of nation and empire were matters of reflection and calculation more than sentiment, and often transacted in a few highly personalised roles. There were, Piesse advised, “weighty reasons against separate diplomatic representation of the Dominions abroad,” given the possible “danger to the diplomatic unity of the Empire” (43) and the potential “isolation” of a merely Australian voice (73). But there was still the imperative of ensuring that the Australian government benefitted more fully from the information and analysis British representatives across the region gathered in their work. Assembling that flow of information – official, formal and informal, data, digests, and journalism – would at least mean that informed independent judgement might be offered in the shaping of imperial policy, and in countering those areas in which the British were “not in sympathy with our interests” (113). And more fundamentally, there was “the difficulty (which anyone familiar with parliament and the public service must realise would be a very grave one in Australia) of obtaining suitable envoys and staffs” with which Australia might hope to carry out such functions for itself. The “qualities” required for such work “are those which a good education and living among people of importance in the affairs of the world will usually ensure”. “In Australia,” Piesse added, “it may be difficult to secure persons of those qualities” (43).

That frank assessment recurs throughout this collection. At several points Piesse returned to the argument that “mental outlook” and “qualities of personal character will have to be considered with extreme care” (118) in selecting the “class of person” to perform the “public and ornamental functions,” let alone exercise the astute personal judgement, required to advance Australian interests overseas (113). In May 1924 – at Prime Minister S.M. Bruce’s instigation – Allen Leeper (Australian-born son of the Irish-born “impulsive and authoritarian” master of Trinity College at the University of Melbourne)¹⁸ was released from his duties at the United Kingdom Foreign Office to visit Australia and advise on what might be done to find that “right type of man.” His report was not encouraging: Australian public service recruitment processes, meagre pay, and slow, strictly seniority-based advancement had the effect of “eliminating the public school and university man almost entirely” from the potential ranks of diplomats (359). The appointment of Richard Casey as Liaison Officer in the Foreign Office was the best that could be done under the circumstances. While effective in itself given the “qualities” Casey possessed and exercised, the position remained (as Casey himself conceded) “an elastic stop-gap,” scarcely

¹⁶ George F. Kennan. “History and Diplomacy as Viewed by a Diplomatist,” *The Review of Politics* 18:2 (April 1956): 170-177, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500008603>.

¹⁷ N. K. Meaney, “Edmund Leolin Piesse (1880-1947),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 11 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/piesse-edmund-leolin-8046>.

¹⁸ J.R. Poynter, “Leeper, Alexander (1848-1934),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leeper-alexander-7154>.

covering “gaps obvious to everybody” (365). It was useful that Casey – certainly the right type of man – earned the patronage of the Secretary of the British Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey, and secured a desk in the Cabinet Office. But patronage abroad had its limits, and did not always translate readily into influence at home.

Comparable issues arose as Australian interests increasingly turned towards the United States during the 1920s, this evolving relationship being another strong theme in this volume. America might occupy “a very warm corner” (47) in Australian hearts, as Prime Minister Billy Hughes assured the 1921 Imperial Conference, but the path for policy was not so easy. Strategically there were the tensions between the Britain-Japan, United States-China alignment to negotiate. There was also (as reported to Piessé) an American perception of a kind of innate “dislike” (134) for them among imperially-minded Australians. And there was the concern, as Bruce put it, that “America will immediately be drawn into her shell” (310) by any mishandling of post-war tensions in Europe. Appointment in 1918 as “Australian Commissioner” in New York might have made, as Cotton suggests, Sir Henry Braddon Australia’s “first diplomat” (103), but without a formally-recognised rank or accreditation, it was not only issues of character that mattered. More testing proved the search for a title sufficiently “resonant” to cut through in American circles, with their own codes of status and esteem. Bored, frustrated or slighted, Braddon and his successors railed at their lack of appropriate “honour or responsibility” (179), advising that in an ostensibly meritocratic republic “a business man of standing would be a less effective representative than a man who is known for his scientific, or literary or other professional attainments” – professors also seemed to carry “great weight” (186). Even before the question of title was settled there was the prior issue of how Australia might choose to be seen. Hughes despaired in 1918 that “every small twopenny ha’penny South American Republic has its representatives on the spot” in America, while Australia’s interests were advanced by Britain in “a casual sort of way,” sometimes by Englishmen “positively too dreadful for words” (165). His successor, S.M. Bruce, however, while welcoming that contacts in the United States valued Australia “as an interpreter of Britain to America” (193), remained even into the 1930s “totally opposed” to the independent diplomatic representation achieved by several other dominions. Again, Bruce’s caution was in part based upon the concern that the “results with the wrong individual would be, at the best, negative, at the worst disastrous” (194). Much rested on, and was constrained, by such doubts.

Yet persuasion remained a crucial part of the repertoire Australians worked to exercise in these new forums of imperial as well as international negotiation. The task was made more demanding by the bind of seeking to speak with independence yet within frameworks of empire that were already under strain among dominions (Canada, the Irish Free State, and South Africa especially) that did not necessarily share Australian views, and not least given the contests within Britain’s own politics over issues such as free trade. Cotton alerts us to these features, which were often reflected in rhetoric but also in the logics internal to the evolving calculations of imperial legitimacy. The volume begins (as Cotton notes) with Hughes’s “eloquent and powerful if not always convincing exposition of a consistent view of the Australian national interest” (12) on matters spanning defence, trade, immigration restriction and imperial negotiation itself. Savouring his prominence, Hughes insisted on a place within imperial decision-making framed by the need for political rather than diplomatic representation (no envoy “can ... speak as I can speak as head of a Government” – 88) and still only yearning for a network of fast global communications, let alone the prospect of “airship travel” to reduce the absence of leaders from their domestic business. It ends (chronologically) by recording the unexpected confidence with which James Scullin, Labor Prime Minister from 1929 to 1932, introduced (Cotton argues) “a more distinctive and individual Australian outlook” (582) on issues ranging from economic affairs to his right to recommend an Australian-born Governor General (on the basis of Sir Isaac Isaacs’s standing as a man exemplifying Australian standards of “integrity and culture, training and public service” – 686).

In between there are often extended extracts from documents that capture the sheer effort of Australian persuasion, in this awkward bind, as it railed within imperial systems it dare not challenge, presuming on familiarities but standing apart from several dominion peers. The issues and many of the phrases captured in Cotton’s often extended extracts might be familiar enough from earlier studies, but the speeches themselves are significant even in their length. Sometimes the reader might long for an editorial trim to what can seem laboured verbosity, but then that, it seems, is the point: this is persuasion trying to find its stride. When Hughes, after a couple of thousand words in a statement on the need for efficient communication between distant Dominions arrives at “the point you wanted me to reach,” British Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s intervention – “Yes, this is what I have been waiting for” (87) – evidently captured a shared mood (even if Hughes still ploughed on, “chastened by long sojourning in the wilderness,” prompting Union of South Africa Prime Minister General

Smuts's lament that "we are drifting into making speeches over this difficult matter and making no progress at all" – 89). And even Hughes confided to Hankey that "I get a little tired of so much talk and nothing definite done" (93). This collection captures the strains of Australia's search for a voice, labouring at a point even when, as in one instance (Hughes debating the Canadian prime minister) the interlocutor has already left the conference "to luncheon with the Prince of Wales" (58).

This is a big book, but these words were/are not superfluous, or at least do not lack historical significance. Among the most arresting moments captured here are the plaintive but powerful speeches of Bruce at Imperial Conferences or in League of Nations Assemblies, at which he spoke of the horror of World War I, of the need to find enduring principles – economic and strategic – for peace, of what it "means to be a soldier," and what it might add to the discussion of international affairs if delegates paused to "think of the matter from the point of view of the man who has got to go and suffer and endure these things if you will continue to have these ghastly and dreadful wars" (394). No doubt he broke the Assembly's "ten minute rule," but in arguing "emphatically ... that Australia, in the past, has borne rather more of her share in comparison with the other Dominions" (303) in sending soldiers to fight, Bruce was not celebrating sacrifice but calling for a proportionate voice in weighing the issues that could too quickly become "a tragedy one-hundredfold worse than the one we have experienced" (301).

This collection – even as the documents unfold, sometimes prolix, restless or proud – show Australians seeking to find this voice of persuasion, not only as a means of policy but an integral component of it, and also as an identity, an appropriate comportment for the diplomatist. Casey – with his insider's view – was "tempted to say [in 1925] that, if they cared to express their views forcibly, the Dominions, either severally or even individually, could exert a far greater influence ... than their relative populations warrant" (362): Great Britain, he added, was "like a parent trying to formulate a holiday plan for herself, to include several rather fractious children, and in her efforts not to displease any of them." No-one was fully enjoying that holiday (362). Outside the family, a world was pressing for attention, drawing from Australia new areas of expertise. There was the deployment of anthropological perspectives in New Guinea in an attempt to avoid (as Piesse put it) the "veiled imperialism" (531) suspected of League of Nations mandates; the application of science to the agricultural development underpinning "empire settlement" schemes; or the exploration and possible economic exploitation of Antarctica. In these tasks, as Evan Wisdom, Administrator of New Guinea, saw it in 1926, Australians proved adaptable as they were "pitchforked ... into an entirely strange job" (547). Strange it might have been for the individuals concerned – and continued to be for those Australians who had to hit the ground running, especially in their transforming region, and especially after 1945.¹⁹ But Cotton's collection also reveals that even in this personal as well as institutional testing, much of the skills and outlooks at stake still drew on racialized condescension. Fretting over the "right type" of man to engage the leaders and elites of one world, it was nonetheless still sufficient to recruit trade commissioners "well versed in the psychology of Oriental traders" to wrangle another: those "in Java should be Dutch, or, perhaps, preferably, half-castes, in Malaya and Hong Kong Chinese, and in India Indian" (203). The "personal touch" was still required in Asia, but "the presence of a vivid personality tells more with Asiatics than miles of the very best appeals handed to them in printer's ink" (205) or presumably the eloquent speeches at conferences, or the right manners over dinner. It would take some time to realise that this was not necessarily the case.

¹⁹ See for example: David Fetling, *Encounters with Asian Decolonisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2017).

REVIEW BY MICHAEL COX, THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, EMERITUS

Perhaps no subject has been more hotly debated over the past few years than the role played by empire in the making of the modern world. Of course, this is not the first time in history that western imperialism has come under scrutiny. But with statues coming down, whole buildings being renamed, and university curricula being redesigned to take account of the new upsurge in critical engagement with the West's past, this time round it appears to have struck a much deeper chord. Indeed, it has not just struck a chord. The whole western world now seems to be suffering from what one writer has aptly termed a long 'hangover,' the cause of which lies fairly and squarely in its own imperial past.²⁰

Australia is no stranger to these debates. In fact, one might reasonably argue that it has been slowly trying to come to terms with the legacy of empire for the best part of a century – first during the First World War when 'Australians' went out to fight as 'loyal sons of Great Britain' but 'came back as Australians',²¹ then in the period immediately following World War II when it became clear that it could no longer depend on the British and the British Empire to provide it with security, yet again in the 1960s and 1970s when it started to abandon its long established 'White Australia' policy, and finally when it began to take a long, hard look at the tragedy visited upon the first Australians ever since that fateful day when Captain James Cook landed at Botany Bay in 1770.

But what, one might ask, has any of this to do with a book of documents on Australian diplomacy covering the years 1920 through to 1930? A very great deal I would suggest. As one reviewer of this very useful volume has pointed out, "for those curious about what 'the Empire' meant to Australians only 90-100 years ago this collection is a godsend"²² covering as it does Australia's still very close relationship with an imperial order of which it felt a part, but within which it pushed not so much for independence (can one even talk of an Australian foreign policy at this time asks the editor James Cotton?) but for a much louder voice within it. And no one pushed harder to make that Australian voice heard than its pugnacious Prime Minister Billy Hughes. Indeed, having led Australia through most of the First World War, he made it abundantly clear to the leaders of the great powers assembled in Paris in 1919 that he would be nobody's pushover. 60,000 Australian war dead made the case for Australia more forcefully than any amount of memos pleading for a place at the high table of international politics, he insisted

Australia led by Hughes certainly pulled no punches in Paris; and if truth be told, probably made very few friends either. Thus Germany, according to Hughes, should be made to pay the highest level of reparations possible, a view unlikely to recommend itself to at least one British economist – John Maynard Keynes – who in 1919 was making an equally strong case in the opposite direction.²³ Nor did he much like President Woodrow Wilson: Wilson in turn did not much like Hughes, this "pestiferous varmint"²⁴ as he called him, who aside from lacking in deference to the great American liberator displayed very little enthusiasm for Wilson's League of Nations either. Hughes was unmoved. The League, he believed, might be useful enough, but unlike the British Empire it had no power and would therefore be "utterly incapable of preserving the peace of the world" (76). Nor did he see eye-to-eye with Wilson when it came to New Guinea. Wilson wanted it declared a trustee territory of his proposed League. But this was Australia's strategic front door, Hughes reckoned. Wilson would have

²⁰ Samir Puri, *The Great Imperial Hangover: How Empires Have Shaped The World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2020).

²¹ Quote from Peter Fitzsimmons, "The Gallipoli Campaign: a defining moment in Australian history," *HistoryExtra*, BBC, 25 April 2019.

²² Derek McDougall, *The Round Table*, 16 June 2020, 347.

²³ See Michael Cox, ed., John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Palgrave, 2019 [1919]).

²⁴ Cited in Michael Wesley, "Making our way in the world through Australian Diplomacy," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 2015.

none of it. “Am I to understand,” he went on “that Australia is prepared to defy the opinion of the whole civilised world, Mr Hughes?” Hughes we are told, fiddled with his hearing aid and pretended not to have heard. Wilson, dripping sarcasm, repeated the question. “That’s about the size of it, Mr President,” drawled Hughes.²⁵

Hughes though is perhaps best remembered for the part he played in opposing Japan when it proposed attaching an ‘equality clause’ to the Covenant of the League of Nations. This move not only deepened his deep distrust of an Asian country which he felt had contributed very little to a war out of which it had done remarkably well. More fundamentally, it posed a threat in his view to what Margaret Macmillan has called “the dike protecting Australia”²⁶ - and that dike was the policy first laid out in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which aimed to keep Australia white under the banner of protecting Australian white workers from the competition of cheap Asian labour. Hughes quite literally led the charge on the issue, much to the embarrassment of Prime Minister Lloyd George (who did not want to upset the Japanese at this stage) though one suspects much to the great relief of Wilson, who could hardly be described as an enthusiast for the clause. Unsurprisingly, Hughes’s vocal opposition to the equality clause made him few friends in Japan, nor amongst the Japanese diplomatic corps in Paris, one of whom referred to the Australian as a “peasant - ignorant and backward with no real concept of the world”.²⁷ Hughes, of course, could not care less, and may have even taken some pride in the fact that he was, according to one Australian policy-maker, as popular in Japan after the war as was the German Kaiser in Great Britain!

Yet oddly enough none of this prevented Hughes making the case for a continuation of the alliance between Japan and Great Britain – and in 1921 he did so against some sustained opposition from the Americans, the Canadians, and unsurprisingly from the Chinese who clearly had most to fear from Japan. But ever the realist he welcomed the renewal of the alliance, which in his view had not only served the British empire’s interest well since the early part of the century, but might continue to do so going forward. But the opposition proved too great. Indeed, it was fast becoming clear (even at Versailles) that the alliance now only had a limited shelf-life. This may well have been because of misperceptions on both sides. But it was becoming very obvious that the interests of Japan and those of the United States in particular were heading in opposite directions. Moreover, even if Hughes continued to think that the case for the alliance was overwhelming, a large number of his fellow countrymen and women did not. Many in fact needed little encouragement when it came to thinking the worse of Japan. The only question then was where would Japanese expansion take it to next: westwards towards the continent of Asia and China or southwards towards Australia itself? ²⁸

All this, however, lay in the future. Australia’s more immediate concern was how to develop an acceptable position within the British imperial system. Here it faced something of a dilemma from which there was no obvious escape. Thus, on the one hand, it wanted to be treated like an equal, to be consulted, and to have its voice heard and listened to at the high table of the Empire. On the other, it still felt a deep sense of loyalty to a Britain upon which it was still dependent economically, from whence came most of its immigrants, and upon whose navy it still relied for its security. As Hughes stressed in 1921, neither Australia nor indeed the Dominions more generally, would even “exist” if “it were not for the British navy” (49). This did not prevent Australians from having a consciousness of themselves as Australians; however, one could not ignore basic facts. Nor should one ignore the wider benefits of being part of something much bigger. Indeed, there was he believed a very great deal to be said for Australia being embedded within something wider, especially when that ‘something’ was a powerful Empire stretching all the way round the world covering nearly twenty five per cent of the earth’s surface and under

²⁵ Quotes taken from Shane Maloney and Chris Grosz, “Billy Hughes and Woodrow Wilson,” *The Monthly* (October 2007), <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2007/october/1290559133/shane-maloney/billy-hughes-woodrow-wilson#mtr>.

²⁶ Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World* (London: John Murray, 2003), 328.

²⁷ Quoted in Brad Webb, “The Path to War: Australia, Britain and Japan,” *Independent Australia*, 18 February 2011.

²⁸ See Charles Nelson Spinkes, “The Termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” *Pacific Historical Review* 6:4 (December 1937): 321-340.

whose flag close to 600 million people lived, for better or worse. Australia's "share in the Councils of the Empire must be a real one" he insisted (59). However, it was important for small countries like Australia – its population in the 1920s was just over 5 million people - to recognize that it would amount to very little outside the family of nations which made up the Empire. If anything, Australia was in a more dependent position than the other Dominions, most obviously Canada, which could at least call upon its powerful neighbour to the south for support and help. (79).

Like any very large volume of documents covering the foreign policy of any nation at any time there are quite a few here one only has to skim read. But there are some very large nuggets to be found in this collection too, including a surprisingly thorough and interesting discussion about Antarctica and why Australia and Britain should lay claim to parts of it (711-870). There are some other, equally useful, documents dealing with the country's relations with the other Dominions such as Canada (with whom Australia did not always see eye-to-eye), South Africa, and yes, we need reminding - Eire - before it became 'Ireland' in 1938 before going on to become a Republic in 1949. Economics also gets a useful airing. Indeed, by the time we reach the 1930s and the onset of the world depression, there is an increased emphasis on the problems facing the world economy in depression and the part played by imperial preference in determining Australia's somewhat limited economic choices.

One or two items in this collection stood out for me, however. One in particular formed part of a speech made by Hughes in London in September 1921. This pertained, interestingly, to Hughes's view of Turkey, a country against which Australian forces had been pitted in bloody combat at Gallipoli between February 1915 and January 1916. Nobody needed to remind Australia or Australians what terrible losses they had suffered in battle at Turkish hands. Still Hughes did not seem to let this cloud his judgement of Turkey, or of Turkey's historical rival (and Australia's former war-time ally) Greece. Hughes was typically blunt to the point of being undiplomatic. Having emerged bloodied from one war, Australia, he went on, had absolutely no interest in getting sucked into another conflict that was now pitting Greeks against Turks following the partition of the Ottoman Empire – especially when the main purpose of this war, in his opinion, was simply to "further the ambitions of King Constantine" of Greece. Nor it seemed did he feel any great animosity towards the Turks. Quite the reverse. As he put it in a way that only he could: "I do not know that the views of the Australian soldier in regard to this matter are very important, but he emerged from the war with a supreme contempt for the Greek, who was supposed to be his ally, and with a hearty admiration for the Turk against whom he fought. I must say I share that view entirely" (52).

But what finally about the country laying six thousand miles across the Pacific which formed part of that linguistic and racial community of which most Australians at the time saw themselves a part? As shown here, the relationship between Australia and the United States was not without its stresses and strains – in part the legacy of the Americans having made the case for a League of Nations it then failed to support, in part a realistic appreciation in Australia that not all Americans were fans of the British empire, and in part a function of the fact that officials in the United States did not wish to give this youthful incomer too much diplomatic space within which to express its own views. Indeed, in 1927 the Australian Commissioner to the U.S. was complaining bitterly about not being taken seriously since having arrived in the United States. Five years on and the whole tone of the relationship looked to have changed almost beyond recognition with American officials seemingly encouraging Australia to now act almost as the interpreter of British policy in Washington. But this was just a straw in the wind. At the end of the day, all roads still led back to London, both for the Americans and significantly for Australia too. It would take yet another global war, one which witnessed major defeats for all the European powers in Asia accompanied by a decisive shift in the balance of power away from Britain to the United States before those roads would start wending their way directly from Washington to Canberra, without first having to go down Whitehall. But that no doubt will be the subject of a future volume in this excellent series.

REVIEW BY DANIEL GORMAN, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Collections of foreign policy documents are catnip for diplomatic and international historians. Curated by experts who have devoted careers to their fields, they guide students and seasoned scholars alike through the thickets of government documents, policy papers, and other relevant foreign policy sources. They provide leads for historians to pursue in the archives, and through their explanatory essays they highlight connections between historiographical debates and the archival sources upon which they rest. *Australia and the World, 1920-1930* successfully performs each of these functions. Edited with skill and a mastery of detail by James Cotton under the auspices of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it will be welcomed by historians of not only Australian foreign policy but also those working on broader aspects of the British World and interwar internationalism.

In this review I will focus on three key themes to which this volume speaks: the international, imperial, and regional spaces within which Australian governments pursued the country's foreign policy interests in the 1920s; Australian foreign policy within the wider British World; and the establishment of Australia's foreign policy machinery after World War I. These themes were interconnected, and one of the many strengths of the collection's explanatory essays and assembled documents is how they demonstrate how Australian decision-makers negotiated multiple issues simultaneously. The timeframe within which decision-makers work is an important variable in foreign policy, with choices made as to how to allocate finite attention and resources. Cotton's decision to organize the volume through a series of specific foreign policy subjects, which are then explored chronologically, effectively conveys this reality and enables the reader to find and contextualize documents with ease.

I

Cotton sets out the volume's key question in his introduction: "was there an Australian foreign policy?" (4) It depends on the issue and the political space within which Australian actors worked. What is clear from the documents in this collection is that there were distinct Australian interests in the 1920s. Australia did not always take its diplomatic lead from London, with the defence of its race-based immigration policies offering a notable example. Yet in other areas, such as the codification of international law or joint imperial actions (particularly the Chanak crisis in 1922, where British Prime Minister David Lloyd George brought Britain to the brink of war with the new state of Turkey), Australia was hesitant to act independently. At the League of Nations and in its regional diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific and the Antarctic, Australia often worked within the British imperial alliance to pursue its autonomous foreign policy interests. The 1920s emerge from the documents in this collection as a transitional decade, where the British connection both aided and constrained the development of an independent Australian foreign policy.

Like the other Dominions, Australia's foreign policy dilemma in the 1920s was to pursue its own interests while maintaining the imperial unity that it deemed essential for that task. Britain's uncertain position towards imperial unity exacerbated this dilemma. R.G. Casey, Australia's representative at the Australian High Commission in London, described Britain to Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce in 1925 as "like a parent trying to formulate a holiday plan for herself, to include her several rather fractious children, and in her efforts not to displease any of them, so modifying her own wishes that none of them enjoy the holiday very much."²⁹ The evolution of Australian foreign policy in these years was part of the Dominions' broader devolution from Westminster.³⁰ This was less a decoupling, however, than a renegotiation of terms with Britain. They did not seek to separate from Dominion status in the interwar years; they embraced it and used it to their own ends. Rather, as the documents in this collection show, Dominion politicians and diplomats sought an independent foreign policy within a British world. It was only when that British world collapsed during and after the

²⁹ Letter, Casey to Bruce, 18 March 1925, Document 173 in James Cotton, ed., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the World, 1920-1930* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2019), 362.

³⁰ A.G. Hopkins, "Rethinking Decolonization," *Past and Present* 200:1 (August 2008): 211-247.

Second World War that the Dominions passed constitutional measures (in Australia's case, the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948) that asserted a new presence in the international system.

This process can be seen in Australia's international, imperial, and regional policies in the 1920s. Australia signed the Treaty of Versailles independently, and had its own seat in the League of Nations Assembly. It largely shared the faith in liberal internationalism that inspired League backers like the British League of Nations Union activist and classical scholar Gilbert Murray (himself born in Australia). Australia participated actively in the League's social and economic work. Australia's federal and state governments (the latter of which had jurisdiction over labour issues) collaborated with the International Labour Organization to monitor and improve labour conditions, and Australia generally supported the League's vision of an international order based upon international law.

In other areas, however, Canberra was leery of League-led internationalism. It was cool to the League's efforts to codify international law, given the Dominions' ambiguous international status. It engaged in debates about the Geneva Protocol to ensure the exclusion of domestic matters from the Permanent Court of International Justice's jurisdiction, with an eye to the Japanese threat in the Pacific. It remained aloof from other international negotiations, such as the Locarno Treaties (1925) that sought to normalize relations between Germany and the former Allied states of the First World War that were British concerns but had little direct bearing on Australian interests. While Bruce himself was eager to deepen relations with London, Australia ultimately joined the other Dominions at the 1926 Imperial Conference in simply adopting a general resolution indicating their agreement to the Locarno Treaties.

One of the most contentious issues at Geneva in the 1920s was the question of colonialism. Australia was itself a 'sub-imperial' power, both through its origins as a settler colonial society, and after World War I as a League of Nations mandatory power in New Guinea and the phosphate island of Nauru. More acute crises in other mandates overshadowed Australia's record of mandatory governance, excepting of periodic Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) investigations of labour conditions of indigenous peoples. Sir Joseph Cook, Australian High Commissioner in London, skillfully presented Australia's annual reports to the PMC, declaring the country's intention that New Guinea "be developed first of all for the good and welfare of the natives [sic]."³¹ Like other mandatory powers, Australia resisted extensive oversight from Geneva, however, illustrating the limitation of the PMC's experiment in international sovereignty.³²

Perhaps the area where Australia acted most independently in the 1920s was as a regional power. It expanded its diplomatic presence in the Asia-Pacific region, from Japan to South-East Asia. This reflected Australia's perception of Japan as a military, economic, and 'racial' threat. It would be interesting to know more about the degree to which racial discourses drove Australian foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific in the 1920s, as opposed to national security interests. The two are not mutually exclusive, but Australian governments' motivations for expanding the country's diplomatic presence in, and focus on, the Asia-Pacific would shed further light on how foreign policy decisions were made, where decision-making power rested, and the importance, or lack thereof, of public opinion.

The other region in its 'neighbourhood' where Australia became particularly active in the 1920s was Antarctica. Australia was centrally involved in the exploration of the continent.³³ The Australian geologist Douglas Mawson led an expedition that helped establish British and Australian sovereignty, setting the foundation for Britain's recognition of Australia's Antarctic claim through the Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act (1933).

³¹ Minutes of Tenth Meeting, Sixth Session, Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations, 1 July 1925, Document 286 in Cotton, 542.

³² Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³³ Letter from Mawson to Prime Minister's Department, Adelaide, n.d. [1921], Document 373 in Cotton, 719-722.

II

Shifts in intra-imperial relations paralleled those at the international level in the 1920s. The doctrine of *inter se*, by which imperial affairs were understood to be separate from foreign policy, was tested by in the 1920s by the Dominions' respective desires to assert their national interests.³⁴ This tension was evident during the First World War, and marked the British Empire delegation's negotiating stance at Versailles. Australia ultimately followed Britain's lead in framing and endorsing the Treaty of Versailles, but Prime Minister Billy Hughes was vociferous in his defence of Australia's interests, especially the fate of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, "white Australia" defence and immigration policies, and the terms of the New Guinea mandate. Hughes was a lone wolf at Versailles, and his personality dominated Australian foreign policy in the war era. (12) He believed that power was the basis of foreign relations and negotiated accordingly at both Versailles and imperial conferences. He opposed the "constitutional tinkers" who wanted to mediate imperial relations through constitutional reform, but he was disappointed in the 1921 Imperial Conference's failure to ensure greater imperial unity. (15) Hughes's public bluster and assertiveness could mask a defensiveness and colonial insecurity. Australia supported Britain during the Chanak crisis on the grounds of imperial unity and to preserve the security of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) gravesites, but Hughes was privately upset with London for threatening war without informing the Dominions, and felt slighted that Australia was excluded from Anglo-French talks in Constantinople to end the crisis.

Hughes' successor as Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, differed in temperament and tact, but he too saw the empire as "one and indivisible."³⁵ Bruce advocated a common imperial defence policy, assisted imperial emigration, and imperial preference (especially for agricultural goods, a key Australian export). The latter anticipated the close imperial economic cooperation spurred by the Depression in the 1930s.³⁶ Australia embraced the Balfour Declaration of Dominion status agreed to at the 1926 Imperial Conference, but even then it was slow to implement the Declaration's terms out of concern that weakened political ties with the empire could harm its already contracting economy. The 1930 Imperial Conference saw the repeal of the Colonial Laws Validity Act, which led to the Statute of Westminster (1931) through which the Dominions' de facto independent foreign policies of the 1920s were formally recognized. Here too, however, Australia was also slow to implement the Statute's terms, in part due to complex negotiation with its states.³⁷

III

A close reading of the documents in this collection reveals the consistently high quality of Australia's overseas representatives in the 1920s. With few exceptions, the "conservative patriarchal elite" (3) tasked with speaking for Australia in Britain, Geneva, foreign capitals, and other postings were well-briefed and creative thinkers. Harrison Moore regularly represented Australia at imperial conferences and at the League, and Australia's reports from the League Assembly were published at home as parliamentary papers. Bruce established a permanent officer in the Australian High Commission in Britain in 1923. R.G. Casey filled the role and helped establish the bones of the Australian diplomatic corps. Australia secured its first native-born Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, in 1930,³⁸ twenty-two years before Vincent Massey marked the same symbolic independence in Canada.

³⁴ Lorna Lloyd, "Loosening the Apron Strings," *The Round Table* 92:369 (April 2003): 279-303.

³⁵ Statement by Bruce, London, 15 October 1923, Document 149 in Cotton, 303.

³⁶ Preston Arens, "'Strictly Non-committal': British Economic Policy and the Commonwealth," *The Round Table* 107:5 (October 2018): 571-583.

³⁷ Scullin to Thomas, Canberra, 15 October 1931, Document 365 in Cotton, 689.

³⁸ Notes by Scullin on Interviews with Stamfordham and The King," London, n.d. [1930], Document 362 in Cotton, 684-686.

While a foreign policy infrastructure began to emerge when a Department of External Affairs was re-established in 1921, foreign policy remained the preserve of the Prime Minister in the 1920s. Even here, though, there were innovations. E.L. Piesse served as Director of the Pacific Branch formed within the Prime Minister's Department. He monitored Japanese developments, built a cohort of officials with expertise in Japanese and Japanese affairs, and expanded Australia's ability to utilize information to develop informed foreign policy. He also collaborated with imperial (the Round Table) and Australian (Australian Institute of international Affairs) think tanks, securing a place for Australia within the postwar Anglo-American foreign policy information nexus.

Australia also took early steps in "trade diplomacy," prefiguring the present fusion of trade and diplomacy embodied in the title of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Like Canadian provinces, Australian states had despatched their own trade commissioners to London in the late nineteenth century, preceding diplomatic representatives. Hughes also appointed Australian trade representative to the United States, concerned that Britain did not adequately represent Australian trade interests in Washington. Beginning in 1919, the Australian Board of Trade advised on the appointment of overseas trade commissioners (106-107). Clive Harold Voss in Paris, Egbert Thomas Sheaf as a general representative in 'the East,' and Edward Selby Little in Shanghai were prominent examples.

The creation of the Pacific Branch and appointment of trade commissioners show Australia's efforts to create an autonomous foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific. Australian governments in the 1920s also pursued connections with civil society actors. Canberra was receptive to lobbying by women's organizations for a greater role for women in the conduct of the nation's foreign policy. It also fostered close relations with the Australian League of Nations Union, which facilitated connections to foreign policy elites in other countries through its membership in the International Federation of League of Nations Societies.³⁹ The Australian government drew on anthropologists to help shape its mandatory policies, a move that was indicative of the discipline's imperial origins, and also a sign that the government was willing to expand its sources of expertise in shaping foreign policy.

Australia and the World, 1920-1930 highlights archival connections between the development of Australian foreign policy and parallel processes in the other Dominions. The transnational threads brought to light through the documents included in this connection point to many suggestive ways in which historians can learn more about the conduct of imperial internationalism in the 1920s. It would be interesting to learn more about the connections between Australian domestic political variables and the formation, organization, and conduct of Australian foreign policy. That is just one of many questions inspired by this valuable collection that will prove an essential reference for scholars of Australian foreign policy.

³⁹ On the IFLNS, see Anne-Isabelle Richard, "Competition and Complementarity: Civil Society Networks and the Question of Decentralizing the League of Nations," *Journal of Global History* 7:2 (July 2012): 233-256.

REVIEW BY TOD W. MOORE, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA

This splendid collection of documents will be welcomed by numerous researchers, especially due to the high importance of the 1920-1930 period for Australia. Why is this such a significant decade? The answer to that question begins with the 1890s, and the federation of the previously self-governing colonies, leading to the emergence of the sovereign Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901. In order to secure the assent of all six constituent States, the Constitution drafted between 1891 and 1898 severely restricted Commonwealth revenues until 1911.⁴⁰ Just a few years after achieving financial viability, the executive government of the Commonwealth was plunged headlong into the Great War of 1914-1918, postponing vital projects such as the creation of a Capital Territory and the building of Canberra. This delay is critical for an appreciation of these documents. The fundamental dilemma of early Australian foreign relations, the tension between a nationalist assertion of sovereignty, and membership of the Empire-Commonwealth, was delayed until the 1920s.

The tension between so-called Dominion nationalism (sovereignty assertion), and unity of the Imperial family, clearly articulated by the Canadian writer Richard Jebb in 1905, is evident throughout this series of documents.⁴¹ As Professor James Cotton points out in his introduction, this was “the conundrum of the era” (4) in Australian foreign policy, and researchers are now able to grapple with this conundrum via a definitive collection of primary sources. When studying these documents in a quest for insights into this fascinating binary, background knowledge of the actors whose voices are preserved in these texts is useful. The Australian protagonists, whether politicians, officials, or representatives of civil society, should all be regarded as broadly Anglophile in the first instance. Looking at the nationalism-imperialism spectrum, Prime Minister William Morris (‘Billy’) Hughes and advisor E.L. Piesse can be situated close to the nationalist end, whereas most others, including League delegate Professor W. Harrison Moore, Nationalist politician John G. Latham, Prime Minister Stanley M. Bruce, and various later officials, can all be located nearer to the other end.⁴² It seems trivial but this may be significant, because the former two were dominant voices in the early 1920s, whereas the latter group were preponderant in the late 1920s. If there had been a societal trend towards increasing Australian national consciousness over the decade, this trend would possibly be masked in the documents by changes in foreign policy actors.

The documents dating from the period around 1920 relating to issues which arose directly from the Paris Peace Conference, and subsequent decisions which advanced Hughes’s nationalism and the insights of Piesse, are among the most significant in the collection. These make up one of two main groups, the other one being the documents from 1927 to 1930, which define Australia’s Dominion status and the evolution of the Statute of Westminster. The overall shape of Australian engagement with the world at this time is marked by a hiatus between these two episodes, when there is less to report, other than some

⁴⁰ See the Australian Constitution, Section 87, which returned 80% of revenue to the States until 1911. This section was originally added to the draft in 1898 by Edward Braddon, with no time limit, but expiration after ten years was agreed at the Premiers’ Conference a year later: Helen Irving, ed., *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 339, 410.

⁴¹ Charles Wentworth Dilke in his 1890 work *Problems of Greater Britain* discussed this trend, but credit goes to Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905) for pointing out the inherent tension between growing Dominion nationalism and Imperial unity.

⁴² Many of these writers and officials at the imperialist end of the spectrum were known to each other, through their participation in liberal imperialist organisations and clubs, especially in Melbourne. Before the War there was Alfred Deakin’s rejuvenated Imperial Federation League, and to this can be added the Boobooks Dinner Club and the branches of the Round Table in Melbourne and Sydney. See Tod Moore, “Liberal Imperialism in Australian Political Thought, 1902–14,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43:1 (February 2015): 58-79, and Tod Moore, “Saving Private Hegel — Australian Liberalism and the 1914–1918 War,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 61:4 (December 2015): 501-514.

civil society and League correspondence. The late 1920s is also marked by Australia's reluctant internationalism in relation to League initiatives in the fields of disarmament and free trade.

Australian assertiveness in 1920-1922 owes much to the realist disposition and dominating temperament of Hughes, as is evident in the 1920 negotiations over the former German territories of New Guinea and Nauru, both of which had been occupied by Australian troops in the War. Hughes insisted upon the application of Australian law under the Class 'C' mandate in New Guinea (Docs. 270 & 272), and he anchored his position to the notion of Australian sovereignty, as a Dominion and as a signatory of the Treaty of Versailles (Doc. 256). Nauru was complicated by the fact that the mandate was vested in "His Britannic Majesty" on behalf of Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom jointly. While Hughes accepted that Australia would eventually administer Nauru under this arrangement (which it did after 1923), he fought hard to guarantee that a large supply of the phosphate resources for which Nauru was famous would go to Australia. Hughes also insisted that as much as possible of the economic infrastructure of this operation would be located in Australia (Doc. 265). At the Imperial Conference of 1921 he vigorously opposed renegotiation of the defence alliance and treaty between the UK and Japan, which was in line with his life-long distrust of Japan's geopolitical motives⁴³ and growing naval capacity (Docs. 18 & 19). These features of Hughes's politics (see Doc. 27), especially his high level of interest in the South-West Pacific region, found support via the appointment of Piesse as Australia's first official foreign policy expert.

For many students of Australian foreign policy, the collection of documents drafted by E. L. Piesse will be the most valuable part of this volume. As the nucleus of the 'Pacific Branch' within the Prime Minister's department, Piesse provided the government with more than just political intelligence, he also framed an Australian view of the region.⁴⁴ His 1920 report on his fact finding mission confirmed the advantages of dealing with agents of influence and sympathetic public officials in the East Asian and Southeast Asian region (Doc. 37). This was especially true in relation to the cultivation of a position of co-operative engagement with the United States.⁴⁵ He clearly appreciated Australia's unique strategic concerns in the region, encouraging Hughes in his opposition to both the Anglo-Japanese alliance and Japan's mandate over the Marshall Islands (Docs. 38 & 40). While the observation that Japan needed the alliance whereas the UK did not was a shrewd one, Piesse and Hughes were naïve to imagine that Japan would ever hand over the Marshall Islands after having occupied them by military force. In relation to Eastern policy, the many documents by Piesse in the collection validate the insight of Hughes, that London could never match the advantage Australia possessed in terms of proximity (Doc. 23). One of the last things which Hughes had to deal with in foreign policy was the inability of London to consult him during the critical days of brinkmanship with Turkey in 1922, a situation known as the Chanak Crisis. Hughes insisted that London's pro-Greek position was at odds with Australian policy favouring Turkey and the *status quo* (Docs. 121 & 125). It was not the decision itself which caused the problem for Hughes, it was the lack of prior informed consent in relation to a major decision of Imperial-Commonwealth policy (Doc. 130).

Apart from the earlier documents regarding the fate of New Guinea and Nauru, there is a second set which also speak to the evolution of a distinct Australian sovereignty. This second set concerns the creation of the Statute of Westminster, which cemented the Dominion nationalism identified by Jebb in 1905. It should be noted that other documents which connect

⁴³ The dread of a so-called 'yellow peril' had disfigured Australian politics since the 1902 Japan-UK treaty and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and invasion scenarios became a feature of literature and drama. For a typical specimen see Samuel A. Rosa, *The Invasion of Australia* (Sydney: The Judd Publishing Co., 1920).

⁴⁴ In the 1930s Piesse was adamant about the Japanese military threat to Australia, writing as 'Albatross': *Japan and the Defence of Australia* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1935), however also note Hughes's rejection of Piesse on the notion of compromising the White Australia policy in Doc. 50. Piesse was following in the footsteps of Will Maloney, *Flashlights on Japan and the East* (Melbourne: Will Andrade, 1905).

⁴⁵ Hartley Grattan argued that at this time the State Department had a restrictive attitude towards Australian policy in the Southwest Pacific, but the briefings of Piesse suggest co-operation at an informal level. See Grattan, *The United States and the Southwest Pacific* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1961), 140-141.

with Australian sovereignty during this period include those which recognise the need to build an Australian diplomatic architecture, and especially those regarding the need to reconcile Australian interests with the single voice of the Empire-Commonwealth in multilateral deliberations. It is doubtful whether any writer appreciated the dilemma of sovereignty more than constitutional expert William Harrison Moore, who can be described as an Australian Briton with a liberal imperialist outlook.⁴⁶ Writing in 1930, Moore acknowledged that Australian laws had full force within Australian borders, and that, like the laws of other Dominions, they could not be abrogated by Empire-Commonwealth legislation. Like other liberal imperialists, he advocated maximum latitude for the adoption of Empire-Commonwealth norms, specifying several key areas including the regulation of deployed military forces, maritime law, and succession to the Crown (Doc. 340). His advocacy of such norms arguably makes Moore a precursor of the English school of international relations, which is associated with Hedley Bull, Martin Wight, and Barry Buzan.

As the Statute was nearing finality, the Australian government confirmed that subjects would enjoy dual nationality, and also that it would remain possible for special treaties to be signed on behalf of the Dominions (including Australia) by the Crown (Doc. 356). It is to be presumed that the authority to do so was to be supplied by the Dominion, and the Australian government maintained that it had competency to legislate “with complete freedom” (Doc. 357). Moving slightly beyond the stated time frame, John G. Latham wrote in 1933 that Australia ought to hasten to ratify the Statute (passed in the UK in 1931), if only to reconfirm the authority of Australian laws. Latham, another liberal imperialist,⁴⁷ noted that three Dominions (Ireland, Canada, and South Africa) had quickly ratified it (Doc. 367). As it turned out, the Lyons government did not care to ratify, and this did not take place until 1942 and another World War.

At the time of the 1930 Imperial Conference, the question of Australia’s diplomatic architecture arose again. Keith Officer was External Affairs Advisor at this time, and he suggested that growing activity of the Dominions in the diplomatic field should be linked to intelligence sharing. There were several mechanisms which would promote this information sharing, including some sort of clearing house in London, which would be connected to the secretariat of the Imperial Conferences (Doc. 348).⁴⁸ This concept of closer communication from London to Australian External Affairs officials had been keenly pursued since at least 1924 (Doc. 170), including the establishment of Australian liaison staff in London (Doc. 171). There had also been confusion regarding the status of Australian representatives in the U.S. since the 1920 debacle over the title of Henry Yule Braddon as “Trade Commissioner” in Washington (Doc. 63).⁴⁹ By 1926, Australian Commissioner in the U.S. James Elder was reporting similar difficulties in Washington, when Australian diplomatic competency appears to have been under a cloud (Doc. 65). By the middle part of the decade, Australia’s engagement in League activities was putting pressure upon the reluctant Bruce-Page government to upgrade the diplomatic architecture (Doc. 174). Despite this activity being

⁴⁶ For the background of Harrison Moore see Tod Moore, “Born in Melbourne? Considerations on the Origins of Australian Political Science,” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 52:3 (September 2017): 450-454. The term “independent Australian Briton” comes from W. K. Hancock’s *Australia* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), which was written in 1928.

⁴⁷ Latham’s career is summarised by Professor Cotton in the biographical appendix. Of interest is his 1928 Macrossan Lectures, published as a book: *Australia and the British Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), with a Foreword by Bruce, see especially page 15 where he asserts Dominion sovereignty in a context of unity of the Commonwealth.

⁴⁸ Between 1905 and 1908 there had been suggestions of similar arrangements at meetings of the Imperial Federation League in Melbourne, including one by Leonard Biggs involving a permanent office at the London secretariat of the Imperial Conferences: See Moore: “Liberal Imperialism in Australian Political Thought,” 65-67; for the Round Table ideal of organic unity, see Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915).

⁴⁹ Henry Yule Braddon was the son of Edward Braddon, and became prominent in business and finance circles, also in the Sydney branches of the L.N.U. and Round Table, and several conservative and anti-communist groups. His publications included: *American Impressions* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1920), and *The League of Nations* (Sydney: The English-Speaking Union, 1924).

much encouraged by civil society groups, especially the League of Nations Union (Docs. 247 & 248)⁵⁰ and the Australian branches of the Round Table, as late as 1927 Bruce was expressing satisfaction with the minimalist approach of reliance upon Australia's officers in London (Doc. 178).

Notwithstanding the positive view of Dominion sovereignty embraced in the Statute of Westminster, the 1930s economic depression added a sour note to Empire-Commonwealth relations, especially with James Scullin forming a government in Canberra in late 1929. Australia's moderate protectionist tariff never sat well alongside the UK free trade tradition, and there was a robust defence by Australia of the tariff policy at the 1923 Imperial Economic Conference (Doc. 155). This position was reiterated at the 1927 International Economic Conference in Geneva, where Australia insisted upon its sovereign prerogative to set a tariff, anticipating the position of the 1929 Tariff Report.⁵¹ Scullin attempted to leverage this policy at the 1930 Imperial Conference in a desperate attempt to gain extra access to UK markets for destitute Australian farmers, to no avail, and his statement included pointed complaints about unfair competition (Doc. 352). At this time Australia was asserting itself by advancing an Australian-born judge, Isaac Isaacs, as new Governor-General. Many attempts were made to sabotage this appointment, including a letter by Richard G. Casey, and even pressure from the King himself, all to no effect (Docs. 361 & 362).

Finally, mention needs to be made of the documents connected to Australian claims in Antarctica. The assertion of Australian sovereignty on the frozen continent can be seen as a vindication of Australia's management of the League mandates. By 1925 the initial Australian claim was being challenged by France, and it is a measure of Australia's maturity in international relations that the decision was made to allow France to claim a narrow sliver known as Adele Land within the Australian quadrant, because doing so would bolster the case of Australia's claim (Docs. 382 & 383). Australia took advantage of proximity and experience, to mount Douglas Mawson's final expedition in 1929, whereby Australia's claim was massively enlarged (Doc. 430). Given that the UK had its own claim in another quadrant, not to mention New Zealand's claim adjacent to the Australian one, the decision of the UK to recognise Australian possession is not surprising (Doc. 440). This is especially so in light of the U.S. developing an interest, following the Byrd expedition of 1928 (Doc. 410). Australia's determination to add Antarctic territories to Papua and the mandates in New Guinea and Nauru demonstrates rising Dominion nationalism. However, the unity of the Empire-Commonwealth is also demonstrated symbolically by Mawson's decision to raise the Union Flag when enlarging the Australian claim, taking possession for Australia in the name of King George the Fifth.

⁵⁰ In the late 1920s the League of Nations Union numbered three of Australia's foremost liberal intellectuals among its active membership: W. K. Hancock in Adelaide and Fred Alexander in Perth, and especially Francis Anderson in Sydney.

⁵¹ J. B. Brigden, et al., *The Australian Tariff - An Economic Enquiry* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1929).

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I am indebted to the reviewers for their appreciative assessments of this volume. Each in their distinctive way offers an insightful perspective on the material and its editorial apparatus. Given that Carl Bridge and Bart Zielinski, Michael Cox, and also Tod Moore offer extended comments on the prime ministers who are the central characters, this response will be framed to assess their respective roles and nationalist credentials. Though all were, in one sense or another 'strong,' their accomplishments were very different.

James Scullin, in London at the 1930 Imperial Conference on his first visit abroad, though he mounted a stout defence of Australian interests – especially over the appointment of an Australian governor-general – came essentially as a supplicant. He was crippled by party disunity at home and overwhelmed by the nation's dire financial situation. W.M. Hughes and S.M. Bruce, by contrast, stand out as powerful operators, though with contrasting approaches and legacies.

There is no doubt of the sheer force of Hughes's style. He was capable of delivering *ex tempore* volumes of commentary (usually laced with invective) drawing extensively upon an evidently deep knowledge of English literature. He had an eye for detail, a prodigious memory, and was responsible for many important innovations – Australia's trade appointments in Asia, noted by Daniel Gorman, were visionary and a generation ahead of their time. More by good luck than good judgement, the appointees were – in their differing ways – exceptionally capable. However, they lacked deep institutional backing at home, and most of their excellent advice was not actioned.

He did have at his disposal some talented individuals. Bridge and Zielinski, Nicholas Brown, Gorman, and Moore remark upon the astuteness of the foreign affairs analyses of E.L. Piesse. Here it is important to note that his appointment was the result of the initiative of W.A. Watt, who was acting as prime minister while Hughes was in London. It is a mark of his failings that Hughes never fully trusted Piesse and often denied him access to materials that would have facilitated his work. Indeed, in 1921 he appointed former intelligence operative George Ainsworth to what was clearly intended as a rival branch of the external affairs bureaucracy, an irregular move that prompted characteristically outraged but fruitless protests from the Public Service Board. Although Ainsworth later worked briefly in London and Geneva, Bruce was unimpressed with his abilities.

With a secretive and chaotic style now entrenched, Hughes alienated many around him whose talents would have made a difference to his performance. His conduct during the Paris peace negotiations, when J.G. Latham was on his staff, made Latham (a future leader of the opposition, Minister in Tokyo, and Chief Justice) an implacable opponent. He broke with Watt – his most promising colleague and likely successor – in an unseemly public dispute. When Hughes travelled to the Imperial Conference in 1921 he took no useful staff with him beyond Percy Deane, a shrewd and loyal personal retainer to be sure, but not a man of ideas.

Beyond personal foibles, Hughes lacked any comprehensive view of Australia's future possibilities. His bravura performance in London in 1921 was indicative. He was emphatic that Australia should play an active part in the management of the Empire-Commonwealth, but wanted no codification or alteration of the intra-mural rules, and thought sufficient facilitation for his preferred outcome would arrive with better communications and speedier travel (prescient observations, but hardly in themselves enough). Despite affirming the notion of a common foreign policy, paradoxically he seems not to have taken fully on board the dynamics and outlooks of Canada and South Africa, his approach to the former confrontational, his references to the leaders of the latter slighting. His extensive interventions at the 1921 conference – of which the book reproduces a modest but indicative sample – represent the triumph of rhetoric and invective over policy.

Bruce's style could hardly have been more different. Despite his almost seven years in the position, Bruce is an under-rated prime minister; this collection may prompt some revision of this opinion. He was certainly responsible for many innovations that have lasted. Shortly (perhaps), one of the oldest continuous features of the Australian system of

government will celebrate its centenary, namely, the cooperation between the liberal and country interests inaugurated by the Bruce-Page cabinet of 1923.

According to some influential views, Bruce was principally a man of sentiment: on this view his central idea was adherence to Empire, and all else was a means. Evidence can be found in this book for the proposition that there was great deal more to Bruce than sentiment. He had an acute sense of the distinctive character of the Australian national interest and was well aware that sustained work was necessary for that interest to receive its due. Although he took the League of Nations seriously (whereas Hughes was contemptuous)⁵² the most important context for this work was the Empire-Commonwealth, which he understood not to be an engine that ran of its own accord but a machine that required constant attention. In Brown's apt characterisation, his role was to articulate 'the voice of persuasion.'

Bruce was a pioneer, before its time, of evidence based policy. To inform his work he needed facts and analysis. To execute the policies thus framed, he needed process.

During its final phase in office, the Hughes cabinet met irregularly, and often with little in the way of a fixed agenda (as the scrappy extant documents show). International affairs were rarely discussed. Preparing to set out for London in 1921 Hughes made a statement to parliament on his intentions for the imperial conclave, but the opinions it expressed were not the product of any cabinet debate. External affairs files from this era often contain excerpts from his pronouncements in *Hansard*, the context suggesting that these parliamentary materials were carefully collected and annotated so that bureaucrats would know precisely what policies to implement.

Under Bruce, cabinet meetings were more frequent, conducted according to an agenda prepared in advance, and often informed by the prior circulation of policy submissions. Foreign affairs were regularly discussed (though then as now domestic matters dominated proceedings); even appointments to represent Australia at the League Assembly or at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) came to cabinet. Here Bruce was certainly capable of taking the broader view, supporting the nomination of John Curtin as worker representative for the ILO annual conference in 1924, thus giving the future prime minister his first educational experience of the wider world.

For Bruce the great conundrum was national development: what were its limits, human and geographical? Where were the markets for augmented exports? Where would the capital come from to fund that development? How would the federal government work with the states to facilitate a common effort? The CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – later the CSIRO) was established in 1926 (from unsatisfactory forerunner organisations) to provide the scientific basis for this policy. Expert commissions and boards were established to provide properly informed advice, including (from J.B. Brigden and Douglas Copland) on the crucial issue of the tariff, as Moore notes. Ineluctably, London was the key to the necessary inputs. In time a developed Australia would inevitably raise greater claims, but such claims were yet to be credible. Seen in this light, Hughes may indeed have openly articulated the 'nationalist' position that Moore detects, but Bruce was no less nationalist in the longer term outcome he intended to bring about. On Bruce's watch Douglas Mawson set out to claim Antarctica for the Empire in 1929, but neither he nor R.G. Casey nor Bruce were under any misapprehension that it would not then pass to Australian control.

Bruce's performance at the 1923 Imperial Conference was remarkable for one who had only been in parliament since 1918 and was just 40 years old. He faced a major task. It is illustrative that in the lead up to the conference, the Bank of England prepared an advisory paper that was clearly intended to forestall an Australian attempt to access further British finance. The

⁵² James Cotton, 'Australia in the League of Nations. A Centenary View' (Canberra: Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Library Research Series, 2018): https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/AustraliaLeagueofNations

paper is entitled, “1923 Imperial Conference Arrival of Australia as a Mendicant (or as a Burglar),”⁵³ the covering note reading “Mr Niemeyer thinks the Prime Minister should also see it.” The archive copy is marked, “seen by PM” carrying a date in the same week. The paper argues that “Australia is probably over-borrowed already” and disputes that any clear cabinet decision had been made that such access should be granted.

Undeterred by such views, and encouraged by advice from imperial elder statesman Lord Milner, Bruce persisted with his “men, money and markets” approach, detailed in the book. Bridge and Zielinski draw attention to one particular outcome of Bruce’s efforts, the so-called “£34 million agreement” on migration finally concluded in 1925, opposition to the terms of which was more effectively mounted by state premiers than the Bank of England. In this context, Bridge and Zielinski also remark on the absence of the topic of loan repayments in the current book; it is an important part, however, of a chapter in the companion volume on 1931-1936 (where, again, Bruce’s achievements are singular), completed and to appear in 2021.

Key to Bruce’s conference strategy was the careful preparatory work of F.L. McDougall. His research gave Bruce access to comprehensive trade and financial data as good as then available which he was able to use to great effect. Bruce’s recognition of McDougall’s talents (their partnership thereafter being of major consequence) was part of the wider story of building (or re-building) bureaucratic support for the framing and execution of foreign policy by drawing on a diverse body of talent, as Gorman accurately notes. The appointment to the external affairs liaison position located in the Cabinet Office of R.G. Casey – who from 1924 provided vital insights into policy making in London – has been well documented in accounts by Edwards and by Hudson.⁵⁴ Equally important, as this volume demonstrates, was the appointment of Walter Henderson, who in effect served as the head of foreign affairs (‘External Affairs’) in Melbourne (and then in the new capital Canberra). Though clearly a difficult personality, Henderson brought unique skills to his position, possessing a doctorate in law from Paris, an exceedingly rare qualification for those times. He had able if under-appreciated subordinates in H.A. Peterson and D.F. Nicolson, later to become senior members of the foreign and trade bureaucracies. Bruce also brought in for advice one of the nation’s best legal brains, W. Harrison Moore⁵⁵ – whose ideas arguably prefigure those of ‘the English School’ of international relations, as Moore’s commentary contends – who did yeoman service in a number of roles, some of which are detailed in the book.

Nevertheless, one of the obstacles in the way of a larger and more formal Australian diplomatic machine in these years was the absence, Brown argues, of men (they were inevitably male) of ‘the right type’ as appointees, especially for service abroad. This proposition no doubt captures the predispositions and class prejudices of the decision makers of the time, but it is salutary to consider here one individual who may be regarded as a counter-example. From a decidedly modest background, H.A. Peterson was a product of Sydney’s inner-city Leichardt Public School who first entered the public service in 1902 at age 15. Despite no evident opportunity he became a linguistic prodigy, acting as secretary to the French official mission visiting Australia in 1918, and moving to the London High Commission in 1919 as an intelligence officer. After a stint as Bruce’s private secretary he became a member of External Affairs (translating as required materials from 5 languages) before transferring to Trade. Barely escaping with his life from his position as Australian Commissioner in Batavia (Jakarta) ahead of the invading Japanese, his final post was as Consul-General in Manila (1946-1948). How many more Petersons there were in the Australia of the 1920s can only be conjectured.

When the 600-document companion volume on the years 1931-1936 appears, the focus will shift to Australia’s response (diplomatic as well as security) to unsettling world events, to new arrangements in trade and finance (including renewed

⁵³ Memorandum, 20 June 1923, TNA, UK: T 176/11.

⁵⁴ P.G. Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press/AIIA, 1983); W.J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵⁵ For an account of Harrison Moore’s thinking, see James Cotton, *The Australian School of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21-47.

Asian experiments), and to the further construction of indigenous diplomatic capacity. Until the break occasioned by the perceived failure of the League in 1936, the extended period from 1920 will be shown to exhibit strong continuities. Meanwhile I am obliged to all the commentators for their careful and constructive observations on this work, and especially to Priscilla Roberts for her introduction and editorial work.