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Francine McKenzie

The University of Western Ontario

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Coming of Age: Independence and Foreign Policy in Canada and Australia, 1931-45

Francine McKenzie

In 1926 Prime Minister James Hertzog informed the South African Assembly that "Unless our status is acknowledged by foreign nations we simply do not exist as a nation."¹ He made this comment upon his return from an imperial conference in London where the foremost item on the agenda was the status of the dominions. In an attempt to stem the nationalist stirrings of discontented dominions (notably South Africa and the Irish Free State), a committee organized under the direction of Lord Arthur Balfour defined the nature of Anglo-Dominion relations. The Balfour Report affirmed that the dominions and Britain were equal and sovereign. The report was given legislative force in 1931 as the Statute of Westminster. But ten years later, Richard Casey, Australia's ambassador to Washington, observed that outside the British Empire and Commonwealth the dominions still appeared to be nothing more than "glorified colonies."² Intra-Commonwealth discussions and constitutional decrees had not resolved the confusion surrounding the dominions' relations with Britain or the concomitant ambiguity about their status.

The Canadian and Australian metamorphosis from British colonies to fully independent states was achieved when these two dominions took charge of their own foreign policies.³ In so doing, they clarified the nature of their relationships with Britain, making the point that London did not direct their foreign policies, that they had individual interests in the world, and that they were engaged with the world beyond the confines of the Commonwealth. This also meant that no area of governance was beyond the jurisdiction of the dominion governments. There was resistance from Britain. While Britain had decentralized authority over domestic matters to Canada and Australia from the mid-nineteenth century onward, London was intent on preserving the diplomatic unity of the Empire under British direction. Indeed, the Commonwealth still appeared to be a British-led bloc in international affairs even after Britain began to cede control over external matters of a local complexion in the early 1920s. This perception had direct

consequences for Canadian and Australian autonomy. As K. C. Wheare noted, the dominions' questionable control over foreign policy "allowed plenty of scope for argument about the precise status of the Members of the Commonwealth in international law."⁴ The challenge for Canada and Australia was to articulate and implement distinct external policies that would make irrefutable the claim that the dominions were independent, as well as equal and sovereign. Only then would Canada and Australia be accorded the international recognition necessary to complete their process of decolonization. Thus, foreign policy was a milestone on the road to independence.⁵

Eric Hobsbawm identifies the years 1918-50 as the time when "the nineteenth-century 'principle of nationality' triumphed."⁶ These were also the years when Canada and Australia were transformed from colonies to states. In the preceding chapter, Margaret MacMillan has examined the start of their evolution toward more extensive consultation with Britain during the First World War. Canadian and Australian representation at the Paris Peace Conference signalled their willingness to play larger roles in world affairs. But the advances made during the war and at the peace conference were not clear-cut. For instance, the other leading powers tolerated Canadian and Australian involvement in Paris only because the British insisted. The signatures of Canadian and Australian representatives on the Treaty of Versailles were placed alongside and as a part of the British Empire Delegation. The standing of Canada and Australia in world affairs was contingent on their membership in a collective bloc, British-centred and London-led.

Canada's efforts to assert control over its involvement in world affairs persisted throughout the 1920s, but did not entirely succeed. For example, during the Chanak crisis of 1922, when Britain and Turkey clashed over the implementation of the Treaty of Sèvres,⁷ Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, appealed to the dominions for military support. Prime Minister Mackenzie King interpreted this plea as an attempt "to play the imperial game, to test out centralization vs. autonomy in European wars."⁸ He dodged the British request for military assistance by insisting that only the Canadian parliament could decide whether or not to send Canadian soldiers abroad. Parliament was conveniently not then in session, and King did not recall it. British officials learned not to make demands that might be rejected, and therefore helped preserve the appearance of diplomatic unity. When the King government decided to negotiate and ratify the Halibut Fisheries Treaty with the United States in 1923 without British involvement, the Foreign Office's first reaction was to balk at Ottawa's impudence. After sober reflection, it decided not to interfere with a bilateral agreement that it could not stop. Instead, it distinguished between local and imperial foreign policy and claimed the dominions should have responsibility only for matters of a purely local nature. In this way, London diluted the significance of the Halibut Fisheries Treaty. The British could also take some comfort from

the fact that American politicians did not grasp that the treaty was an important precedent in Anglo-Dominion relations. In the debate in the US Senate, American senators assumed the Halibut Fisheries Treaty was an agreement between Britain and the United States.⁹ Canada also sent its own diplomats abroad – to Washington in 1927, Paris in 1928, and Tokyo in 1929. The reaction in London blended “astonishment and resentment.”¹⁰ Once again, the threat to British control over imperial foreign policy was minimized. In Washington and Paris, Canada’s representatives were accredited with the resident British ambassador by their side. Britain’s secretary of state for dominions affairs was satisfied that opening diplomatic offices of its own “would not denote any departure from the principle of diplomatic unity of the Empire.”¹¹

There were also internal restraints that prevented King from explicitly assuming control over Canadian foreign policy. He feared a backlash among English-speaking Canadians in response to the dilution of the Anglo-Canadian connection. Domestic harmony was the cardinal principle in King’s foreign policy, and that meant tempering his actions. Moreover, King himself admired Britain, held British liberals like William Gladstone in the highest respect, and did not want to sever ties with the mother country, even though he resisted all attempts – perceived and real – to undermine Canadian sovereignty.¹² In fact, he intended that Canada should remain a good ally of Britain, particularly in times of war. He reassured British officials to this effect at the 1923 Imperial Conference. King noted that “If a great and clear call of duty comes, Canada will respond ... as she did in 1914.”¹³ Ottawa’s efforts to establish authority over its foreign policy and foreign relations were temporarily stalled with the onset of the Depression, which also saw King and the Liberals go down to defeat.

Australia, on the other hand, made virtually no effort to define its own foreign policy tradition in the 1920s. Canberra responded positively to Britain’s request for aid in the Chanak crisis, although Prime Minister Hughes did complain about the lack of consultation. Australia made no attempt to establish, let alone manage, external matters of a local nature. In contrast to King’s efforts to disentangle Canada from a centralized imperial foreign policy, Australia’s prime minister, Stanley Bruce, tried to enhance Australia’s role in the framing of imperial policy. He appointed Richard Casey to act as a liaison with Britain. Casey was not long in London before he urged Bruce to “break down the proverbial silence of the Dominions” on foreign policy.¹⁴ Bruce did not act on his advice.

In the 1920s, the perception of British control over imperial foreign policy persisted. There was no challenge to British authority from Canberra; London succeeded in containing the significance of Canadian initiatives; and Canadian advances were tempered by concerns about national unity as well as King’s personal commitment to the British tie. Perhaps most importantly,

the divided views of Canada and Australia perpetuated the ambiguity of the dominions’ status and responsibility. As dominions, Canada and Australia belonged to the same category. The actions of one had an impact on the whole. Because Canadian and Australian actions and attitudes were conflicting, they cancelled one another out.

This chapter picks up the story in 1931. Some might think this is an unusual point of departure in an analysis of the dominions’ independence, noting that Britain’s passage of the Statute of Westminster in that year marked the end of the dominions’ evolution from self-governing colonies to independent states. This interpretation belongs to a long tradition of overstating the significance of the Statute of Westminster.¹⁵ While the statute did affirm the equality and sovereignty of Britain and the dominions, the word “independence” never appeared in the text. Furthermore, there was no visible change in the language used to describe the dominions after 1931. The term “dominion,” regularly used since the 1907 Imperial Conference, implied British domination of Canada and Australia, as well as New Zealand and South Africa. The fact that Britain was not a dominion reinforced the inferior status of the others.¹⁶ The term “Commonwealth” had been in use since the First World War, long before any of the dominions were independent, while the term “Empire” remained in use when discussing the dominions long after 1931. The Commonwealth was not reorganized in recognition of the dominions’ sovereignty and equality. The “old dominions” and the crown colonies, like Jamaica and Kenya, had long been differentiated in imperial organization. The two tiers remained unchanged after 1931. Moreover, dominion status was not necessarily permanent. In 1934, Britain revoked Newfoundland’s dominion status.¹⁷ Perhaps most importantly, the process of constitutional negotiations perpetuated confusion. Self-government was acquired peacefully; Britain and the dominions remained close allies. The only previous example of a British colony acquiring its independence was that of the Thirteen Colonies. Waging war to overthrow British control left no doubt that the United States was separate and free. In contrast, the only war the dominions were willing to wage was to defend Britain, not to break away from it. Finally, Australia did not immediately ratify the Statute of Westminster, and Canada did so only in part. Thus the Statute of Westminster was shrouded in ambiguity. As Stephen Leacock, the famous Canadian economist and humorist, observed, “After reading ... [the Statute of Westminster] no one can tell whether the Dominions are sovereign states or not.”¹⁸ In fact, he went on to conclude the dominions were definitely not independent. Australia’s constitutional lawyers in the 1930s also “found it impossible briefly and simply to describe the exact nature of the relationship between Britain and Australia and the other white dominions. All were agreed, though, that they were not foreign to each other.”¹⁹

Canada and Australia in the 1930s: Working at Cross-Purposes

Before Canada and Australia could develop their own foreign policies, they needed the support, expertise, and infrastructure of departments devoted to foreign affairs. In the 1930s, however, their respective departments of external affairs were rudimentary. By 1939 Canada's department employed thirty officers to staff the office in Ottawa and seven posts abroad.²⁰ Australia's department lagged far behind, with a handful of officers and no consular offices beyond London.²¹ Their departments of external affairs could not provide their governments with the advice needed to articulate individual policies. Consequently, they could not function as policy-making centres. The best they could manage were occasional utterances on international affairs, but there was neither rigour, consistency of thought, nor a philosophical foundation to their sporadic pronouncements on foreign affairs.²² For the most part, the governments of Canada and Australia depended on British embassies for information and the Foreign Office for analysis. Hardly surprising, they saw the world much the way the British did. Even if either dominion did introduce a policy individually, such as the Canadian commitment to the appeasement of Germany in the 1930s, the overlap with the British policy meant they appeared to be following a British lead. Reliance on British sources of information prolonged the appearance, as well as the reality, of subordination to London.

It was not only size that revealed the institutional immaturity of their respective departments of external affairs. The name of the departments – External Affairs – made the same point by implying that there were two categories of relations: those that were only external and those that were truly foreign. Because neither dominion was prepared to classify Anglo-Canadian or Anglo-Australian relations as foreign, they reinforced the idea that relations with Britain were qualitatively different from those with other nations. The name also suggested that there were limits to their engagement with the wider world and that they focused only, or primarily, on those members in the external category. That left the responsibility for managing relations with the rest of the world to Britain's Foreign Office.²³ Canada and Australia did have seats in the League of Nations, which could have served as launching pads for independent foreign policy traditions. Neither Canada nor Australia made much of this opportunity. In the Manchurian crisis of 1931-3,²⁴ Stanley Bruce delivered a singularly unmemorable speech. His lack of engagement reflected the views of most Australians, who at the time were more upset by a new style of bowling in cricket.²⁵ This was better than his muddled Canadian colleague, C.J. Cahan, who surprised all with his pro-Japanese comments. The next major challenge to the League, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, confirmed that Ottawa and Canberra remained removed from the wider world. Bruce's contribution was on a par with his performance in the earlier crisis. He barely addressed the

question of sanctions, commenting instead on issues related to food and agriculture.²⁶ In stark contrast, Walter Riddell, the leader of the Canadian delegation in Geneva, endorsed sanctions against Italy wholeheartedly. He even suggested adding oil to the list of embargoed items, a suggestion that the international press soon dubbed "the Canadian proposal." Mackenzie King, who returned to the prime minister's office in the midst of the crisis, was alarmed by the prominent stand taken by the Canadians in Geneva. King believed that Canada's standing in the League was too insignificant to be effective. In King's mind, Canada was "a small and distant country, not primarily responsible for what may be the outcome of league decisions."²⁷ Consequently, he distanced the government from Riddell, his country from the League, and removed Canada from the bright glare of the international spotlight. Neither Canada nor Australia capitalized on the opportunity provided by membership in the League of Nations to entrench their independence through the articulation of individual or well-considered policies. Instead, they confirmed that they were not yet ready for involvement in world affairs.

In contrast to Canadian and Australian self-effacement and marginalization in the League of Nations, their participation in imperial conferences perpetuated the impression that they remained attached and subordinate to Britain. Imperial gatherings of the 1930s tended to be inconclusive because of the divergent views of constituents. For instance, Australia hoped that the Empire would speak with one voice; Canada objected to all proposals involving policy centralization or automatic cooperation because both detracted from the sovereignty of the government of Canada. David Mackenzie has detected these divergent responses on the part of Canada and Australia to proposals to organize commercial aviation in the 1930s. This disagreement was clearly evident at the 1937 Imperial Conference, where the Australians preferred to work within an imperial framework and Canadian officials refused to endorse any kind of centralized coordination. Consequently, Commonwealth discussions never culminated in a single policy. However, disagreement was disguised by optimistic summaries published at the end of every meeting.²⁸ For instance, again at the 1937 Imperial Conference, Britain had hoped the dominions would offer their explicit support as London prepared to confront an increasingly confident and aggressive Hitler. The dominions differed on what support to extend and how to do so. Still, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, claimed that the conference achieved "a general harmony of aims and policy." He went on to contrast the good relations within the Commonwealth and Empire to the deteriorating international situation. "War between us is unthinkable and if we had to consider only the countries of the British Commonwealth there would be no need of armaments for any of us."²⁹ This uplifting statement served two purposes. First, it masked British disappointment in not getting

support from all of the dominions when it needed it most. Second, it differentiated intra-Commonwealth relations from relations between "foreign" states.

Even when the national interests of Canada and Australia came to the fore at Commonwealth meetings, the public portrayal still emphasized unity. One of the most glaring displays of Commonwealth fragmentation and dominion pursuit of self-interest occurred at the Ottawa Imperial Economic Conference of 1932. This gathering was the brainchild of Canada's prime minister, R.B. Bennett (1930-5), who believed that greater reliance on Commonwealth and imperial markets could offset the devastating effects of the Depression. The British, never keen on preferential tariffs, attended reluctantly but were hopeful that the dominions would lower their high protective tariffs against British exports. They misjudged the dominions, whose negotiators bargained single-mindedly to secure concessions that would benefit their exports, while making few reciprocal concessions. British delegates singled out Stanley Bruce, the leader of Australia's delegation, and Bennett for their ruthlessness in securing as much as possible while giving little in return. "Both Bennett and Bruce demanded further concessions – brutally and as if they were dictating terms to a beaten enemy, as indeed they were – and all were at once conceded."³⁰ The British delegation was thoroughly disabused of the belief in collective interests prevailing over national ones. Thus this gathering rightly belongs to the national histories of the dominions. But the public portrayal of this meeting emphasized cooperation, not discord. The very fact of coming together, against an international backdrop of mistrust and chauvinism, was more important than the results. As Stanley Baldwin, who led the British delegation, explained to the opening session, the decision to exchange preferential terms signalled a willingness to subordinate national interests to collective welfare: "it marks the point where two roads diverge, the one leading to the development of purely national interest, the other to closer imperial unity."³¹ This description was totally inaccurate – but it was widely believed. Hot on the heels of the Statute of Westminster, imperial preference suggested that ties remained strong and that practical realities reinforced a Commonwealth alignment.

The description of Commonwealth meetings as family gatherings further obscured the limitations of British authority over the dominions. Even Mackenzie King, who was scrupulous about upholding Canada's independence, fell into the trap of using the family analogy. For instance, after emphasizing the differences among Britain and the dominions at the 1937 Imperial Conference, King commented on how "we have enjoyed and exercised the family privilege of free and frank speech."³² The family construct perpetuated the historic roles of Britain and the dominions. Britain as the parent and head of the family could speak on behalf of the clan. The dominions were children, even if they were growing up. Thus the family analogy impeded the realization of Australian and Canadian independence.

Despite its attendance at imperial gatherings and the failure to distinguish itself at the League of Nations, Mackenzie King believed he had differentiated Canada from Britain. He regarded this as essential to Canada's domestic stability, even survival. King had witnessed the divisive effects of British foreign policy on English and French Canadians during the First World War. He believed his primary political task was to minimize this source of strain. His mottoes were "No Commitments" and "Parliament Will Decide," which he believed captured his commitment to preserving the sovereignty of the government of Canada. Without a doubt, King earned his reputation as a champion of Canadian sovereignty and national unity. But his tactic – adhering to a policy of inaction and non-commitment – did not positively demonstrate that Canada had a foreign policy, let alone that it controlled it. Until Ottawa affirmed its foreign policy powers by revealing what it stood for, rather than by refusing to state its views concretely, it did not fully own them.³³

The perception of Canada as subordinate to Britain in matters of foreign policy also persisted because Canada did support Britain in its greatest test of the 1930s: going to war against Nazi Germany. King had always intended to support Britain if a fight came. It was obvious to King that morality, justice, and law were on Britain's side. He rarely said this publicly because he did not want to be accused of following Britain's lead or of being implicated in British foreign policy, especially its wars.³⁴ When Britain and Germany did go to war, King summoned parliament to debate whether Canada should also go to war. No vote was taken because support was overwhelming. King succeeded in bringing a united Canada into the war, thereby reconciling his domestic and external goals. Outside observers did not appreciate King's punctilious regard for Canadian authority and sovereignty. As Jay Pierrepont Moffat, the American ambassador in Ottawa confided to his diary, fighting alongside Britain reversed King's efforts to disentangle Canada from British foreign policy: "despite the outward trappings of independence, it [Canada] is, at least for the duration of the war, a mere adjunct of British foreign policy as laid down from London."³⁵

Australia in the 1930s still did not try to disentangle itself from Britain. The strength of its attachment to Britain was evident in Australia's refusal to ratify the Statute of Westminster. When the attorney-general, Robert Menzies, introduced the statute to the House of Representatives in 1937, he described it as a "grave disservice" and an exercise in frustration because it attempted "to reduce to written terms something which was a matter of the spirit and not of the letter."³⁶ Most of Australia's elected officials agreed so completely that they decided not to endorse it at all. Hardly surprising, in the realm of foreign policy Australia continued to support a collective imperial stand in international affairs, decided upon in London. Stanley Bruce, the high commissioner to London in the 1930s, noted that there was rarely

even a pretence of consultation: "What happened in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred was that the U.K. Cabinet reached a conclusion" and the dominions were implicated in the decision. Bruce complained only if a policy struck him as unwise or dangerous.³⁷ What he then sought was a voice in the making of imperial policy, not the separation of Australian and British policies. Either goal was unwelcome in London, which was intent on maintaining its decision-making monopoly. Despite some frustration about its exclusion, in 1939 this antipodean dominion continued to be a supporting player to Britain on the world stage.

On the eve of the Second World War, Britain still appeared to set the foreign policies of the dominions in the most vital way: deciding whether or not to go to war. In Canberra there was not a separate declaration of war. Australian politicians accepted that the British decision committed Australia to fight. Prime Minister Menzies explained the connection in a radio broadcast only a few hours after news reached Australia that Britain and Germany were at war. "Great Britain has declared war upon her [Germany], and ... as a result, Australia is also at war."³⁸ The way in which Australia entered the war confirmed that, eight years after Britain enacted the Statute of Westminster, Australia existed as "a major satellite in the British imperial orbit."³⁹

In Washington, there was some question about whether the British declaration bound Canada, Australia, and the other dominions. The point was more than academic: the administration had to know whether to draw up one declaration of neutrality or five, that is, one each for Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. President Roosevelt placed a call to Mackenzie King. King used this opportunity to advance Canada's constitutional status as a practically independent state by asking the president to draw up a separate declaration for Canada. Washington did so.⁴⁰ The attention King had devoted to cultivating relations with the United States had paid off in this instance. What also needs to be remembered is that President Roosevelt had to call and ask King for direction. It would have been obvious that Washington should draw up a separate declaration of neutrality for Canada had its sovereign status been established beyond question.

At the start of the Second World War, Canada exercised complete control over its foreign policy by deciding when and whether to go to war. To outside eyes, however, there remained doubt about Canadian authority. As a result, Canada's status as an independent state was not securely established. Australia, on the other hand, had not tried to gain control over its foreign policy. In the 1930s Canada and Australia were working at cross-purposes. Indeed, while King worked quietly to gain control over foreign policy and to branch out Canada's relations beyond London and the Empire and Commonwealth, Australia strove to become a larger part of a single imperial approach to foreign affairs. Australian and Canadian attitudes and goals were at odds. Not surprisingly, there was little direct contact between the

two dominion governments. Despite occasional consultation at imperial meetings, there was little opportunity to work together. But lack of contact was not the real problem. Their divergent outlooks, attitudes, and objectives impeded one another's goals and meant that Canadian and Australian leaders did not turn to one another for advice, to coordinate tactics, or to seek assistance.

Canada and Australia at War: Parallel Paths

In the early years of the Second World War, the gulf separating Canadian and Australian attitudes toward and goals concerning foreign policy narrowed.⁴¹ They agreed on the necessity and desirability of controlling all aspects of their external policy, beyond a shadow of a doubt – but for different reasons. In the perilous stage of the war after the fall of France, Canada stood as Britain's ranking ally. Canadian officials welcomed the recognition that accompanied their heavy wartime responsibilities. But with the entrance of the United States into the war, they found themselves instantly demoted and excluded, as Galen Perras's chapter details. Both Britain and the United States expected that London could represent the Commonwealth and would act as the intermediary between the United States and dominions. The realization in Ottawa of the tenuous nature of their position provoked Canadian officials to entrench their independence so as to preclude their subordination to or representation by Britain in future.

In Australia, the transition from loyal supporter to fervent nationalist was abrupt and dramatic, a product of disappointment in Britain's inability to protect Australia and the fear that Australia might be overwhelmed by the Japanese. The possibility of Australia going down to temporary defeat while Britain was preoccupied with the German advance is at the centre of a nationalist literature on Anglo-Australian relations.⁴² The subsequent development of an "Australia-first" foreign policy was founded on the recognition that Britain could not be relied upon, that Australian and British interests were not compatible, and if forced to choose, the British government would ensure the security of its people first. The wartime Labor government accepted that, ultimately, it alone could guarantee that Australia remained free and safe. National interest and national boundaries obtained a clarity and discreteness of conception that they had never before enjoyed. The consequence of Canadian marginalization and Australian vulnerability was the decision of their governments to seize responsibility for their external policies and foreign relations. As Alister McIntosh, the secretary of New Zealand's Department of External Affairs wrote of Canada and Australia in 1943, they "are determined to assert their claim to equality of voice in all matters relating to the conduct of international affairs."⁴³

Canada and Australia still faced obstacles, the most formidable of which was Britain's refusal to treat them as independent states. Until their oldest

ally regarded them as fully independent, other governments were not likely to do so either. But Britain was not inclined to grant such recognition, principally because it was more dependent than ever on the Commonwealth to prop up its international position and as determined as ever to preserve its greatness and influence. Clement Attlee, the deputy prime minister and leader of the Labour Party, penned a memo to this effect while he served as secretary of state for dominion affairs in 1943. He accepted as "a fundamental assumption" the goal of preserving "the British Commonwealth as an international entity, recognized as such by foreign countries."⁴⁴ The idea of a united Commonwealth in world affairs was expressed as the third great power, and the unspoken assumption was that the dominions' views, interests, and voices could be subsumed within those of Britain.

Most British officials were confident that there would be collective representation and ongoing cooperation, with Britain as the natural leader of the group. Their logic reflected their own power-politics approach to international affairs. Speaking only for themselves, Canadian or Australian voices would only be "occasionally audible," whereas a representative of the Commonwealth and Empire "can rely on his voice carrying real weight all the time."⁴⁵ Ultimately, British officials were confident that "the exercise of intelligent leadership on the part of this country" would compel the dominions to follow the British lead.⁴⁶ Hence, they saw little need to acknowledge the status and standing of Canada and Australia.

Because British officials were slow to appreciate that Canada and Australia were determined to become distinct players in world affairs, they regularly offended their Canadian and Australian allies. For instance, on 24 January 1944, Lord Halifax, the ambassador in Washington, delivered a speech in Toronto in which he referred to the Commonwealth as the third great force in the postwar world. Mackenzie King responded immediately with a speech of his own, in which he affirmed that the Commonwealth would be one of many organizations with which Canada was affiliated in a new and comprehensive approach to international affairs. The third great force idea was also out of step with an Australian-New Zealand conference held only a few days before Halifax's speech, in which the antipodean dominions laid out their views about postwar planning. They did not inform London of this meeting until it was over. Australia initiated this meeting because of its exclusion from great power councils addressing the organization of the postwar world.⁴⁷ The Canberra conference was a novel experiment in bilateral relations between Australia and New Zealand and represented a departure from the standard Commonwealth configuration by shutting out Britain entirely. The Canadian and Australian repudiations of the British conception of the postwar Commonwealth confirmed that their basic outlook toward foreign policy, relations with Britain, and their roles in the international community were aligned.

British officials were quick to learn that their relations with Canada and Australia required delicate and diplomatic handling, but slow to abandon their goal of a united Commonwealth in world affairs. A close look at the language used by British officials when referring to Canada and Australia, or the dominions as a whole, reveals their persistent belief that they were led from London. For instance, politicians regularly described the war effort as British, even though the dominions donated money, materials, and men from the outset. Ernest Bevin, the wartime minister of labour and national service, labelled the period between the fall of France and the German invasion of the Soviet Union as twelve months when Britain had had to fight alone.⁴⁸ During a speech at the Mansion House on 29 May 1941, Anthony Eden lumped Britain and the dominions together. He referred only to "The countries of the British Empire and their Allies, with the United States and South America." He went on to discuss the dominions' contribution to postwar recovery under the rubric of the Empire: "The Dominions and ourselves can make our contribution to this because the British Empire will actually possess overseas enormous stocks of food and material."⁴⁹ These were not slips. They were common, and there were other variations. When discussing only the dominions, British officials would refer to the British Empire and Commonwealth. In general, the terms Empire and Commonwealth were used interchangeably. Winston Churchill was one chronic offender, who, when speaking of the British Commonwealth *and* Empire really meant the "British Commonwealth *or* Empire."⁵⁰ The semantic implications of this language reinforced the belief that Canada and Australia were subordinate to Britain and implied that the Statute of Westminster had changed nothing.

In wartime, such inaccurate terminology raised the hackles of Hume Wrong, Canada's assistant undersecretary of state for external affairs. He objected to the long-standing practice of "lumping the Dominions together ... as though the Dominions tended to possess a common interest and a common policy on all matters." One remedy would be to banish the phrase "the British Dominions," because it made the dominions faceless and indistinguishable. In particular, he wanted the British to stop referring to "Great Britain and the Dominions," which reinforced the idea of dominion subordination. Instead they should refer to "the member states of the British Commonwealth."⁵¹ Escott Reid, the second secretary in the Department of External Affairs, also picked up on the insidious implications of nomenclature. In 1944 he drew up a twenty-four-point program to eliminate the "vestigial remnants of ... colonial subordination." He argued that the term "high commissioner" should be dropped and replaced by "ambassador." This would standardize relations between members of the Commonwealth as well as between them and foreign nations. He also recommended renaming the Department of External Affairs as the Foreign Office. His suggestions:

went far beyond terminology. He also believed Britain had to send out signals that it recognized its relations with the dominions as being the same as those with non-Commonwealth nations. Hence, it should transfer the responsibilities of the Dominions Office to the Foreign Office.⁵²

Australian officials did not match Canadian vigilance in this particular area. They regularly conflated Australia and Britain in their public statements. For instance, Richard Casey, the Australian ambassador in Washington, referred to the American interest in "the survival of the British countries in their struggle with totalitarianism," clearly including Australia in the category of British countries.⁵³ Stanley Bruce, the high commissioner in London during the war, also reinforced Australia's connection to Britain. In a speech to the American and British Commonwealth Association in 1944 he said, matter-of-factly, that "we in Australia are British to the core." Throughout the speech he referred to Britain and the United States, but he used the personal pronoun "we," obviously linking Australia and Britain. When speaking of the fates of Britain and the United States, he made this conflation obvious as he referred to "the fate of our two Nations."⁵⁴ Even Australia's Labor leaders, who were eager to affirm Australian independence, regularly identified Australians as British. In a speech on the responsibilities of citizenship in 1943, well after Australia's great betrayal by Britain, Prime Minister John Curtin outlined three different manifestations of citizenship: "The full expression of these responsibilities is to be a good Australian, a good British subject and a good world citizen. They are complementary to each other."⁵⁵ The term Empire remained current in Australia, even preferable to Commonwealth, well into the 1950s, as Christopher Waters has pointed out in his chapter. However, the repeated description of Australia as British was not a reflection of enduring colonial subordination to Britain. Rather it was a response to Australia's geographic situation. It was a Pacific nation, but was unlike its neighbours ethnically and culturally. Hence, Australians could not think of themselves as Asian. The fervour of the claim that 99 percent of Australians were of British descent was an attempt to hold themselves apart from their region.⁵⁶ Thus the use of the term British was racialist, and did not mean there was a single British government. They were attached culturally, but they retained their political independence. It was "an Empire of the British race, not the British government."⁵⁷

Clarifying the purpose of the Commonwealth was essential to the practical achievement of Canadian and Australian independence. As Hume Wrong observed, "the most important current problem in intra-Commonwealth relations is to make countries outside the Commonwealth understand what these relations actually are."⁵⁸ This was also the forum where Canada and Australia most regularly came into close contact. But the two dominions did not gravitate toward one another, despite their common objectives.

Consequently, Canadian and Australian efforts to redefine the Commonwealth were mutually reinforcing rather than coordinated. For example, it was essential in wartime to eliminate confusion about the nature of Commonwealth consultation as well as the scope of cooperation. This was important in preventing British transgressions as well as the appearance of British authority in the eyes of non-Commonwealth countries. Thus, Canada and Australia had to dispel the increasingly popular notion of the Commonwealth as an international bloc. Throughout the war, London was eager to convene Commonwealth conferences to consult on all matters, coordinate action, and preserve its association as the exclusive power base of Britain. But these were not easily organized; the dominions were uncooperative about their timing, organization, and purpose. Consequently, the first prime ministers' conference was only held in 1944, largely because of Mackenzie King's unwillingness to absent himself from Ottawa. There was, however, no consultation with Australia about monitoring Britain to ensure it did not misrepresent wartime Commonwealth meetings.

Australia helped to dispel the impression of the Commonwealth as a discrete subset of the international community in international meetings. British officials wanted to hold Commonwealth meetings on the side at international gatherings. But at the Food and Agriculture Organization conference held in Hot Springs, Virginia, in the summer of 1943, Australian officials refused to meet privately with their British colleagues, lest this create the impression of a Commonwealth bloc. Dr. Herbert Coombs, director of the Department of Postwar Reconstruction, rebuffed British overtures, claiming he was "embarrassed to come together." This frustrated British officials like Lionel Robbins, who complained that the unwillingness to consult was "a ludicrous situation."⁵⁹ On this occasion, Australia took the lead without consulting or coordinating with Canada.

When Commonwealth meetings were finally held, their achievements were minimal because of the conflicting goals and tactics of the various prime ministers. Australia and Canada adopted seemingly irreconcilable postures. At the 1944 prime ministers' meeting, Prime Minister Curtin of Australia advocated more extensive defensive cooperation among the members of the Commonwealth. King scotched the proposal, which called for more cooperation than he was comfortable with.⁶⁰ These positions were reminiscent of their roles at Commonwealth meetings in the 1930s. In fact, Australian proposals for Commonwealth cooperation and integration were not motivated by loyalty to Britain and acceptance of British leadership. Rather, Curtin wanted to revamp the Commonwealth so that it would serve as a vehicle to transport the dominion to places in international affairs that Australia could not attain by individual effort alone.⁶¹ Thus, Curtin proposed the definition of spheres of interest, in which the dominion most

interested or affected would be principally responsible for developing and implementing Commonwealth policies. This would allow Australia to take the leading role in the Pacific.

Reconstructing the Commonwealth to reflect the equality and interests of the dominions in no way weakened the organization. Quite the contrary. As Dr. Herbert Evatt, Australia's minister of external affairs, explained, continued cooperation within the Commonwealth was only made possible "by the rapid increase in status and stature" of dominions like Canada and Australia.⁶² Thus Curtin and Evatt set out to reshape the Commonwealth, whereas King preferred to keep it at arm's length. Despite employing different tactics, they shared a common goal: to redefine and clarify the purpose of the Commonwealth so that it could serve their national interests and would not undermine their status as independent states. Canadian and Australian officials made little attempt to work together because they could not see that they were divided by means and not ends.

Canadian and Australian views converged over the *purpose* of Commonwealth consultation. King invoked his line of the interwar years, that consultation was limited to the simple exchange of information that facilitated cooperation where possible.⁶³ Australia also insisted that Commonwealth consultation must not curtail its freedom of action and opinion. Dr. Evatt issued strict instructions to ensure that, after any Commonwealth meeting ended, Britain must not try to represent Australia's view on a particular subject. After one meeting in London in 1943 to discuss postwar trade, Dr. Coombs, who regularly led Australian delegations to economic meetings, reported that nothing had been said or done to commit Australia to the British approach to postwar trade matters. He even admitted to going a little too far in defending "our freedom of action in this field."⁶⁴ But the goal was worth it: Australia's sovereignty was safe.⁶⁵

As in the interwar years, the differences between Britain, Canada, and Australia at Commonwealth meetings – as well as the inconclusive nature of those meetings – were obscured beneath the standard public declaration about the unity of the Commonwealth. The prime ministers' meeting of 1944 ended with the usual upbeat, if bland, communiqué: "We rejoice in our inheritance of loyalties and ideals, and proclaim our sense of kinship to one another."⁶⁶ However, the significance of these public messages was becoming clearer as Canada and Australia demonstrated that the Commonwealth was not an exclusive forum or the primary focus of their foreign relations. For instance, the United States, which was deeply interested in the future of international trade, let it be known that it would welcome an invitation to a Commonwealth conference in 1943 to consider the organization of postwar trade. The British declined on the grounds that it was a family affair. Canada and Australia were quick to object, although for different reasons. Australia supported opening the meeting to American officials

because they did not want to do anything to alienate the United States.⁶⁷ In the end, this did not happen, but Canberra's willingness to include American representatives demystified the Commonwealth as a closed group or a unified bloc. Canadian diplomats objected to the description of the meeting as a family gathering.⁶⁸ It was alright to keep the United States out, but Britain must not perpetuate the family image of the Commonwealth.

Not only did Canada and Australia check British attempts to harness the Commonwealth to British foreign policy, and thereby entrap them in supporting roles, they differentiated themselves from Britain and the Commonwealth by developing relations with non-Commonwealth nations. During the war, the most important ally to both Australia and Canada was the United States. Before 1939 Canada had enjoyed more extensive and harmonious relations with the United States than Australia, out of necessity as much as inclination. Geography dictated that the two nations could not be indifferent to one another, particularly in wartime. The integration of Canadian and American defences in 1940 in the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) introduced a continental system with potentially far-reaching implications. In Britain, the PJBD was cause for alarm. It confirmed the British suspicion that America was luring Canada out of Britain's sphere. Hence Churchill's disappointed reaction to the announcement of the PJBD, even though it lessened the demands on Britain's over-taxed military resources. But he could not divert the continentalist tide. In 1941 Canada and the United States concluded the Hyde Park Agreement, which coordinated their wartime economies. Ottawa confirmed the paramourty of the American connection when it elevated its legation in Washington to full embassy status in 1943. Thus Canada was better able to protect its interests and voice its concerns in Washington.⁶⁹ Canadian officials understood that deepening ties with the United States was an act of liberation, as it demonstrated that Canada operated independent of, even in spite of, Britain in international affairs.⁷⁰

Australian-American relations also flourished in wartime. There was much scope to expand and improve their relations, which had been entirely acrimonious in the 1930s, poisoned by trade disputes. Australia stood so low in American eyes that Washington did not extend most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment to it even while fascist Italy and Nazi Germany enjoyed the privilege. The first overture was the appointment of a minister to Washington in 1940: Richard Casey. It was an important step and revealed that Australia could not trust the representation of its interests to British officials in Washington. The Japanese advance was an effective inducement to further rapprochement. On 28 December 1941, Curtin, in a much-cited and regularly discussed statement, called upon the United States to come to Australia's aid: "Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pang as to our traditional links or kinship

with the United Kingdom.⁷¹ Churchill's reaction was bitter. But he could do nothing to lessen the military threat to Australia. The subsequent ratification of the Statute of Westminster in 1942, and its retroactive application to 1939, reinforced the significance of Curtin's appeal. It confirmed that Australia finally accepted the principles inherent in the statute: that Australia was sovereign and fully responsible for its security. Deepening ties with the United States emphasized that Australia's wartime leaders accepted responsibility for their national interests and worked beyond and independent of Britain.

However, American recognition of the dominions' independence did not automatically follow the opening and upgrading of diplomatic offices in Washington. Americans continued to assume that Britain could speak for the dominions. As late as November 1944, American officials distributed memos to all members of the Far Eastern Committee of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA), except for Australia and New Zealand. Washington sent their copies via London,⁷² content to leave the briefing of the dominions to British officials. The British did not object to this practice because it reinforced their own centrality within the Commonwealth, which was consistent with their postwar aims. But this pattern of consultation was dangerous to the dominions, which were intent on gaining influence and recognition – the two went together. As a general rule, the Americans were much more willing to deal directly with Canada, with whom they had longer-standing relations. Still, they assumed that Britain exerted some influence over Canada as its historical parent.⁷³ For instance, when the United States and Britain drafted the principles of the Atlantic Charter, the United States left it to Britain to apprise Canada of the proposal and to consult with them, as though Canada and Britain constituted a bloc.⁷⁴ American deference to Britain in managing relations with the dominions inhibited the Canadian and Australian quest for independence. Part of the problem was that they were small powers that could be easily overlooked in the great power dynamic. But the underlying reason for their marginalization had much to do with their colonial heritage.

While American recognition came gradually, the two dominions succeeded in impressing their foreign policies with their own stamp. Their brand of internationalism helped to distinguish them from Britain. In Canada, a group of young, enthusiastic, and confident civil servants formulated a philosophy of international relations to justify their claims to inclusion and influence. It was called the functional principle. It rejected the domination of world affairs by the largest powers, but it was not an attempt to democratize international relations. Nor did it seek to delegate influence in a fixed pattern. Instead it equated capacity, contribution, and expertise with responsibility and influence.⁷⁵ Where a nation made a significant contribution or had expertise, then that nation should enjoy a commensurate influence.

The Canadians tested the functional principle by lobbying to join the executive of the Combined Food Board (CFB). Their case was compelling. Canada was second only to the United States as a supplier of food to the allied war effort. Moreover, they were included at every level of the CFB except the top one. They met with resistance, primarily from British officials whose objection was that if Canada got in, then Australia would demand inclusion. Ottawa countered by agreeing that, as soon as Australia contributed as much food as Canada, it, too, should be admitted to the executive. Over one year of lobbying paid off when Canada joined the CFB executive in October 1943. Still, the British attempted to deny that a precedent had been set or that inclusion was a form of recognition of their contribution and independence. Churchill amended the message notifying Ottawa of its executive membership so that it "cut down recognition of Canada's right to be consulted."⁷⁶ But British efforts could not deny the significance of the achievement. Canada's international personality assumed a new dimension and distinguishing traits. Canada was the champion of the right of middle-sized nations to have selective influence. This was a new role for Canada in world affairs.

Canberra also articulated a foreign policy that was explicitly geared toward the promotion of Australian goals and independence.⁷⁷ At its core was the determination to reverse the order of priorities so that Australian interests came first, Britain's lower down. An "Australian-first" approach resulted in some unpleasant disputes with Britain. For instance, Canberra took issue with the appointment of Richard Casey, Australia's first minister to Washington, as the *British* minister to the Middle East. They saw this as poaching by Britain, whereas in 1939 it would have been highly unlikely that the Australian government would have objected to one of its own representatives being singled out for such responsibility. In fact, Curtin was so indignant he threatened to block the appointment. The sniping between the two allies grew so acerbic that President Roosevelt expressed his alarm to Churchill.⁷⁸ Such disputes weakened the allied cause in the Second World War, but Canadian observers still welcomed this development, believing Australia had positioned itself on the path of sovereignty and independence: "It definitely intends to pursue a policy of greater independence of action much along the lines of Canadian policy."⁷⁹

The emergence of an independent approach owed much to the election of the Labor Party in Australia in 1941. Labor had consistently challenged the pro-British inclinations of previous Liberal governments. Once Labor came to power, it immediately set out to complete the transition to independence. In order to be successful, Australia had to define its own voice and ensure it was heard.⁸⁰ There could be no more effective person to realize this than Herbert Ewart, foreign minister in the Labor government. He was well educated, supremely confident of his own abilities, and passionate about

the cause of Australian security and independence. He also possessed a loud voice. A conventional style of diplomacy was ill-suited to Ewart's temperament, nor was it likely to achieve his objective: recognition that Australia was independent, mature, and had the ability to influence international and Commonwealth affairs. Paul Hasluck has described Ewart's diplomacy as "shin-kicking,"⁸¹ Australia could demonstrate its independence from Britain by being rude to British politicians, bureaucrats, and diplomats.⁸² The British were not alone in being singled out for abrasive treatment. Ewart's diplomatic style was consistent, no matter whom he was dealing with. Without a doubt, Ewart was noticed and discussed by world leaders as no previous Australian politician ever had been. The descriptions were not always laudatory, but that was not the point. By war's end Ewart had done much to put Australia on the international map.

The expression of a new approach to international affairs was not narrowly nationalistic. Like Canada, Australia positioned itself as a middle power. Its triumphant debut in this role came at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, where Ewart objected to great power dictation of the postwar world. He insisted that unless small powers shaped the peace, no postwar settlement would be stable.⁸³ He went on to insist that the authority of the great powers had to be curbed. Thus, he took strong exception to the great-power veto. Instead, he advocated enlarging the contributions of the small and medium-sized members by enhancing the role of the general assembly. Although Ewart was successful in giving Australia a new international personality and function, he was less successful in revising the UN charter. He was heard, but with little effect. One of his own advisers explained why this was so. According to Paul Hasluck, Ewart adopted a position and championed it aggressively without taking into account larger international political realities. He did not understand the necessity of compromise. Consequently, he was irritated with those who did not support Australian amendments, siding instead with Britain and the United States. He called them stooges, a category to which Canada belonged.⁸⁴ But even if Ewart did not change the charter in any substantive way, he did succeed in amplifying and legitimizing the voice of small powers. Australia was rewarded with election to one of the first non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

In contrast to their irrepressible and flamboyant Australian colleagues, Canadian representatives to the San Francisco conference worked quietly, assiduously, and behind the scenes to help create the UN. The Canadian brand of diplomacy was the stylistic antithesis of Australia, and this was a real impediment to their burgeoning relationship. Canadian delegates were disdainful of Ewart, who railed with so little effect. Canadians prided themselves on picking their battles more wisely, and for appreciating what was possible, as opposed to what was desirable. For instance, Canada understood

that relations between the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union were extremely fragile. Agreement on the draft charter had not come easily to the big three. The great powers could not act on all of the suggestions to improve the UN because that might provoke the collapse of the great-power alliance. Canadian criticisms and contributions were framed with this in mind.

Despite a more sophisticated understanding of the international political process, Canadian officials also envied Ewart. He said what they thought and consequently got all the credit. Mackenzie King vented his frustration in his diary after Ewart was singled out for praise at the end of the conference, whereas there was no special mention of the important contributions of Canadian officials. "To me, it looked like a case where if men are nasty and rough enough, they get the credit and the decent people are left behind."⁸⁵ Australia seemed to have usurped the role Canada was meant to play as the leader of the small powers and to have stolen its seat on the Security Council. But a more flamboyant performance would have been inconsistent with the new character that Canada was defining for itself as a constructive, sensible backroom player. Incompatible diplomatic styles, mixed with mutual envy, limited the scope for cooperation between Canada and Australia on the world stage.

Even if they enjoyed little success in amending the UN charter, the roles played by Canada and Australia at the San Francisco conference were effective in distancing themselves from Britain and entrenching their individuality and independence. Their success was evident when Lord Halifax, Britain's ambassador in Washington, complained to Prime Minister Smuts of South Africa of the embarrassing "exhibition the Empire was making in the presence of the Americans and other countries" because of the active and vocal role of Ewart, as well as that of Prime Minister Peter Fraser of New Zealand. Smuts disagreed with his gloomy view, insisting that it was "on the whole very good" that "other nations should see that each part of the Empire really managed and we were not following just one particular course."⁸⁶ This was deeply disappointing to the British, who wanted to lead a united Commonwealth into the peace. Canada and Australia, in their own ways, made it clear that the Commonwealth would not function as a bloc in world affairs. Britain's acceptance of the limits of its authority over the dominions and its inability to use the Commonwealth as the exclusive instrument of British foreign policy granted recognition, albeit grudgingly, that Canada and Australia were sovereign states. Lord Cranborne, the secretary of state for dominion affairs, commented that the San Francisco meeting demonstrated that Australia, and even New Zealand, were following the Canadian lead of disentangling themselves from Britain: "First, Canada, and now, as appeared at San Francisco, Australia and New Zealand, are beginning to show the most disturbing signs of moving away from the conception of

a Commonwealth acting together to that of independent countries, bound to us and each other only by the most shadowy ties. Dr. Ewart is only a particularly repulsive representative of a not at all uncommon point of view in his own and the other Empire countries."⁸⁷

Despite Cranborne's pessimistic assessment of the state of the Commonwealth, the determination of the Canadian and Australian governments to carve out individual niches for themselves in world affairs did not translate into rupture with Britain. Both continued to believe that the Commonwealth was, or should be, a useful association of nations. The difficulty was that membership in the Commonwealth had compromised their independence and status. They had to distinguish between "acting as a unit" and "acting in unison."⁸⁸ Part of the purpose of behaving separately in international affairs was to clarify the confusion surrounding the relationship between Britain and the dominions. If the rest of the world understood that Britain, Canada, and Australia were sovereign, equal, and independent allies, then membership in the Commonwealth would no longer engender confusion and ambiguity. Thus they had to disentangle themselves from Britain in world affairs so that they would be able to work together in the Commonwealth, as well as other international forums.

The development of more extensive ties with the United States reinforced the appeal for Canada and Australia of maintaining close relations with Britain. Although Canadian officials initially saw their relationship with the United States as a form of emancipation, they soon learned that their neighbour could be as oblivious to their interests and opinions as Britain. Having cleared the colonial hurdle, they still had to overcome the realities of power politics. Maintaining a working relationship with Britain acted as a counterweight to the American relationship. Australians also cherished their relationship with Britain; despite the wartime rapprochement, they were deeply suspicious of the United States. Their apprehension was rooted in an historic mistrust of American capital.⁸⁹ Direct contact between Americans and Australians during the war deepened this suspicion. Moreover, Australian politicians and diplomats, like their Canadian counterparts, discovered through close contact with the United States that the difficulty in making themselves heard was a problem of stature as well as status. Working with Britain and the Commonwealth, as long as it was on Australian terms, would enhance their standing in Washington. Although Ewart was despised in London, and accused by his compatriots of being "probably a secessionist,"⁹⁰ he was satisfied with shaking the Commonwealth up and did not try to break it apart.

The Canadian and Australian desire to maintain close contact with Britain and the Commonwealth was cold comfort in London. Although Britain would likely remain the hub of the Commonwealth, it was clear that London could not manage that association to serve its own ends. From the

Canadian and Australian points of view, however, cooperation with Britain and association in the Commonwealth was much less problematic after 1945. There was less confusion among outsiders about the workings of the Commonwealth. And British frustration in its dealings with Canada and Australia was all the evidence needed to demonstrate convincingly that they were not appendages of British foreign policy. Moreover, they had impressed their own views upon their external policies and distinguished themselves in the international community so that they could no longer be ignored or mistaken as subordinate to Britain. Their independence was beyond question, and the reason this was so was that Canada and Australia assumed all of the responsibilities of sovereignty. However, the challenge did not end there. Having entrenched their independence, these two dominions also wanted to be relevant and influential in international affairs. To do so they would have to learn to compensate for their relatively small size in a world dominated by superpowers and once-great powers. But before they could reasonably attempt to shape the course of world affairs, they had to come to terms with their colonial pasts. By war's end they had done so in one overwhelmingly important area – that of managing their own foreign affairs.

Conclusion: Canada and Australia As Middle Powers

The emergence of Canada and Australia as independent states required that they have complete control over foreign policy. As Escott Reid complained in 1942, the dominions were themselves primarily responsible for their underdeveloped standing in the world. Their refusal to assume responsibility for foreign policy prolonged and testified to their immaturity and resulted in other nations regarding them as dependents. "We are being treated as children because we have refused to behave as adults. An adult makes his own decisions; he accepts responsibility for his own decisions ... We have taken a positive pleasure in trying not to influence the course of history."⁹¹ The timing of the Canadian and Australian affirmation of independence, during the Second World War, when the Commonwealth war effort validated the connection to Britain, seems ironic at first glance. But the wartime revival of the Commonwealth threatened to have a regressive effect on Anglo-Dominion relations. Canada and Australia could lose what gains they had made in the interwar years unless they were anchored to their existence and acceptance as discrete states.

The story of the dominions' independence was also a tale of struggle against British resistance. Until their oldest ally regarded them as true equals, other states would be slow to acknowledge that these two dominions no longer fell within Britain's purview. Thus British recognition was essential to securing general recognition, without which Canadian and Australian claims to independence would ring hollow. However, the struggle to limit and clarify their relations with Britain did not mean their relations with Britain were at

an end. Cooperation with Britain would persist, but only because the dominions had eliminated confusion about their connection with Britain. Indeed, they proved to be tenacious allies. In Australia's case, its determination to stand unquestioningly by Britain endured until the Suez Crisis of 1956. But there was a fundamental difference between being a loyal ally and a subservient pawn. If the dominions chose to work with Britain, they did so voluntarily. Moreover, this aspect of the history of the dominions' emergence as autonomous states tells only one side of the story. It concentrates on securing political and international independence. These two nations also needed to develop individual civic identities, which would involve patriating their Britishness. That was a more drawn-out and subtle process.⁹²

This study of Canada and Australia emphasizes comparisons more than relations, a product of respecting the historical record. Individually, although not in concert, they became states in fact, recognized as distinct from Britain. They adopted different tactics even if their ultimate goals overlapped. Moreover, they generally misunderstood one another and believed they were working at cross-purposes. This was particularly evident in the Commonwealth, where Australia teamed up with New Zealand to overhaul its structure and purpose. To Canadian eyes this appeared to be another attempt at centralization, which robbed them of their autonomy. Thus they did not see eye to eye. Contrasting diplomatic styles – from the self-effacing backroom diplomacy favoured by Canadian diplomats to the shin-kicking, soapbox diatribe at which Evatt excelled – disguised substantive agreement. Their relations were also limited because they viewed one another as rivals. The middle-power category was a new one in the international hierarchy. It was not clear that they could both excel. One's gain seemed to represent a loss for the other. Thus there was a competitiveness between Canada and Australia that impeded cooperative relations.

But even if relations were limited, their awareness of one another was great because Australia and Canada also acted as reference points for one another as they defined and moved toward middle-power roles and identities. Measured against the other's progress, they could gauge whether or not they were moving in the right direction and at a fast enough pace. They could also learn from one another how to avoid, circumvent, or overcome obstacles as they confronted the same challenges. Estrangement did not entail lack of interest. In fact, one's gain was a direct benefit to the other when it came to entrenching their autonomy. The dominions constituted an eclectic group, but it was still assumed that there was one set of rules for all. Consequently, an advance made by one dominion affected all the others. So Canada and Australia pushed and pulled one another down the road to independence; at war's end, although their successes were individual, they were mutually reinforcing. As they turned to the next challenge in

foreign affairs – to assert real influence in the international community – they would realize the benefits of cooperation that the chapters in the next section examine. But in 1945 they remained accidental allies.

Notes

- 1 Sara Pienaar, *South Africa and International Relations between the Two World Wars: The League of Nations Dimension* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1987), 21.
- 2 "Text of an address on the occasion of the annual Feast at Eliot House, Cambridge, Mass., by Mr. R.G. Casey, Australian Minister to the United States on the Evening of March 20th, 1941," Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library (hereinafter FDR), Winant Papers, box 222, folder: Speeches by Members of the British Government.
- 3 This logic also applies to South Africa and New Zealand. I have included them in my study of Anglo-Dominion relations in the 1940s: *Redefining the Bonds of the Commonwealth, 1939-1948: The Politics of Preference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).
- 4 K.C. Wheare, *The Constitutional Structure of the Commonwealth*, (1960; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 55.
- 5 Although there is a vast literature on the subject of nationalism, little attention has been paid to the way that states acquired sovereignty and standing in the international community, a fundamental part of the process of becoming independent.
- 6 See E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Canto, 1990), ch. 5, "The Apogee of Nationalism, 1918-1950" for an elaboration of his general argument.
- 7 This was the peace treaty concluded with Turkey at the Paris Peace Conference.
- 8 Quoted in Charles Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, vol. 2, 1921-1948, *The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 23. Stacey denied that the British were trying to assert their authority over Canada and the other dominions. Rather, he concluded that the clash was a product of Britain's sloppy handling of relations with King in particular, and of lack of interest in the management of relations with the dominions in general. For his analysis, see 2:17-31.
- 9 John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 105.
- 10 R.F. Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance, 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 74.
- 11 Amey to Skelton, 11 May 1929, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 4, 1926-1930, ed. Alex I. Inglis (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1971), 76-7. For more information on the opening of Canada's embassy in Japan, see John Meehan, "From Ally to Menace: Canadian Attitudes and Policies toward Japanese Imperialism, 1929-1939" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2000), 16-76.
- 12 Charles Stacey, "Mackenzie King's Personal Atlantic Triangle," *Mackenzie King and the Atlantic Triangle*, 1976 (Joanne Goodman Lectures (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), 19, 21. Stacey described King's attitudes toward Britain as "those of a good Victorian and a good colonial." King's closest adviser on foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s was O.D. Skelton, who became undersecretary of state for external affairs in 1925. Skelton was much more critical of the British connection and willing to act more boldly in distancing Canada from Britain. For an analysis of Skelton's attitudes toward relations with Britain, see Norman Hillmer, "The Anglo-Canadian Neurosis: The Case of O.D. Skelton" in *Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship*, ed. Peter Lyon (London: Frank Cass, 1976), 61-87.
- 13 Stacey, "The Hermit Kingdom, 1921-1930," *Mackenzie King and the Atlantic Triangle*, 35. J.L. Granatstein and R. Bothwell make the same point about King being determined to stand by Britain in a major war in "A Self-Evident National Duty: Canadian Foreign Policy 1935-1939," in *Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical Readings*, ed. J.L. Granatstein (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993), 159.
- 14 W.J. Hudson, *Cassey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 69.

- 15 An examination of the British understanding of the consequences of the statute raises more doubt about its significance. The British endorsed the Statute of Westminster because they believed they were simply replacing formal ties with voluntary ones, which they did not doubt would be as strong. Unofficial links, such as finance and emigration, would perpetuate cooperation with Britain. London believed it was merely sacrificing the form of control in order to retain the substance of it. See John Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars," *The Historical Journal* 23, 3 (1980): 662-7. As Darwin observed, "the price of constitutional equality would be little more than an exaggerated deference to the prejudices and susceptibilities of dominion politicians," 667; P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-1990* (London: Longman, 1993), 109, note that dominions remained dependent on the UK economically and militarily, except for Canada.
- 16 Wheare, *The Constitutional Structure of the Commonwealth*, 6-16.
- 17 A Commission of Government was established to restore order to Newfoundland's financial affairs, after which responsible government was supposed to return. The Commission of Government was directly responsible to the Dominions Office. For an explanation of Newfoundland's economic and political development, consult the introduction in David Mackenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).
- 18 Stephen Leacock, *Back to Prosperity: The Great Opportunity of the Empire Conference* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), 28.
- 19 Hudson, *Casey*, 103.
- 20 See John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1909-1946* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990) for information about the growth of the department. There are several useful memoirs covering the early history of the department. See Maurice Pope, ed., *Public Servant: The Memoirs of Sir Joseph Pope* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960); Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 1, 1897-1948 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Hugh L. Keenleyside, *The Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside*, vol. 1, *Hammer the Golden Day* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981); J.L. Granatstein's biography of Norman Robertson, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft* (Toronto: Deneau, 1981) is also helpful.
- 21 The Australian Department of External Affairs did not have its own secretary until November 1935; it had been a part of the Prime Minister's Department before then. David Lee is currently completing an official history of the Department of External Affairs.
- 22 P.G. Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy, 1901-1949* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66.
- 23 Australia renamed it the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1970; Canada likewise changed the name to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1993.
- 24 Japan invaded Manchuria and established a puppet state of Manchukuo under the titular authority of Pu Yi, China's last emperor, who had been deposed in 1911.
- 25 Cecil Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne, A Man of Two Worlds* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 224.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 236.
- 27 Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches of British Commonwealth Affairs 1931-1952*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 147.
- 28 J.D.B. Miller, *Britain and the Old Dominions* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 155-6.
- 29 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:170-1.
- 30 Joe Garner, *The Commonwealth Office 1925-68* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 106.
- 31 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:122.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 171, 172.
- 33 J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).
- 34 King did remark in January 1939 that an attack on Britain would put Canada at war; criticism followed. In March 1939, following Germany's seizure of Czechoslovakia, King stated that aggression against Britain would represent aggression against the entire Commonwealth. The backlash was sharp and divided. The French press speculated whether Quebec's

- MI's should quit the government. The English press blasted King for not making a strong enough commitment to Britain. King's fears about national unity and the divisive impact of foreign policy on relations between French and English Canadians were more than justified by this response. See H. Blair Neahey, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Prism of Unity, 1932-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 297-9.
- 35 Diary entry for 21 December 1940, in *The Moffat Papers: Selections from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pierrpont Moffat, 1919-1943*, ed. Nancy Harvison Hooker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 342.
- 36 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:21.
- 37 Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne*, 233.
- 38 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:479.
- 39 Carl Bridge, ed., *From Munich to Vietnam: Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States since the 1930s* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 3.
- 40 Memo, 6 September 1939, FDRL, Bertie Papers, box 211, Diary September-October 1939.
- 41 Greg Donaghy's short and useful survey of Canadian-Australian relations is called *Parallel Paths: Canadian-Australian Relations since the 1890s* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1995).
- 42 See especially David Day, *The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939-1942* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1988).
- 43 McIntosh to Berendsen, 6 November 1943, in *Unidiplomatic Dialogue: Letters between Carl Berendsen and Alister McIntosh 1943-1952*, ed. Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), 35.
- 44 Memo by Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, "The Relationship of the British Commonwealth to the Post-War International Organization," 15 June 1943, Public Records Office, London, UK (hereinafter PRO), PREM4, 30, 3, WP, (43), 244.
- 45 Minutes by Ronald, 31 December 1942, PRO, FO371, file 35362.
- 46 Minutes by Gladwyn Jebb, 28 December 1942, PRO, FO371, file 35362.
- 47 Ewart was particularly irate about this exclusion from the Cairo conference, to which Chiang Kai-shek had been invited.
- 48 "The Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service, Speaking at Shipley, Yorkshire, on Sunday, 12th April 1942," FDRL, Winant Papers, box 185, file: Bevin, Ernest.
- 49 "Mr. Eden at the Mansion House, 29 May 1941," FDRL, Winant Papers, box 194, file: Eden, Anthony.
- 50 Wheare, *The Constitutional Structure of the Commonwealth*, 5. Italics added.
- 51 Hume Wrong, memorandum, "Some comments on intra-Commonwealth relations," 17 August 1943, National Archives of Canada (hereinafter NAC), RG25, vol. 3263, file 6133-40, part 1.
- 52 "Twenty-Four Point Programme for the Abolition of the Vestigial Remnants of Canada's Former Status of Colonial Subordination and for the Creation of Appropriate Symbols of Canadian Nationhood," memo by Scott Reid, 21 March 1944, NAC, Escott Reid Papers, MG31 E46.
- 53 "Address by Mr. R.G. Casey, 20 March 1941," FDRL.
- 54 "Notes of Speech by the Rt. Hon. S.M. Bruce to the American and British Commonwealth Association," 12 December 1944, FDRL, Winant Papers, box 183, file: Australia - High Commissioner, Bruce, S.M.
- 55 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:565.
- 56 Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 3, *Problems of External Policy 1931-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 137. This statistic exaggerates the number of Australians who were British. About 90 percent were, but the 99 percent figure was bandied about as popular lore.
- 57 David Day, "Pearl Harbor to Nagasaki," in *Munich to Vietnam*, ed. Bridge, 67.
- 58 Wrong, "Some comments on intra-Commonwealth relations."
- 59 "Lionel Robbins: Hot Springs and After, May-June 1943," 5-7 June 1943, in *The Wartime Diaries of Lionel Robbins and James Meade 1943-45*, ed. Susan Howson and D.E. Moggridge (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), ch. 1, 56.

- 60 Paul Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), 478.
- 61 Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 4, *Problems of Wartime Cooperation and Post-War Change, 1939-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 168-9.
- 62 Douglas Copeland, "Australia's Attitude to British Commonwealth Relations," *International Journal* 3, 1 (1947-8): 41.
- 63 Heather J. Harvey, *Consultation and Cooperation in the Commonwealth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 84.
- 64 Coombs to Chiffley, 12 July 1943, Australian Archives (hereinafter AA), Department of Treasury, Main series files, A571, 61, file: 1944, 1109 part 1.
- 65 Meade Diary, 10 June 1945, London School of Economics Archives. James Meade described the experience of Leslie Melville, who attended an economic conference of the Commonwealth. Evatt reprimanded Melville for saying that Australia would not give up any imperial preferences in future tariff negotiations unless there were far-reaching concessions. This went too far for Evatt, who insisted that Australia be absolutely uncommitted with respect to changing preferential tariffs.
- 66 Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches*, 1:586
- 67 Coombs to Melville, telegram no. E.68, 10 May 1943, AA, Department of Treasury, Main series files, A571, 61, file: 1944, 1109C part 2; Department of External Affairs to Prime Minister, teleprinter draft message, 27 April 1943, AA, Department of Treasury, Main series files, A571, 61, file: 1944, 1109 part 2.
- 68 Secretary of State for External Affairs to Canadian High Commissioner in London, tel. 1101, 25 June 1943, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 9, 1942-1943, ed. John F. Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 678-9.
- 69 King to House of Commons, 12 November 1940, in *Documents and Speeches*, ed. Mansergh, 1:548.
- 70 Author interview with Charles Ritchie, Ottawa, 24 September 1992.
- 71 Cited in *Documents and Speeches*, ed. Mansergh, 1:550.
- 72 McGibbon, ed., *Undiplomatic Dialogue*, 91.
- 73 Memo to Hull from Berle, 28 August 1942, FDRL, Berle Papers, Box 58, Hull, Cordell - January-August 1942.
- 74 Memo of conversation between Berle and Hume Wrong re joint declaration of the Atlantic Charter, 31 December 1941, FDRL, Berle Papers, box 213, file: Diary December 12-31, 1941.
- 75 J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), 92.
- 76 Minutes by Berle, 15 October 1943, FDRL, Official file series 4281, file: Winant, John G. 1941-1944.
- 77 Roger Bell, *Unequal Allies: Australian-American Relations and the Pacific War* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1977). Bell dates the articulation of Australia's own role and personality in world affairs to 1941-6.
- 78 Roosevelt to Churchill, tel. 127, FDRL, Hopkins Papers, box 136, file: Winston S. Churchill (folder 1), 22 March 1942.
- 79 Davies to Robertson, letter, 23 June 1944, NAC, RG25, 89-90, 029, box 4, 4-G(s), part 2.
- 80 Paul Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941-47* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 28.
- 81 Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942-1945*, 629.
- 82 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 42.
- 83 Evatt's comments cited in "Voice for Small Nations in Making of Peace," January 1945, FDRL, Winant Papers, box 183, file: Australia - High Commissioner, Bruce, S.M. Jan. 45.
- 84 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 195.
- 85 Mackenzie King diary, microfilm reel 219, 26 June 1945, 642. Thanks to Kathy Rasmussen for finding this passage for me.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 24 June 1945, 631-2. Thanks again to Kathy Rasmussen.
- 87 David Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan 1942-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 280.
- 88 Pearson to Robertson, 1 February 1944, NAC, RG25, vol. 3263, file 6133-40, part 1.

- 89 Peter Love, *Labor and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984).
- 90 J.M. McCarthy, "Australia: A View from Whitehall 1939-1945," *Australian Outlook* 28, 3 (1974): 326. Note that it was Australians who described him as "probably a secessionist."
- 91 Denis Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear: Canada and the Cold War, 1941-48* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 17.
- 92 Many historians have tackled the slippery subject of dominions' nationalism, in particular how the British heritage of Canada and Australia contributed to individual identities, as well as making them a part of Greater Britain. See Carl Berger, *Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). Also consult John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa First Assert Their Nationalities, 1880-1914* (Sydney, Wellington, London, and Boston: Oxford University Press, 1988).