

ANZUS: The United States and Pacific Security. By Henry S. Albinski. Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America for The Asia Society, 1987. 62 pp.

Professor Albinski's book is a most useful addition to the growing library on the ANZUS dispute, most especially because it offers an American perspective on the issue. The author is one of the few American academics who have taken an interest in either the alliance or Australia and New Zealand. This undoubtedly reflects the low profile of the alliance and the asymmetry of the relationship for, as he points out, New Zealanders and Australians know a great deal more about the United States than Americans know of them. His perspectives on the historical and contemporary attitudes of the two smaller countries are, with some reservations, gratifyingly sophisticated. His survey of American interests, Australian and New Zealand security policies, and public attitudes to the alliance are quite thorough. The final chapter looks at the state of the alliance in the mid-1980s, detailing American criticisms of New Zealand's ship-ban policy, the broad security implications of that policy, and, in that context, the state and prospects for the bilateral relationship between Australia and the United States. Its style is narrative, and as a record of the dispute, its background and consequences, it is an excellent primer for those interested in the issue (though the absence of references and an index is a hindrance).

The real strength of this book lies in the survey of American interests and American perceptions of how Australia and New Zealand contribute to those interests. In a reasonably balanced fashion, he also endeavours to detail Australian and New Zealand criticisms of the alliance. However, like most non-New Zealanders, Professor Albinski tends to treat Australia and New Zealand as a single entity. To be sure, his account of the bilateral dispute between the United States and New Zealand is more thorough than one would expect from what is a relatively short book, but the impression remains that he is more familiar with Australia than with New Zealand.

A problem arises from the length and the familiarity with Australia: though he recognizes the greater cultural closeness of Australia to the United States, he does not develop the argument to any great degree. The lack of sympathy in New Zealand for the United States has its historical antecedents in New Zealand's determination to cling to its former colonial connection with Britain. New Zealand sought little more than a guarantee of local security from its relationship with the United States until Britain withdrew East of Suez in the late 1960s.

Without this context, it is more difficult to see the dispute for what it is: a lack of fundamental mutual sympathy. Though he perceptively details New Zealand criticisms of the United States, he does not, except by implication, reach the point of deciding that New Zealanders and Americans do not understand each other. On the other hand, he shows very clearly in a section entitled "Political and Cultural Compatibility" that Australia and America have a great deal more in common, and that mutuality can be expected to grow. Indeed, Australia, though it has had a difficult path to follow, has reaped the most benefits from the ANZUS rift: it has earned the gratitude of both the United States and New Zealand for its loyalty to them.

Apart from these criticisms, the analysis of American interests and responses is very interesting, and is helped considerably by putting Australian and New Zealand contributions to those interests in perspective. Once again, it is clear that the bilateral relationships within the alliance, with the exception of the United States-New Zealand leg, were just as important as the tripartite treaty itself. Professor Albinski concludes that the continued strengthening of these bilateral ties, particularly between Australia and the United States,

may well achieve many of the same functions of the tripartite alliance. In this sense at least, the three countries' interests remain relatively unharmed, but the fall-out from the dispute means that all the relationships will continue to require careful tending if healing is to ever occur.

Professor Albinski's book is a contribution to that process, in that it sets out the perceptions and misperceptions that have occurred in a reasonably balanced way. His scrutiny of the alliance presents a good coverage of New Zealand and Australian criticisms as well as the American responses. Understandably, he looks most closely at the "broad security implications" of the ANZUS rift for United States interests, which is a useful background to American thinking in the dispute, and he clearly has little sympathy for the New Zealand policy, calling it "much regretted".

Few New Zealanders would agree that the Reagan Administration has not resorted to "bludgeoning methods". Small independent countries can get very sensitive when their historical right to decide policy for themselves is under pressure, and there is no doubt that the tone of the American response (and the style of personalities such as the United States Ambassador to New Zealand) had a negative effect on New Zealand public opinion. While alliance management skills were clearly deficient on both sides, the fundamental truth which this book illuminates is that New Zealand's continued membership of the alliance was less important to the United States than other American regional security interests. What it does not show so well is that because of the effects of history on New Zealand political culture and sympathies, retaining membership of the alliance was not the shibboleth it was thought to be.

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