

While commercial relations grew progressively closer during the 1960s, the two countries' political objectives began to diverge. In part, this was caused by the changing importance the postwar Commonwealth played in each country's foreign policy. The Australian prime minister seemed especially unhappy with the modern Commonwealth. The accession of large numbers of Asian and African countries had destroyed the comfortable club of the inter-war period. In Menzies' view, the Commonwealth had been "modernized out of existence" and transformed into something that "no longer expresses unity but exists chiefly to ventilate differences."³⁹

In contrast, Canada embraced the boisterous and multiracial Commonwealth as an integral part of its foreign policy. It promised the more established country a forum in which to exercise its influence and offered access to new perspectives on international developments. There was never any question that Ottawa would risk its standing in this new Commonwealth by trying to ease Australia's growing isolation. By 1961, for instance, Canada was prepared to help force South Africa out of the Commonwealth despite clear indications that such action would strain its relations with Australia. Similarly, Ottawa rejected Menzies' efforts in the spring of 1963 to foster closer bilateral relations lest other members of the Commonwealth, particularly India and Pakistan, feel excluded.

The 1960s introduced a second uncomfortable factor into the relationship--the war in Vietnam. Since the Second World War, Australia had come to depend on the United States, as the foremost Western power in the Pacific, for its security. This new relationship was initially rooted in the 1951 Pacific Security Agreement and subsequently defined through their common membership in SEATO. As the 1950s progressed, Australia increasingly shared Washington's determination to contain communist expansion in Asia; like Washington, it found itself slowly dragged into the quagmire in Southeast Asia. By 1967, the handful of advisors that Australia had sent to South Vietnam five years earlier had become almost a full combat division.

Australia's growing attachment to Washington's Asian policy had a profound impact on relations with Canada. As Canberra's capacity and inclination to function as a middle power began to decline under the weight of its alliance with the United States, Canadian officials assigned less importance to the relationship. Moreover, Asia began to emerge as an active source of continuing bilateral tension. Canada had always been sceptical of applying the European doctrine of containment to Asia. By the mid-1960s, Canadian scepticism had changed to opposition as the strategy failed and conflict flared in Vietnam. The secretary of state for external affairs, Paul Martin, was soon embroiled in the search for an end to the war in Vietnam. His efforts, which included an ill-fated initiative to bring Peking's influence to bear on the U.N.'s deliberations, were deeply resented in Canberra. Australians wondered why their