Maintaining the ‘Australian Way of Life’: President Johnson’s 1966 Visit and its Implications for National Culture

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Abstract

President Lyndon Johnson’s visit to Australia in October 1966 was the apogee of the Australian-American political alliance and coincided with the peak of Australian public support for the American war in Vietnam. It was also during this period that Americanisation in Australia intensified. This thesis utilises the Johnson visit as a lens onto Australia’s Cold War political relationships and cultural loyalties. I argue that Australians’ enthusiastic embrace of the president did not reflect either political or cultural subservience, and that Australian political and civic culture at this time remained essentially ‘British’.
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On the clear, chilly evening of 20 October 1966, President Lyndon Johnson landed in Canberra, Australia.¹ His coming marked the first visit of a serving American president to Australia and the penultimate leg of Johnson’s Asia-Pacific tour, which included a prior stopover in New Zealand and the subsequent Manila conference in the Philippines.² The tour itself was designed to boost regional support for the war in Vietnam, but Johnson knew that in Australia he was guaranteed a hero’s welcome.³ His three-day visit coincided with the highpoint of Australians’ support for the war against communism in Vietnam – a welcome contrast to the increasingly negative opinion of the war back home in the United States – and his relationship with Prime Minister

³ Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 360.
Harold Holt was already well established.\textsuperscript{4} When Holt travelled to Washington in July that same year, he made a now famous speech on the South lawn of the White House.\textsuperscript{5} Appropriating the 1964 Democratic election campaign slogan, the prime minister told Johnson that in Australia ‘you have an admiring friend, a staunch ally that will be “All the Way with LBJ”’.\textsuperscript{6} For this statement, the Australian press and opposition Labor party fired a barrage of criticisms at Holt, deriding him for embarrassing the nation with such a ‘crass’ expression of obsequiousness.\textsuperscript{7} Johnson, however, reportedly found the comment amusing.\textsuperscript{8} It has nevertheless come to symbolise a particular style of Australian alliance management, one which gave Australia little freedom of movement, let alone independence.

Much like the worlds contained in photographs themselves, the historiography of the Australian-American alliance under the stewardship of Johnson and Holt has become ossified in the hands of scholars unable or unwilling to move beyond the metaphor that has been extrapolated from David Moore’s photograph.\textsuperscript{9} Thus Holt, squat in stature, is seen as solemnly genuflecting to the hulking back of his powerful ally, ready and eager to obey the president’s bidding. This interpretation has been reflected time and again in the literature. Academics such as Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, Alison Broinowski and Erik Paul, and commentators Donald Horne and Don Watson have claimed that


\textsuperscript{7} Frame, The Life and Death of Harold Holt, pp. 182-183.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 183.

\textsuperscript{9} Rickard, Australia, p. 211.
Australia in the Cold War became not only strategically dependent on the United States but also culturally subservient to its powerful friend.\textsuperscript{10} Although Johnson’s travels of the east Australian coast from 20 to 23 October 1966 have often been neglected by historians, Gerster and Bassett as well as Horne have interpreted Australians’ dramatic show of affection for Johnson as epitomising their total embrace of Americana.\textsuperscript{11} Through an examination of Johnson’s tour, this thesis presents a counterargument: that the harmony of interests between Australian and American approaches to dealing with Asian communism was not accompanied by Australians’ desire to become culturally American, and that Australian civic and political culture in the mid- to late-1960s remained essentially British.

To date, historians of the Australian-American alliance have tended to focus largely on the close alignment of Australia’s foreign policy with its ‘great and powerful friend’ in the Cold War. But as historian David McLean has emphasised, serious attention has not yet been paid to the cultural dimension of this strategic relationship.\textsuperscript{12} This trend in the historiography is surprising given that policymaking does not operate in a vacuum, but is instead shaped by a nation’s ‘cultural baggage’.\textsuperscript{13} Political leaders, after all, are creatures of their culture and must seek a popular mandate for their policy agendas and programs. We err if we place an artificial fault line between political ‘elites’ and the


\textsuperscript{13} McLean, ‘Australia in the Cold War’, p. 317.
people they seek to represent.\textsuperscript{14} For Australian governments and the Australian community at large, the question of cultural inheritance was of paramount concern in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{15} This question was inextricably linked to how Australia saw its role in the world and its relations with what many still affectionately referred to as the ‘mother country’ – Britain – and America. By the mid-1960s Australia had become fully integrated into America’s defence nexus, a process which began in the late 1950s with Australia’s reorganisation of its armed forces to facilitate closer military cooperation with its Pacific neighbour, and with the agreement of the Menzies government to the construction of American intelligence installations on Australian soil.\textsuperscript{16} With Prime Minister Robert Menzies’ April 1965 commitment of an Australian battalion to Vietnam – the first war in which Australia fought without Britain – the nation’s foreign policy revolution, from seeking protection under the wing of the ‘mother country’ to keeping the Americans locked in Southeast Asia, was complete.\textsuperscript{17} At this time, as a consequence of Britain’s announcement that it would commence a military withdrawal from the region, and the solidification of America as Australia’s defence backbone, the Americanisation of Australian culture intensified.\textsuperscript{18} This presents an important historical problem for Australians. Did the collapse of the British empire lead to a weakening of identification with Britain and the British world? Did Australians simply switch their cultural affections from Britain to America in line with the changing strategic

\textsuperscript{15} Rickard, Australia, pp. 204-207.
\textsuperscript{17} David Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain’s Empire (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 157.
circumstances? This thesis is an attempt to deal with these issues: what McLean has called ‘the larger questions raised by Australia’s [Cold War] experience’.

Marriage of the strategic and cultural aspects of foreign relations is afforded by the expanded role of diplomatic history in recent years. In historian Thomas Zeiler’s view, diplomatic history ‘reminds us of the significant presence of the state’ but can also merge this focus with ‘transnational actors… and other measures of the cultural turn’. Thus this thesis has taken multiple approaches in its examination of Johnson’s Australian tour. Although a study of Australia’s cultural loyalty in the mid- to late-1960s is an exercise in national history, the state interacted with forces originating outside the nation, notably Britishness and Americanisation. It is also the intention of this thesis to contribute to the growing number of revisionist histories that consider ‘how America’s overseas audiences (both governments and people) shaped… [and] resisted… the process of Americanisation’. Australians’ agency in the negotiation of American hegemony was found in the Holt government’s decision-making over Vietnam troop commitments as well as in the actions of dissenting Australians throughout the president’s visit who opposed the dominant perceptions of the Vietnam conflict in America and Australia. Moreover, the recent opening up of diplomatic history – one which stresses the variety of factors influencing policy formation other than what is mined at the archives – has enabled a greater focus on the interplay between the forces of nationalism, theories of international relations and the influence of popular culture. Explored here is not only the use of power by the United States and indeed Australia, but also the limits of this power, which had consequences for

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American might and the re-formation of Australia’s self-image following the abandonment of racial nationalism in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{23}

The source material underpinning this dissertation reflects a multidimensional approach to Johnson’s visit. The online archive \textit{The American Presidency Project} has made available the official speeches of Johnson in Australia, whilst audio recordings of Holt’s speeches during the tour were found in the National Library of Australia. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates have delineated the coalition government’s and opposition Labor party’s views on Australia’s and America’s roles in the Vietnam conflict. Diplomatic files were selected from archives in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In demonstrating the nature of the media coverage of the president’s visit, it was important to consider a broad Australian readership. The integration of broadsheet newspapers, tabloids and women’s magazines has exposed the spectrum of views of the president’s Australian journey. Finally, the Dr Kenneth Macnab collection in Fisher Library at the University of Sydney has provided a local perspective on the logic behind the anti-Vietnam protests in Australia and identified the types of participants of these demonstrations.

In trying to divine the influence of the Johnson visit on Australian loyalties, it is important to highlight the comparative context in which his visit was often placed. The experience of the American Commander in Chief in Australia and the reception he received had only one precedent: British royal tours. Australians have reacted with similar energy but for different reasons to the presence of British royalty and Americans

in their nation. The first chapter therefore begins by focussing on the importance of Royal tours and state visits for historians, followed by the historiographical and contextual background to the American presidential visit. The next three chapters consider Johnson’s time in the country from different angles. Chapter Two examines the policies adopted by the Johnson government in Washington, and the Holt government and Labor party in Australia towards the Vietnam War. It will show that the Holt government was not in fact ‘all the way with LBJ’ in its commitment to Vietnam. Rather, it aimed to use the American alliance to serve Australia’s national interests. The subsequent chapter entitled ‘People’ explores the preparations for and the proceedings of the visit itself. Here the anti-Vietnam War and anti-American protests and demonstrations show that the Australian community was not totally enamoured of all things American. Finally, the study turns its attention to the question of Australia’s cultural loyalty in the mid- to late-1960s, when the demise of racial Britishness left Australian politicians and culture-makers scrambling for a new language of community. The argument here is that the penetration of American culture in Australian life, which occurred particularly at the popular level, was not a result of aggressive American imperialism dominating its passive junior ally. Nor was it a result of the failure of the ‘new nationalists’ to define the parameters of a more authentic Australian nationalism. On the contrary, Australians mediated American culture at all levels of social class, and their general fondness for American-inspired ideas and lifestyles did not erode their attachment to Britishness, even at a time when that very idea of ‘being British’ was undergoing reappraisal.
Chapter One: Historiography

Royal tours and state visits

In recent years historians have given increasing attention to the powerful imagery and symbolism that accompany a Royal tour or state visit. Not content to see in these events a simple panorama of pageantry or surface-level hysteria, they have instead investigated how such occasions present an opportunity to study both the visitor and host: in essence, to capture a snapshot of the nation. Historians Jane Connors, Neville Meaney, John Rickard and Stuart Ward have noted that irrespective of political affiliation, Australians showed feverish public enthusiasm for Queen Elizabeth II’s tour in early 1954.24 These comments, which have been cited as witnesses to Australians’ powerful attachment to Britishness, have mainly formed part of broader enquiries on Australia’s relationships with Britain.25 Jane Connors’ specific study of the 1954 Royal tour to Australia has encouraged historians to consider why the Queen’s visit was so ‘remarkably popular’ and met with so little publicly articulated opposition.26 Whereas Connors has asked whether there were clear benefits to laying eyes on the Queen for Australians, visits by a head of state have been conveyed by historians as tools of diplomacy of benefit to both the host and visiting nations.27 Thus academic Erik Goldstein has suggested that the host nation’s government, through careful planning of its reception of a

25 One book has been dedicated to the first Royal tour to Australia, that of Prince Alfred, but it is largely a narrative recount. See Brian McKinlay, The First Royal Tour 1867 – 1868 (Sydney: Rigby, 1970). David Lowe’s article on the 1954 Royal tour was mainly concerned with the tour’s international context. See David Lowe, ‘1954: The Queen and Australia in the World’, Australian Historical Studies, vol. 19, no. 46 (September 1995), pp. 1-10.
27 Ibid., p. 371.
foreign head of state, is able to project a desired image of their community. Similarly, historian Mike Cronin has viewed the state visit, with its accompanying media attention, as a vehicle for shaping international perceptions of the participating nations. Moreover, as an exercise in ‘public diplomacy’, the state visit enables the touring leader to ‘communicate with foreign publics as a method of heightening an understanding of [the visiting nation’s] aims and policies’. However, the use of the state visit for promoting a nation’s ideological outlook does not necessarily make it a stage in the treaty-signing process. Rather, as Goldstein has noted, these events are ‘atmospheric and psychological’. This focus on the emotional impact of the state visit means that the organisation of spectacle as well as the visiting leader’s public interactions with the host government and citizens often take priority over private discussion. Lyndon Johnson’s people-oriented approach and affable nature on his vice presidential travels throughout the Third World, although they engendered criticism by some American State Department officials who accompanied Johnson, have been hailed by historian Mitchell Lerner as ‘the driving force behind a fairly successful effort to convey a message of solidarity and empathy to the common people of the non-Western world’. At the height of the Cold War, such interactions were of acute importance, as though the visits themselves were times to present rival ideologies and ways of life. Johnson used public appearances as well as private conferences during state visits on his October 1966 Asia-Pacific tour to shore up support for the war in Vietnam, alerting Australia and other anti-communist Asian nations that America required further contributions of assistance in that

30 ‘Ibid.’, p. 121.
theatre. In sum, close examination of Royal tours and state visits can assist historians in diagnosing the health of relations between the visiting and host nations, and can shed light on broader questions about Cold War alliances and allegiances.

The alliance: Historical schools of thought

As previously noted, Johnson’s October 1966 tour marked the first visit of a serving American president to Australia, and has been deemed the highpoint of the Australian-American alliance. But this was not the first instance in which the coming of the Americans’ representative generated a near frenzied response from Australians. A similar reaction bordering on hysteria greeted the arrival of sixteen American navy vessels – part of President Theodore Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet – at Sydney and Melbourne in August 1908, with the occasion witnessing the budding relationship based on common culture and strategic interests between the two Pacific nations. Many Australians were also fervently excited by the stationing of hundreds of thousands of male and female American war-service personnel in Australia during the Second World War. That Johnson’s visit came at the peak of Australian public support for America’s war in Vietnam has in itself coloured the way historians and commentators have interpreted the significance of the event. These interpretations and wider views of the observers of the Australian-American alliance can be grouped into three schools of thought.

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The radical nationalist school, like other historians writing in the nationalist tradition of history, assumes a teleological view of nationalism. That is, the belief that the nation state is set on an inevitable path to nationhood which will culminate in the realisation of a distinctive, independent national community. Radical nationalists have viewed Australia’s supposedly uncritical dependence on Britain and then America as obstacles to the achievement of full national maturity. This habit of reliance was embarrassing for historian Humphrey McQueen, who summarised Australia’s international allegiances in this period with the rather colourful statement that Prime Minister Robert Menzies ‘switched from British sycophant to American lickspittle’. Historian Stephen Alomes similarly lamented the ‘further default of Australian nationhood’ as foreign investment from Britain and later America inhibited the ‘growing social and cultural assertion’ of Australia’s national impulse in the 1960s.

Nowhere was Australian dependence more evident, for historians Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, than in Australians’ reception of President Johnson. Following Australia’s swap of its ‘political bondage’ to the Union Jack for stars and stripes in World War Two, the spirited embrace of the president encapsulated ‘Australia’s love affair with America’. For these historians the Johnson visit confirmed that Australians were unable to distinguish their national destiny from that of their so-called ‘great and powerful’ friend.

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38 Neville Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 31, no.2 (May 2003), p. 122; Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, p. 77. Radical nationalists view the Labor party and participants of the labour movement as forerunners in pursuit of independent foreign policy-making, which, as McLean has noted, is seen as a pre-requisite for Australian nationalism. See McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 66.

39 David Day, for example, has bemoaned the curtailment of an Australian policy agenda and outlook by a ‘dependent mentality’. This mindset of Australia’s political elite meant that there was no struggle to escape the clutches of the ‘imperial master’. In Day’s view, Australian governments were content with their pusillanimity; its leaders had lacked the courage to generate ‘policies based on a clear appreciation of national interest’. See David Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan 1942–1945* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 314-316.


Another interpretation has been to stress Australia’s limited freedom of movement within the alliance. Rather than emphasising Australian subservience this school promotes the perspective that Australian governments believed they needed to make insurance payments in return for protection from America. The traditional view of the formation of the ANZUS treaty, signed by Australia, New Zealand and the United States in 1951, is found in historian Thomas Bruce Millar’s statement that America ‘acquiesced only with reluctance’. Millar claimed that although ANZUS offered the impetus for American administrations’ ‘sense of commitment to Australia’, he also noted that the Australians were ‘conscious of the need to pull their weight’ so that America would feel obliged to protect Australia. Highlighting Australians’ sense of accountability to America, historian Glen St J. Barclay has equated Johnson’s trip to that by a ‘chairman of the board checking up on his branch managers’. The endpoint of Millar’s and Barclay’s analysis that Australian governments had to work hard to commit America to Australia’s defence was that the Australian government had little choice but to support the American war in Vietnam. As a show of ‘gratitude’, to use historian Peter Edwards’ term, Johnson repaid the government and Harold Holt in particular with a three-day American-style presidential tour during which Johnson turned Holt’s ‘all the way’ ‘gaffe’ into a ‘political asset’.

The flaws inherent in both the radical nationalist and insurance premium schools have been underlined by historian David McLean. Contrary to the radical nationalist proposition, Australian governments’ avoidance of public disagreements with the United States did not

equate to servility. Instead, McLean has argued, Australian leaders where they could aimed to utilise their relationship with America in pursuit of Australia’s national interests and most importantly its regional security.\(^{49}\) Far from being a reluctant warrior in the fight against communism in South East Asia, McLean has emphasised that Australian governments pressed the Americans to continue the fight.\(^{50}\) Keeping the Americans engaged in the region was the main pillar of Australia’s Cold War foreign policy.\(^{51}\) Such evidence undercuts the assertion that the obsequious characters in Australian governments, Holt being the guiltiest offender, extended the nation’s adolescence and entrenched its subservient tendencies by holding hostage Australia’s faculty for independent thinking. The theory that Australia’s Vietnam commitment was an insurance payment for American protection is equally problematic for McLean, given that at the height of the commitment, Australian troops numbered eight thousand – a token force – even after Johnson had privately criticised the Holt government on his Australian tour for not carrying a heavier load in the conflict.\(^{52}\) Barclay’s opinion that Johnson ‘had done everything in his power to make it impossible’ for Holt to avoid enlarging Australia’s Vietnam military contingent has presented Holt as confined to limited options in the alliance.\(^{53}\) But it was not imperative for Holt to respond favourably to the Americans. None of America’s European allies in SEATO, save for New Zealand, sent troops, with no real consequence dealt to them by the American government, but Holt’s decision to increase troop numbers in relatively modest increments aimed to placate the American administration at the lowest possible cost to Australia.\(^{54}\)

\(^{49}\) McLean, ‘Australia in the Cold War’, p. 310.
\(^{50}\) ‘Ibid.’, p. 312.
\(^{51}\) ‘Ibid.’, p. 320.
\(^{52}\) ‘Ibid.’, p. 312.
\(^{53}\) Barclay, Friends in High Places, p. 162.
An alternative interpretation of Australia’s security alliances has been offered by McLean and historian Neville Meaney. Despite the closeness of the relationships with both Britain and America in cultural and sentimental terms, Australian leaders have always prioritised their own nation’s security interests, which of course were directly related to their geographical position in the Pacific. As McLean has noted, Australia’s search since Federation for a security agreement with its Pacific power friend, America, must be seen in light of the Australian political elite’s nagging conviction that Britain could not empathise with or provide for Australia’s regional insecurities in the Asia Pacific. However this hunt for a guarantee of American protection in the absence of Britain’s ability to offer such a promise was not to forsake Australia’s cultural Britishness. From the perspective of this school, evaluations of the significance of President Johnson’s Australian tour must take into account that Australian governments had been conditioned over time to expect dissatisfaction and frustration in their relations with their powerful allies. As a small- to middle-power, Australia had been disappointed by Britain, for example in Britain’s inability to defend Singapore in 1942, and suspicious of the United States on the basis that it was not a British nation and therefore unobligated to come to Australia’s aid. The tangible presence of the president, then, signalled the crescendo of decades of hard work dedicated to yoking Australia’s security with America’s for the advantage of the smaller power.

58 Australian politicians also felt let down by Britain in 1944 when Prime Minister John Curtin’s proposals for a more closely integrated empire were rebuffed. See Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia’, pp. 127-132; McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 74.
A ‘historic shift of policy’: Australia’s self-image in 1966

The timing of Johnson’s visit was as important for historians as the occasion itself for gaining an indication of how Australia viewed the United States, itself and the fate of its cultural future. Australia in the 1960s underwent significant domestic changes as old shibboleths were jettisoned in an unstable international environment. The onset of global decolonisation in Africa and Asia, the potential withdrawal of Britain’s troops east of Suez and Britain’s attempts at joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1961 and 1963 had dramatic implications for Australia’s defence arrangements and the substance of its nationalism. Not only was Australia faced with a seemingly hostile region without the buffer of a British military presence, but Australian politicians and policy makers had also acknowledged the redundancy and undesirability of their racially discriminative national myth. Lyndon Johnson himself viewed this ‘historic shift of policy’ in Australia as ‘a profound, and doubtless painful, readjustment’ of the country’s self-image. His visit in 1966 is therefore an important moment in which historians can endeavour to chart the course of a changing Australia.

Stresses and strains in the Anglo-Australian alliance in the 1960s exacerbated Australia’s need for an American military body in Southeast Asia. For historians James Curran and Stuart Ward, the most profound shock to the Menzies government’s conceptions about the nature of the Commonwealth came early in the decade, with the Macmillan government’s

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60 On decolonisation and Britain’s application for entry into the European Economic Community, see Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*, p. 58; pp. 99-119.
application to enter the EEC in July 1961.\textsuperscript{63} Britain’s move roused the pervasive feeling within the Australian government, parliament and public that the Macmillan government was ‘breaking some imagined code of British conduct’.\textsuperscript{64} Additionally historian Jeppe Kristensen has shown that Australia and Britain differed in their approaches to Indonesia’s waging of \textit{Konfrontasi} against the Malaysia Federation as well as to Vietnam, to which Britain refused to send troops.\textsuperscript{65} Despite Britain’s turn to Europe, historian David Goldsworthy has argued that the British were nevertheless unwelcoming of the fact that by 1965 ‘Australia’s key strategic alliance was with the United States’.\textsuperscript{66} From the Australian perspective, despite repeated warnings that Britain was about to reassess its defence commitments east of Suez, when the decision was finally announced in April 1967 a lingering sense of ‘hurt’ and even ‘betrayal’ was felt by Australian policy makers.\textsuperscript{67} Divergent interests had finally dashed the persistent hope, often unfulfilled, that Britain would always be able to come to Australia’s aid.

A more constrained British role in the world had far-reaching consequences for the American and therefore the Australian efforts in Vietnam. Historian Jeremy Fielding has shown that the Johnson administration viewed its prospects in Vietnam as contingent upon the strength of Britain’s economy, which was in tatters throughout the 1960s despite measures taken by America to ‘bail out’ the pound.\textsuperscript{68} Saving the British economy was of paramount concern for the Americans who required continued British presence not only in Southeast Asia but also in

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\textsuperscript{63} Curran and Ward, \textit{The Unknown Nation}, pp. 32-33. It should be noted that Curran and Ward’s argument extends beyond an examination of the UK-Australian defence alliance in this period by examining the implications of the unravelling of empire on Australian policy and culture.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34.


\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 157-159; Kristensen, “In Essence still a British Country”, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{67} Goldsworthy, \textit{Losing the Blanket}, p. 171.

the Middle East to avoid ‘strategic vacuums’ America would need to fill. In the event that Britain could not afford these ventures, and the United States administration judged its military resources to be stretched too thin given Britain’s waning global presence, the degree of Australia’s own commitment to Vietnam would be implicated.

The disintegration of the British empire under the twin pressures of the era of decolonisation and a sliding British economy also undermined the racial dimension of Australian Britishness. Meaney has established that from the late nineteenth century down to the 1960s Australians thought of themselves primarily as a ‘British’ people. The idea was manifested in Australian institutions and civic culture, and in the public rhetoric of both Labor and Liberal party politicians. Although kinship ties existed with Britons around the world, for instance in the United Kingdom and Canada, Australians and New Zealanders saw themselves as ‘better Britons’ – to borrow CEW Bean’s phrase – with their combined English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh blood. Under the weight of the new circumstances in which Britain cut loose its colonial associations and the British race idea collapsed, peoples belonging to the Commonwealth who defined themselves as ethnically and culturally ‘British’ were forced to deal with a widely-perceived sense of emptiness and dislocation.

From the late 1950s many in the Liberal government, including Menzies and Holt, began expressing the need to reconsider the racially restrictive White Australia policy in order that Australia would cease offending her Asian neighbours and to avoid reproach from the

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71 Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, p. 79.
74 Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia’, p. 126.
international community. In historian Matthew Jordan’s view, the eventual decision in 1966 to admit non-Europeans into Australia spoke of a redefinition of the ideal Australia along socially and culturally homogeneous lines rather than racial ones.

But even as this change was implemented, Australian leaders were reluctant to abandon the old language and symbols of Australians’ civic culture, a symptom of their inability to imagine themselves as anything other than ‘British’. Australians had not made the choice to disassociate themselves from empire. Rather, as Holt confessed in 1966, Australia had been ‘jolted by events to adulthood’, and the onset of this transition phase would prove to be awkward and uncomfortable indeed. To make the process of discarding the British race myth more problematic, by this period nationalism as a unifying social idea had lost much of its appeal. The attempt at national renewal by Australian officials and intelligentsia therefore had to travel a somewhat tricky and hazardous path in delivering a sense of community whilst weaving around the more aggressive and chauvinistic ideas of national self-belonging. With the demise of Britishness, Australians found themselves anxiously searching for a new idea of the nation but uncertain about its location. There seemed to be no ready-made national myth to call upon to define a post-imperial community.

Some politicians and commentators reached for the concept of a ‘new nationalism’ to define Australia’s emergence from the imperial orbit, but in a period when nationalism was perceived to be increasingly obsolete, and as Australia was discarding its old white racial

identity, this was a fraught exercise. Viewing with alarm the apparent emptiness of national sentiment given that Britishness had theoretically been drained from it, Australian politicians and policymakers became determined to fill the so-called identity void. Unlike previous moments of supposed Australian cultural nationalism in the 1890s and 1940s, historian Stuart Ward has shown that governments in the 1960s actually legislated to bolster what they saw as the flimsy foundations of Australian nationhood, evident in the establishment in 1967 of the Australian Council for the Arts. Ideas of how to communicate Australia’s uniqueness were found to be unsatisfactory or non-existent, which was seen during the change to decimal currency predicament of 1963. Here, the community voiced outrage over the possibility of the new currency being called the ‘Royal’ but could not suggest home-grown substitutes that would be taken seriously. Holt himself could not avoid resorting to the ‘postcard stereotype’ of Australia – ‘our gum trees and our kangaroos’ – in his satellite broadcast for the 1967 Montreal Universal and International Exhibition. The discourse ignited by Australia’s newly ambiguous cultural orientation cut across the public domain from the government to the arts, but it had shallow depth when it came time to produce viable alternatives to Britishness.

With Australia’s foreign policy firmly intertwined with America’s and British race patriotism ebbing from Australia’s post-imperial national story, some commentators felt compelled in the mid-1960s to re-examine Australians’ loyalty to the Monarchy and pitch the argument for an Australian republic. Australian leaders clung to the idea of British family membership, epitomised by the emblem of the Crown, well into the 1960s, which was seen in their

81 Ibid., p. 7.
82 Ibid., pp. 58-63.
84 Curran and Ward, The Unknown Nation, pp. 93-94.
85 Ibid., p. 106.
behaviour during Queen Elizabeth II’s 1963 Royal tour.\textsuperscript{87} Holt was incensed by the lack of enthusiasm shown by one church group for Her Majesty’s visit, whilst Prime Minister Menzies personally delivered to the Queen the oft-quoted lyric ‘I did but see her passing by, and yet I love her till I die’.\textsuperscript{88} However, according to Don Whittington, the decline in crowd sizes for the 1963 Royal tour bore witness to some Australians’ diminishing interest in such tours and some disenchantment with the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{89} Of course, any Royal tour simply could not have drawn the same crowds relative to population as Queen Elizabeth’s 1954 visit, where an estimated three-quarters of Australians saw the Queen at least once.\textsuperscript{90} Whittington was among the scholars and journalists who contributed to Geoffrey Dutton’s symposium \textit{Australia and the Monarchy}, published in 1966, which implored Australians to reconsider ‘where their loyalties lie’ at a time when the Monarchy’s relevance to Australians was dwindling.\textsuperscript{91} Dutton beseeched Australia’s leaders to quit their ‘embarrassing’ expressions of deference to the Throne and to stand on their ‘own Australian ground’.\textsuperscript{92} Public intellectual Donald Horne suggested that the constitutional shift to a republic would mean Australia could no longer evade ‘the question of what Australia was supposed to be about’.\textsuperscript{93} An Australian republic, as historian Mark McKenna has noted, was therefore seen as an essential step towards the cessation of cultural dependence on Britain.\textsuperscript{94} Although the pro-republican organisations, magazines such as \textit{The Bulletin} and figures such as Dutton and Horne brought the case for an Australian republic into the mainstream, the idea could not ‘gain traction’ in

\textsuperscript{87} Ward, \textit{Australia and the British Embrace}, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., pp. 239–240.
\textsuperscript{90} Connors, ‘The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia’, p. 372.
\textsuperscript{92} ‘Ibid.’.
the wider community.\textsuperscript{95} That McKenna’s comprehensive study of Australian republicanism omitted reference to Johnson’s visit demonstrates that it had no measurable impact either on the proponents of republicanism or Australians’ dedication to the cause.\textsuperscript{96} In fact it was possible that the Royal tour of April 1970 restored the place of the Queen in the public imagination.\textsuperscript{97} Even as outcries of fervent loyalty to the Monarchy receded, and the ability of the Monarchy as an overseas institution to nourish an endemic Australian identity faded, Australians saw no need to fully detach themselves from the symbolism of empire. In this way, Australia remained starkly different to America.

‘…sparkling, neon-lit fun’: Americanisation and Australian culture

Much like the debate over Australia’s political and strategic relationship with the United States, the debate over Americanisation has similarly polarised historians and commentators. Amidst the worldwide political instability and social ferment of the 1960s, Gerster and Bassett have maintained that ‘America became the greatest fashion of all’.\textsuperscript{98} At this time, Alomes saw in Australia a ‘cultural battle’ in full swing.\textsuperscript{99} Thus although the British connection retained importance for tertiary education and the arts, it waned in the area of trade.\textsuperscript{100} 1966 was the first year that the United States had a higher stake in Australian investment than Britain.\textsuperscript{101} Undoubtedly at play at the pinnacle of the Cold War was what political scientist Joseph Nye labelled America’s ‘soft power’, a magnetic force which projected America overseas as an imagined exemplary democracy and attracted Australians

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\textsuperscript{95} Curran and Ward, \textit{The Unknown Nation}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{96} See McKenna, \textit{The Captive Republic}, pp. 219-309.
\textsuperscript{97} Curran and Ward, \textit{The Unknown Nation}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{98} Gerster and Bassett, \textit{Seizures of Youth}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{99} Alomes, \textit{A Nation at Last?}, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 179; Pemberton, \textit{All the Way}, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{101} Alomes, \textit{A Nation at Last?}, p. 179.
to America’s prescription for spending leisure time.  

In the view of architect and commentator Robin Boyd, for Australian teenagers in particular their own ‘stodgy’ culture was eclipsed by the ‘exciting, glamorous, sparkling, neon-lit fun’ of American lifestyles.

This image of Australian culture as totally overrun by Americanisation has been revised by historian Richard White, who has stated that ‘Australian democracy was saved from the worst excesses of Americanisation by the fact that it was British.’

White has shown that, in the latter half of the twentieth century, forces shaping Australia which were both modernising and Americanising still operated within lingering British cultural frameworks and interacted with peculiar local factors such as religion, social class and increasing multiculturalism.

Historians Philip and Roger Bell have also demonstrated that Australians developed ‘sometimes nationalistic’ reactions to the ways that modernisation in their country was cast in an American mold.

Despite these remarks, there has been no serious examination of whether the alignment of Australia’s foreign policy with America in the 1960s resulted in a cultural reorientation that replaced Australia’s essential Britishness with Americanness. This gap is one example of the tendency noted by McLean for historians to ignore the cultural dimension of foreign relations.

Some historians have touched on this question but none have presented sustained treatment. White has argued that the new Cold War arrangement ‘seriously threatened’ Britishness in Australia, but that the underwriting of Australian civic culture by Britishness has endured.

Moreover, Bell and Bell have viewed the continuing, albeit weakened, ties to

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106 Bell and Bell, *Implicated*, p. 158.
Britain alongside Australia’s positioning of itself under an American umbrella of strategic protection.\textsuperscript{109} The motivating factor for Australia’s alignment with American power in the Pacific was the emergence of the communist threat from its Asian neighbours.\textsuperscript{110} As a means of erecting bulwarks – which were found in American cultural and economic ideologies – against any appealing quality of communism, Australian governments from 1949 sought enmeshment into American networks of strategic planning, commerce and consumerism, and popular culture.\textsuperscript{111} More recently, an explicit reference to the cultural ramifications of Australia’s alliance with America is found in McLean’s statement that:

in the 1950s and 1960s, there took place a marked expansion of economic links between the two countries and a growth in the influence of American popular culture in Australia. But there is no reason to conclude that as a result of these developments Australians grew more pro-American in sentiment or more inclined culturally to be subservient to the US.\textsuperscript{112}

Australians’ general fondness for Americans has been continuous from the beginning of the twentieth century through to the Vietnam War years.\textsuperscript{113} The reaction given to President Johnson on his 1966 tour has therefore been explained by McLean as a function of this constant endearment towards a nation basically similar culturally and additionally capable of adopting the role of the Pacific protector – the biggest concern for Australians fearing an apparent downward thrust of communism from Asia.\textsuperscript{114} That same kind of enthusiasm, noted above, was clearly evident during the Great White Fleet visit in 1908 and the so called American GI ‘invasion’ of Australia during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{115}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Bell and Bell, \textit{Implicated}, p. 138.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Bruce Grant, 1983, cited in Bell and Bell, \textit{Implicated}, p. 163.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} ‘Ibid.’.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} ‘Ibid.’, p. 73.
\end{itemize}
Expounding their views from a particularly anti-Americanisation platform at the very time this process was playing out, Boyd and intellectual Geoffrey Serle worried that with the withering away of Australia’s British attachment in the post-imperial era, Australia’s cultural lake had been drained dry and would be subsequently swamped by a tidal wave of crass Americana. Writing in 1960, Boyd’s book *The Australian Ugliness* lamented the Australian interpretation of American West Coast architectural styles. Boyd decried the widespread development in Australian suburbs of the American-inspired motel, the designs of which were considered ‘contemporary’ but were for Boyd nothing short of ghastly. Likening the flashboarding advertising approach and predictable internal design schemes of motels to the catchy but shallow ‘carnival symbolism’, Boyd noted this symbolism was transported straight from the United States but ‘never [arrived] intact’. Although Australia was not alone in its supposed desire to model itself on American ‘popular arts and superficial character’, in Boyd’s opinion Australia had a particular tendency to appropriate the worst aspects of this Americana, which was often set off by the vulgarity that could be described as a distinct Australian touch. Boyd’s term ‘Austerica’ described the peculiar style that resulted when ‘an austerity version of the American dream overtakes the indigenous culture… it is slightly hysterical and it flourishes best of all in Australia’. Australia’s vulnerability to displaying particularly severe cases of Austerica was for Boyd indicative of the nation’s lack of self-knowledge and the consequent inability of those responsible for building Australia to create anything separately Australian.
Serle in 1967 echoed Boyd’s sentiment by wailing that Australia appeared to ‘capitulate…
whole-heartedly’ to American influence so that Australians were destined to ‘become just
slightly different sorts of Americans’. Serle contended that most in Britain were not overly
embracing of Australians and that Americans were closer to Australians in social habits than
Europeans. Although this bond located in social practise might have been tolerable for
Serle, Australia’s new addiction to ‘the gaudy tinsel of progress’, evident in ‘the superficial
trimmings of American civilisation’, was repugnant. American commercial values had
usurped Australian ones, with scant few voices raised in opposition. There was no other
conclusion to be drawn, Serle judged, apart from the inevitable replacement of British
sentiment with American worship, thus further delaying Australia’s emancipation from
another great powerful friend. Serle wondered why Australian leaders had made no effort
to protect the British connection as a ‘make-weight for dependence on the United Sates’. Serle
took aim at the lack of opposition to the imported American methods and designs,
claiming that Australia should be ashamed that America’s worst features ‘catch on most
readily’ in the smaller nation. To be sure, Serle identified positive aspects of American
culture, such as its participatory-style democracy, tertiary education standards and quality
business sector, but found Austerica devoid of any face-saving feature. The grim outlook
from Serle’s position was that Australia ‘shall never be self-governing in the full sense’
because it was ‘making the transition from a British colony to an American province’. Serle
decided, however, that this process would take longer than the ‘local republicans’

124 ‘Ibid.’.
126 ‘Ibid.’.
130 ‘Ibid.’, p. 249.
expected, and suggested that in a final attempt to stave off a ‘total American embrace’, republicans would ironically ‘cling to the Monarchy’.\textsuperscript{131}

Boyd and Serle saw American cultural dominance as incompatible and irreconcilable with the pursuit of Australian independence: so long as Australians aimed to remake their image in the American design, they could not be truly themselves. Alongside this concern was that national independence was reliant on the strength of national identity, the foundations of which had been shaken and, as it seemed to Boyd and Serle, hastily repaired with shoddy American adhesive.\textsuperscript{132} The post-imperial era created challenges for Australian intelligentsia facing the demise of British race patriotism, a process which coincided with an intense inflow of American products and ideas, but White has acknowledged the need to focus on Americanisation in Australia ‘without the distraction of national myth-making’\textsuperscript{133}. If this call is to be answered, the radical nationalist understanding of the American relationship as an impenetrable blockage on the road to realising Australian nationhood must be overturned.

At the heart of this historical problem about Australia’s aspirations for a new identity following the dissolution of the British race myth and the establishment of American hegemony is the assumption that Australians wanted to ‘go American’ on a fundamental level – that American institutions, ideologies, symbols and rituals were seen as suitable examples for Australia to emulate. Percy Spender, as Australian Ambassador in the United States from 1951 to 1958, learnt early in the Cold War that there was little similarity between ‘American political culture and historical traditions’ and those of Australia.\textsuperscript{134} As historian David Lowe has pointed out, this familiar ‘institutional tissue’ which was an unwavering point of bondage

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p. 244.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{133} White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 112.
\end{itemize}
for Britain and Australia did not feature in the American alliance. McLean has concluded that at the crux of the alliance, regardless of the extent to which Australians latched onto American popular culture, was Australians’ perception of America as a ‘foreign country’. It is this view of America that arises through the following analysis of President Johnson’s journey through Australia.

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136 McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 73.
Chapter Two: Strategy

This chapter focuses on how the Holt government, the Australian Labor party and the Johnson administration in Washington DC envisaged Australia’s role in Vietnam in the months prior to and then during the president’s visit. The first section provides a framework for understanding the rhetoric used by the political leaders at this pivotal moment in the Cold War and history of the alliance. The subsequent section considers the issues encountered by the Labor party in trying to balance their opposition to the Vietnam War with their commitment to the American alliance, a task which reinvigorated an old question in Australian politics: which party best exemplified loyalty to the great power protector and thus claimed the right to safeguard Australian security? Commentator Donald Horne has argued that at this time there was a ‘new faith’ in the nation’s political culture in the form of exclusive strategic reliance on America.137 No matter how accurate such an observation may have been, some Australian leaders did take issue with this new orthodoxy. An examination of the rhetorical edifice of the alliance and the tensions within the political community over the War has the potential to shed new light on Australia’s experience of the Vietnam War and the history of its relationship with America.

A ‘token force’: The Australian commitment to Vietnam

The Liberal-Country party coalition shared the American administration’s understandings about communism in Asia and the situation in Vietnam.138 The ‘domino theory’ – that neighbouring states would fall in quick succession to communist influence imposed by an

137 Horne, Time of Hope, p. 5.
138 On Canberra’s adoption of American Cold War rhetoric and perceptions, see Bell, ‘The American Influence’, pp. 359-361.
external aggressor – dominated the Australian government’s assessment of Cold War realities in Asia.\textsuperscript{139} China was seen by the Menzies and Holt governments as a nefarious centre of communist subversion throughout Asia. External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck gave voice to this belief in expressing the possibility of Peking’s influence in Indonesia, a testament to the ‘growing power of communist China’.\textsuperscript{140} The allegedly long-reaching arms of China made another appearance in the 29 April 1965 announcement by Prime Minister Robert Menzies that an Australian battalion would be sent to fight the Vietcong, whose aim to take over Vietnam ‘must be seen as part of a thrust by communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans’.\textsuperscript{141} Preying on the popular fears of the public, coalition parliamentarian John Hallett asserted that Asian communists not only have ‘territorial ambitions’ but also ‘ambitions to rule [the Australian] way of life’.\textsuperscript{142} Couched in these terms, defence of South Vietnam was directly linked to defence of the Australian mainland, but communism was also depicted as a monolithic, existential threat to Western culture.\textsuperscript{143}

The eagerness of the Holt government to secure the physical presence of the American president in Australia is largely explained by Australian governments having been inured throughout the nation’s history to anticipate ‘isolation in the face of regional dangers’.\textsuperscript{144}

Theoretically, American protection was secured with the signing of the ANZUS treaty in 1951 and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954, which also included


\textsuperscript{141} Robert Menzies, 1965, quoted in Meaney, \textit{Australia and the World}, p. 680.

\textsuperscript{142} Hallett, \textit{Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates}, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansard80%2F1966-05-10%2F0136;orderBy=fragment_number,doc_date-rev;page=8;query=Data

\textsuperscript{143} ‘Ibid.’, p. 42.
Australia’s long-time protector, Britain. However, Australians had learned that their unequivocal strategic dependence on these great powers often left them feeling more vulnerable than ever. Historian David McLean has noted that Australian policymakers’ tendency to inflate expectations of both the ANZUS alliance and Australian access to Washington’s decision-making processes repeatedly produced disappointment. This sentiment was felt after the failure of the United States to join with Australian forces both in preventing Indonesian acquisition of the Dutch territory of West New Guinea, and in combating Indonesia’s policy Konfrontasi against the new Malaysia Federation in the years 1963 to 1966. Even the Kennedy-Barwick Memorandum signed by President Kennedy, US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Australian Minister for External Affairs Sir Garfield Barwick in October 1963, which pledged American support if Indonesian aggression threatened Australian security, was littered with so many qualifications as to render the support virtually meaningless. Any American assistance would only be offered as a last resort and, more to the point, would be restricted to logistical aid. Continuing Australian concern over Indonesia’s regional ambitions was a significant factor in explaining Canberra’s willingness to support the United States in Vietnam. Furthermore, the government’s anxiety over America’s inconsistent regard for Australia’s interests in the Pacific was intensified by the anticipation of Britain’s abandonment of its defence commitments east of Suez. Signs of the British retreat from empire in the form of decolonisation and the

146 As noted previously, in the case of the UK alliance, the Australian government’s policy of defence reliance on Britain was dealt a huge blow with Britain’s failure to defend Singapore in 1942. See Curran and Ward, The Unknown Nation, p. 60.
151 Edwards, A Nation At War, p. 100.
Macmillan government’s attempted entry into the EEC have been discussed in the previous chapter. However it is worth re-emphasising that Britain’s inability to continue protecting Australia made it doubly urgent for the maintenance of an American interest and presence in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{152} In a period of strategic flux, Australians sought confirmation of a great power protector in the region in order to keep the threat from Asia distant.

According to historians Peter Edwards and Gregory Pemberton, the aims of Australia and America in Vietnam were ‘parallel’ rather than ‘identical’.\textsuperscript{153} Both the United States and Australia were concerned with the containment of communism in Southeast Asia, and indeed the highpoint of Australian-American cooperation in this common endeavour was marked by Australia’s military commitment to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{154} However, the Menzies and Holt governments expressed more certainty than the Americans in the appropriateness of an unlimited American military commitment in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{155} It was American prestige and credibility, not its physical survival, that was threatened by the success of communism in Asia.\textsuperscript{156} On the other hand, the Liberal-Country party in Australia unanimously perceived the defeat of communism in Asia as a prerequisite to the continuation of the ‘Australian way of life’.\textsuperscript{157} There was, then, the belief that more was ‘at stake’ for Australia than America should the Vietnamese communists prevail.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{154} McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{156} McLean, ‘American and Australian Cold Wars in Asia’, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{157} Hallett, \textit{Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates}, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansard80%2F1966-05-10%2F0136;orderBy=fragment_number;doc_date_rev:page=8;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%22%22%20Year%22%22%20Month%22%22%22%20Day%22%22%22%22%22%22;rec=8;resCount=Default.
\textsuperscript{158} Rodan, ‘Harold Holt’s Foreign Policy’, p. 314.
The Australian and New Zealand commitments to Vietnam aside, the troops of key American allies in the region, such as Thailand and the Philippines, were heavily subsidised by the Johnson administration. In a press conference in London en route to Washington in June 1966, Holt had even criticised the Wilson government for withholding military assistance from Vietnam. To a considerable degree, Johnson appreciated this show of solidarity. His administration had been attacked for its Vietnam policy domestically and internationally, with Secretary General of the United Nations U Thant voicing his disagreement with America’s evaluation of the conflict, and Britain urging commencement of peace negotiations. To these, the Australian government remained opposed lest negotiations lead to American withdrawal and the stripping of the American cloak of protection from Australia’s back. But even after the application of pressure by Vice President Hubert Humphrey on his visit to Australia in February 1966, which led to an increase in Australian combat forces in March from 1,500 to 4,500, this number was not high enough for Johnson. Australia’s defence expenditure never rose above 4.6 per cent of its GNP compared to America’s at 9.7 per cent. This evidence suggests that contrary to the oft-quoted slogan appropriated by Holt in Washington in July 1966, Australia was far from going ‘all the way with LBJ’. Rather, the Holt government capped its human and material contribution to the conflict at such a level that it was rebuked by Democrat Senator William Fulbright for sending only a ‘token force’ whilst American troops were expected to ‘pay the

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159 Pemberton, All The Way, pp. 305-306.
161 Edwards and Pemberton, Crises and Commitments, pp. 352-353.
162 Ibid., p. 356.
164 McLean, ‘American and Australian Cold Wars in Asia’, p. 43.
Such an approach is summarised by historian Peter King’s phrase that Australians would ‘fight in Southeast Asia to the last American’. During the visit to Australia, Johnson not only expressed gratitude for Australia’s willingness to stand by America in Vietnam in the defence of those unable to protect themselves from communist insurgence, but he also clarified ever so subtly that Australia could do more.

The language of partnership: Rhetoric on the visit

In framing the public face of alliance cooperation during this visit, Johnson returned to the wellspring of the Second World War. Adding a personal connection and endearing himself to the nation in which he was a guest, Johnson reminisced in his speeches on the circumstances which brought him to Townsville in 1942 – the threat from rampant Japanese militarism. Identifying a tradition of partnership between America and Australia in the ‘struggle to preserve freedom’, Johnson located the manifestation of this partnership in the present when ‘Australian sons’ were fighting ‘side by side’ with Americans in Vietnam. America came to Australia’s aid in World War Two, but aggression was defeated through mutual ‘sacrifice’, ‘bravery’ and ‘determination’ on the part of the two nations and their allies. Whereas it was a ‘mission of war’ that motivated Johnson’s first visit to Australia as a soldier, his journey as president constituted a ‘mission of hope’.

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168 Curran and Ward, The Unknown Nation, p. 60.
confirmation of America’s belief that its decision to be in Vietnam was ‘right’ despite the heavy burden it placed on that nation, it also aimed to ‘warn’ Australia that its ‘work [was] not done’. That ‘Australians will go all the way as Americans will go all the way’, as the past had proved, was a truism taken for granted in Johnson’s speeches, but at the same time the president implored the nation to ensure it fulfilled this assumption.173

Drawing on the commonalities between America and its Pacific neighbour, Johnson showed that not only did the alliance possess ‘credibility’ insofar as America delivered on protection in the Second World War when its own interests were concerned, but it was also a natural alliance.174 The Australian landscape and wildlife brought to Johnson’s mind his own native Texas, but he was careful to emphasise that ‘the real similarities’ between America and Australia ‘were far deeper and more meaningful’ than topography or fauna.175 Rather, it was the parallel experiences and achievements of the Australian and American peoples – ‘democratic politics’, ‘devotion to education’ and an ‘intelligent interest’ in foreign affairs – which Johnson pinpointed as the ‘foundations of friendship’ between the nations.176 Holt, too, spoke to this friendship in his welcome speech for Johnson at Canberra airport, reminding the public that America’s contribution ‘to the security of this nation’ at its hour of ‘greatest peril’ warranted Australia’s thanks.177 And although Holt’s expression of hope that between the American president and the Australian people will be established ‘a lingering bond of affection which will persist down through the years’ was not realised if presidential visits to

Australia after Johnson’s were any kind of measurement of this bond, Johnson himself spoke of his happiness in returning to a place of sentimental value that undoubtedly provided comfort to an increasingly stressed president.  

Since the two nations shared common ‘goals’ and a common ‘future’ arising out of similar political and cultural outlooks and growing ‘interdependence’, it followed for Johnson that the diplomatic, military and economic contributions made to the defence of the non-communist Vietnamese should reflect Australia’s certainty in the necessity of the War. Leadership and initiative would be required at the Manila Conference in late October from Holt and the New Zealand Prime Minister Keith Holyoake in impressing upon Vietnam’s Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky the allies’ united front against Hanoi. Although in a private meeting with the Holt Cabinet in Canberra Johnson gave the impression that ‘he had not come to Australia to ask for a man or a dollar’, he made entirely clear that his conception of a workable, sustainable Australian-American alliance involved Australian commitment to Vietnam that demonstrated the importance of allied victory for Australia. This perspective was epitomised in Johnson’s public statement that the communist Asian enemy would reach Melbourne before San Francisco, and in the call for Australians to ‘decide how much your liberty and your freedom mean to you and what you are willing to pay for it’. The impact of Johnson’s rhetorical intensity caused journalist John Bennetts to comment that the


181 ‘Ibid.’.

‘persuasive and confident’ Texan left Holt’s own oratorical style and prime ministerial presence in the president’s wake, and that Johnson had the ability to woo a crowd ‘like an evangelist’. But acknowledgment came from the British high commissioner in Australia, Charles Johnston, that the president’s speeches validated Holt’s conviction in the ‘wisdom’ of American strategy in Vietnam.

Opposing the War, supporting the alliance: Labor’s dilemma

Johnson’s visit brought to the fore longstanding arguments within the Labor party about how best to articulate its view of the world and its relationship with America. Internal party conflict throughout the 1950s over the influence of communism in the party’s ranks, especially within the trade unions, culminated in the split of the party in 1955. After the split the coalition consistently argued that Labor was not fit to govern on the basis of its internal disharmony and incompetence in foreign policy and defence management.

Although many in the party looked to the United Nations for mediation in international affairs, discarding the American alliance was never a serious objective. Rather, as this section will show, the Labor party under Arthur Calwell proposed an alternative view of Australia’s role in the alliance. If Australia was to be a responsible ally, it should advise against foreign policy adventures which risked degrading America’s reputation and international standing. But articulating this approach at a time when the Australian public showed overwhelming support for America’s plight in Vietnam and the government’s posture

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183 Age, 24 October 1966.
towards the War proved to be a challenging endeavour. Nevertheless, an examination of this tension within the Labor party and its explosion in the midst of the president’s tour provides a counterpoint to the traditional images of streamers, star-spangled banners and mellifluous rhetoric flowing through this period.

Many in the Labor party did not view the government’s justifications for involvement in Vietnam as valid. Historian Henry Albinski’s argument that Labor politicians were less inclined to see the Vietnam conflict as an ‘externally-directed set-piece of communist aggression’ is reflected in Labor Senator John Wheeldon’s rejection of the ‘downward thrust by China’ theory on the basis of paucity of ‘evidence’. Neither was it true, the Labor party maintained, that Australia was committed to Vietnam under either ANZUS or SEATO. Historian Denis L. Cuddy has shown that despite External Affairs Minister Barwick’s and his successor Paul Hasluck’s offerings of legal justifications for participation in the War as an extension of ‘general obligations assumed under SEATO’, there was no reference made to SEATO by the South Vietnamese government in its acceptance of Australia’s offer of help. Labor senators Wheeldon and Lionel Murphy strove to cast the Vietnam commitment as an arbitrary, irresponsible action of the government. If SEATO applied to Vietnam, Wheeldon argued, other European and Asian SEATO treaty members would be involved. Murphy

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188 According to the Morgan Gallup polls, approval ratings of the government’s policy of sending military forces to Vietnam rose from 52 per cent in May 1965 to 62 per cent in May 1967. See Meaney, Australia and the World, p. 702.
189 Albinski, Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia, p. 37; John Wheeldon, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Senate, 30 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-30%2F0081;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22%20Day%3A%2215%22%20Month%3A%22December%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Day%3A%2214%22;rec=6;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
190 These justifications were given in late 1964. See Cuddy, ‘The American Role in Australian Involvement in the Vietnam War’, p. 342. For an account of the Australian government’s extraction of a call for assistance from the South Vietnamese government, see Pemberton, All the Way, pp. 135-165.
191 Wheeldon, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-
firmly denied any applicability ‘whatever’ of ANZUS to the Vietnam conflict. But both the Menzies and Holt governments claimed that obligations and responsibilities under Australia’s treaties warranted Australian troops in Vietnam. With a view to bolster the government’s decision in the public mind, Holt specified in his November election statement that Australia was fighting in Vietnam because of the duties that accompanied ANZUS and SEATO. In various statements made by Liberal-Country party politicians, though, the basic reason emerged for Australia’s desire to be in Vietnam, which was to show tangible support for the American alliance. Menzies stated that Australia ‘must not overlook the point that our alliances, as well as providing guarantees and assurances for our security, make demands upon us’, whilst Holt’s Defence Minister Allen Fairhall gave the vague explanation, meant as an affirmative clarification, that Australia was in Vietnam ‘by request, by treaty, by obligation and by commitment’. 

According to historian Ashley Lavelle, Labor did not initially oppose American efforts in Vietnam. A February 1965 statement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, for which responsibility is contentiously attributed to Labor politicians Jim Cairns and Allan D. Fraser,
gave approval of American intervention.\textsuperscript{196} The bombing of North Vietnam was acceptable insofar as it hastened commencement of a peace settlement.\textsuperscript{197} Cooperation between America and Australia was endorsed in the statement as it was necessary for the establishment of suitable social and economic conditions conducive to free elections in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{198} The statement also gave voice to the fear of the communist menace creeping ever closer to Australia’s shores.\textsuperscript{199} That communism posed a danger to Australia’s capitalist democracy was accepted wisdom in both the Liberal-Country party and elements of the Labor party.\textsuperscript{200} As historian Neville Meaney has argued, Labor in this period was never anti-American but instead gave voice to an idea of America different to that espoused by the conservatives; that is, ‘the America of social progress, liberal reform, civil rights and equal opportunity’ envisaged in the principles of leaders such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{201}

It was over national service, or the less palatable term conscription, that Labor began its own war on the coalition government in earnest.\textsuperscript{202} Menzies’ announcement in April 1965 of the possibility that Australian conscripts would be sent overseas was followed by the notice given by Prime Minister Holt in March 1966 that conscripts would be among the additional

\textsuperscript{196} Edwards and Pemberton, \textit{Crises and Commitments}, p. 348. Although Edwards and Pemberton have decided that Cairns and Fraser formed the statement, Jim Cairns’ biographer Paul Strangio could not indicate conclusively whether this was true. Strangio has pointed out that Cairns believed Kim Beazley Snr wrote the statement. See Paul Strangio, \textit{Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns} (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002), pp. 148-149.

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)}, 19 February 1965.

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{202} Although the Australian public showed overwhelming support for Australian involvement in Vietnam, the majority consistently opposed sending conscripts to fight there. See Murray Goot and Rodney Tiffen, ‘Public Opinion and the Politics of the Polls’, in Peter King, ed., \textit{Australia’s Vietnam: Australia in the Second Indo-China War} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 142-143.
numbers sent to Vietnam. A different vision of alliance management was offered in Calwell’s 4 May 1965 response to Menzies’ troop commitment announcement. Sensitive to America’s status as a global superpower, Calwell argued that American interests were jeopardised by the involvement of Australian conscripts. Asserting that America ‘must not be humiliated in Asia’, and that America should initiate negotiations whilst it still had the upper hand, Calwell insisted that sending conscripts to Vietnam would only prolong what was an ‘unwinnable’ ‘civil war’, at the end of which the communists would prove victorious. The Labor party’s objection to conscription was also based on the belief that it reflected the government’s misinterpretation of the lesson of Munich: to ‘move early and decisively against rising threats’. This misinterpretation meant that the government placed too much emphasis on military methods of meeting a political threat which would only be defeated through economic aid and diplomatic strategies. Sending conscripts would therefore assist the allies’ defeat in the long term and facilitate the demise of American power and prestige. Labor’s objection also comprised a strong moral element, summarised by Calwell in parliament on 10 May 1966:

The government’s attitude represents... a cowardly desertion of responsibility by throwing the almost whole, ultimate burden of military service in this country on to a

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204 Ibid., p. 142. Menzies in 1964 announced that selective compulsory service was necessary to increase the strength of the army in a short period of time. This announcement was not met with the same hostility as was Menzies’ 29 April 1965 announcement. See Main, Conscription, pp. 136-141.
205 Meaney, Australia and the World, p. 680.
section of our twenty year old youths who have neither a voice nor a choice in their consignment, maybe, to an early death in jungle swamps.\footnote{Arthur Calwell, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 10 May 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansard80%2F1966-05-10%2F0129;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=8;query=Dataset%3Ahansard,hansard80%20Decade%3A%221960%22%20Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2205%22%20Day%3A%2210%22;rec=8;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.}

For these strategic and ethical reasons, conscription was not seen by the Labor party either as a way to nurture the American alliance or to accomplish a favourable outcome in Vietnam.

Opposition to conscription was a key plank of the Labor party platform in the November 1966 election, which was essentially a referendum on conscription, but the party lacked a united voice on when and which troops would be withdrawn should the Australian people elect a Labor government.\footnote{Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, ‘End of an Era? Anti-Americanism in the Australian Labor Party’, Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol. 56, no. 4 (December 2010), p. 597.} The Federal Parliamentary Caucus policy statement of 12 May 1965 asserted that a future Labor government would return conscripts home immediately and would return the regular army troops home ‘as soon as practicable’.\footnote{Meaney, Australia and the World, p. 686.} The policy of withdrawing conscripts but not volunteers was in itself impractical, but more importantly the party came under fire for at once diluting and strengthening its May 1965 promise.\footnote{Lavelle, ‘Labor and Vietnam’, p. 122.}

Incompatible statements on troop withdrawal were made by Gough Whitlam and Calwell.\footnote{Lavelle, ‘Labor and Vietnam’, p. 122.} Careful to avoid appearing too extreme, Whitlam had offered national servicemen a choice to stay in Vietnam or return home.\footnote{Aitchison has stated that Whitlam and Calwell often disagreed not only on the issue of Vietnam but also on domestic policy matters. See Aitchison, From Bob to Bungles and Now to Billy, p. 25.} Offering a different line again, Calwell on 23 August 1966 insisted \textit{all} troops would be returned to Australia as early as possible.\footnote{Edwards, A Nation at War, p. 135.} The party was attacked for not having made decisive conclusions on its ‘real [troop withdrawal] policy’.\footnote{Arthur Calwell, 1966, quoted in Roy Forward and Bob Reece, eds., Conscription in Australia (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1968), pp. 87-88.}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[209] Arthur Calwell, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 10 May 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansard80%2F1966-05-10%2F0129;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=8;query=Dataset%3Ahansard,hansard80%20Decade%3A%221960%22%20Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2205%22%20Day%3A%2210%22;rec=8;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
\item[211] Meaney, Australia and the World, p. 686.
\item[212] Lavelle, ‘Labor and Vietnam’, p. 122.
\item[213] Aitchison has stated that Whitlam and Calwell often disagreed not only on the issue of Vietnam but also on domestic policy matters. See Aitchison, From Bob to Bungles and Now to Billy, p. 25.
\item[214] Edwards, A Nation at War, p. 135.
\end{itemize}
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Not only had Labor’s conscription stance oscillated between factions, it had also changed over time. Levelling the charge of hypocrisy against the Labor party, Liberal Senator Francis McManus noted that members of the party were pro-conscription in the World Wars: ‘I am opposed to a party which was the first party in Australian history to introduce compulsory military training… going before the people and describing itself as an anti-conscription party’. 217 The inability of Labor to show solidarity over the conscription issue and the government’s condemnation of the party’s inconsistency reflected the broader problem of incoherent party policy arising out of internecine debate.

Divisions in the Labor party had been apparent since early 1965. 218 Calwell himself was increasingly being perceived as ‘awkward, aged and out of touch’ with the electorate. 219 Additionally the party was seen by many as a ‘captive of the extreme left’. 220 Cairns, apparently criticised by the left for his endorsement of American intervention in Vietnam, was then labelled a ‘traitor’ by the leftists for his speech to Labor party candidates before the November election in which he did not foreground the troop withdrawal issue. 221 Also voicing the concern over left-wing extremism, Liberal Senator Magnus Cormack ridiculed the lack of consensus in the Labor party due to the simultaneous worship of ‘several...
In assessing the nature of the division in the Labor party in 1966, Lavelle has shown that the party was not merely ‘polarised’ around the perspectives of Calwell and Whitlam. Rather, several other Labor politicians like Kim Beazley Snr and Sam Benson vocalised their own disagreement with Calwell’s ideas. Such dissent played straight into the coalition’s hands, with Liberal Senator Edward Mattner declaring that ‘waves of divergent opinions are rocking the Australian Labor Party ship’. Labor Senator Samuel Cohen’s denouncement of the government’s Manichean ‘goodies and goodies’ approach to the Vietnam War and his assertion that the better albeit vacuous alternative was to show that ‘Australia has a voice of its own in these matters’ could not have been expected to eventuate within a party unable to decide which voice to heed. There were those in parliament who expressed discontent with the government’s dependence on the American alliance for foreign policy direction, but Australians would not take seriously a party that could not organise its own affairs.

222 Magnus Cormack, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 30 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-30%2F0087;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3Ahansards,hansards80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22;rec=6;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
224 Ibid.
225 Edward Mattner, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 30 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-30%2F0085;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3Ahansards,hansards80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22;rec=6;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
226 Samuel Cohen, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 30 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-30%2F0084;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3Ahansards,hansards80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22;rec=6;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
227 Aitchison, *From Bob to Bungles and Now to Billy*, p. 23.
A party that could not formulate a unifying foreign policy agenda based on the unequivocal view that communism everywhere was a potential threat to Australia was easily made to appear suspect on its management of Australia’s ANZUS treaty. In March 1966 the Liberal-Country party launched an assault on Labor’s re- wording of its official defence platform the previous year. In the Foreign Affairs section of the document, a line had been inserted explicating the need for Australia to ‘periodically review its defence treaties and alliances to meet new circumstances as they arise’. Exploiting this as an example of Labor’s untrustworthiness, Holt warned that if the public voted for Labor in the upcoming election, there would be no hope that ‘the treaties and alliances to which Australia is part would be honoured’. Despite Whitlam’s retort that a section had been added to the platform stating that the Labor party ‘believes Australia cannot isolate itself from the struggles of the peoples of the world’, demonstrating Labor’s belief in the necessity of ‘universal or regional treaty arrangements’, the coalition continued to taunt the Opposition with charges of weakness in defence maintenance. One example is Liberal politician William Aston’s declaration that Labor had only a ‘lukewarm attitude’ to SEATO and ANZUS. In a more strident tone, Liberal Senator Cormack claimed that the Labor party saw no value in treaties and would, if

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228 Harold Holt, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 29 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-03-29%2F0085;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=3;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22%20Day%3A%2229%22;rec=0;resCount=Default](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-03-29%2F0085;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=3;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22%20Day%3A%2229%22;rec=0;resCount=Default), viewed 11 July 2013.

229 Ibid.

230 Gough Whitlam, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 29 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-03-29%2F0086;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=3;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22%20Day%3A%2229%22;rec=0;resCount=Default](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-03-29%2F0086;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=3;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2203%22%20Day%3A%2229%22;rec=0;resCount=Default), viewed 11 July 2013.

231 Aston, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-10-11%2F0113;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=5;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22%20Day%3A%2211%22;rec=14;resCount=Default](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-10-11%2F0113;orderBy_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=5;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22%20Day%3A%2211%22;rec=14;resCount=Default).
given the powers of government, endanger Australia’s security. In contrast the government aimed to convince the public that its handling of the American alliance was advantageous to the nation at the time and in the future, stressing the importance of mutual input in order to derive mutual benefit: ‘Australia needs friends. We need powerful friends and we need reliable friends. The only circumstances in which we are entitled to have a friend [are] if we are a good friend ourselves. If we want a steadfast friend, we must be a steadfast friend’. By conveying its own supremacy in alliance management, particularly that with America, the Holt government was able to perpetuate the image fashioned by Menzies of the conservative party holding a ‘monopoly of wisdom in the foreign policy field’. Such an image of Holt’s grasp of Asian issues and their importance for Australia was reinforced by his tour of the Southeast Asian region only four months into his prime ministership.

Labor ran into difficulty in communicating its opposition to conscription and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War but not the American alliance or official treaties, a dilemma that also risked offending the president himself. Withholding party support for the anti-Vietnam protests encouraged by Federal Labor Party President Jim Keeffe during Johnson’s tour, Labor wanted to avoid seeming not only anti-American but ‘discourteous’ to a visiting

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232 Cormack, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates,* http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-30%2F0087;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3Ahansards,hansards80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2203%22%22;rec=6;resCount=Default.

233 John McEwen, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 29 March 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1966-03-29%2F0088;orderBy=fragment_number,doc_date-rev;page=3;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2203%22%22%20Day%3A%2229%22%22;rec=0;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.


235 The frequency with which Holt visited Asia – three times in his twenty-three month prime ministership – highlighted the contrast between Holt and Menzies, whose Euro-centrism and personal aloofness towards Asia was well known. See Rodan, ‘Harold Holt’s Foreign Policy’, p. 314.

But at times Labor either could not or did not avoid these labels. Suggesting the government was failing to protect Australian citizens out of concern for the American alliance, and that America would not reciprocate support for Australia if America’s interests were not involved, Labor Senator Wheeldon implied American unreliability. Another accusation interpreted as having given offence to America and Johnson particularly was made by Labor politician Tom Uren. Quick to soften his remark that Johnson was easily influenced by the ‘hawks’ in his government, Uren denied any intention to ‘bash and abuse’ the president. That his comment carried a grain of truth was less important than the impression it gave of Uren’s disapproval of Johnson’s foreign policy decisions. At the end of Johnson’s meeting with Labor party leaders at the Canberra Rex, in which Johnson emphasised that ‘either a treaty relationship had validity or it did not’, Chairman of the Australian Labor Party Foreign Affairs Committee, Fraser, abandoned all politeness and let fly the comment ‘Thanks for the lecture, Mr President’. It was Calwell, ironically part American, who crossed the line entirely at the parliamentary luncheon for Johnson. There the Labor leader pointed out the president’s own Democratic colleagues, including senators William Fulbright, Wayne Morse and Robert Kennedy, who ‘were not prepared to go all the

237 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
238 Wheeldon, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Vietnam%20Dataset%3Ahansards,hansards80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22;rec=6;resCount=Default.
239 Tom Uren, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 11 October 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansards80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22;orderBy=_fragment_number,doc_date_rev;page=5;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%22%20Month%3A%2210%22;rec=14;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
240 Greenstein has argued that there were numerous people in Johnson’s administration urging a more dovish stance towards Vietnam. Edwards and Pemberton, on the other hand, have emphasised Johnson’s own reluctance to forgo the establishment of ‘political stability’ in South Vietnam before accelerating military action, and the pressure which urged him to make this decision. See Greenstein, The Presidential Difference, pp. 85-86; Edwards and Pemberton, Crises and Commitments, p. 349.
241 Memorandum of Conversation, The President with ALP Leaders, 22 October 1966, Canberra, National Security Files – NSC Histories, Box 45, Folder Tab F, Asia trip, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJL).
242 Calwell’s American ancestry is noted in Aitchison, From Bob to Bangles and Now to Billy, p. 26.
way with LBJ’.\textsuperscript{243} According to journalist Alan Reid, Calwell had committed the sin of involving himself in the domestic politics of his guest.\textsuperscript{244} Furthermore Calwell’s jibe solidified in the public’s eyes that the Australian-American alliance was best managed by Holt’s government and Johnson. This was reflected in the fact that Labor, particularly its leader, had used the ‘all the way’ rhetoric to challenge rather than fertilise the alliance and could not emulate the cozy personal relationship between Holt and Johnson.\textsuperscript{245} Indeed the president was well-versed on Calwell’s foreign policy views before his touch-down in the country and was advised to deal with Calwell the same way ‘he would with individuals who disagree with or have reservations about [American] policy’.\textsuperscript{246}

Added to the awkwardness of Labor’s position was the impact on domestic politics of the Johnson visit. It has been argued by academics Alan Bloomfield and Kim Nossal that the timing of Johnson’s visit, which came only a month prior to the federal election, gave rise to anti-American sentiment in the Labor party.\textsuperscript{247} Labor parliamentarian Fred Daly, for example, reproached Holt for organising Johnson’s tour through cities in which the government’s ‘electoral stocks’ were at a ‘record low level’ before the visit.\textsuperscript{248} The charge by Labor party politicians that the organisation of the visit was an exercise in ‘electioneering’ and that Johnson was meddling in Australian domestic politics was not articulated outside of

\textsuperscript{243} The Bulletin, 29 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Edwards, A Nation At War, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{246} ‘End of an Era?’, p. 598.
\textsuperscript{247} The actual policies of the ALP, however, were not very anti-American at this time. See Bloomfield and Nossal, ‘End of an Era?’, p. 598.
\textsuperscript{248} Fred Daly, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 25 October 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansard80%2F1966-10-25%2F0050;orderBy=_fragment_number,doc_date-rev;page=0;query=Dataset%3Ahansard80%20Decade%3A%221966%22%20Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2210%20Day%3A%2225%22;rec=10;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013.
parliament. To the media, Calwell reported his expectation that Johnson’s tour would not influence Australians at the polls, presumably in an attempt to isolate the visit from the sphere of domestic electoral politics. Although the electoral advantage potentially derived from a visit by the American president would not have escaped Holt’s attention, and the visit certainly did the coalition no harm, other factors were salient in accounting for the record majority with which the coalition was returned to government. For example, historian Trevor Reese has noted that electorates in the 1960s were still attracted to easily digestible over-simplifications such as ‘aggressive communism’ or ‘loyalty to an ally’, whilst academic Paul D. Williams has determined that the strength of anti-communist feeling in the community and popular support for Holt’s posture towards Vietnam were crucial. Holt’s quip that his party did not need a visit from the American president to defeat the Opposition in the election has been proved accurate. At the time, though, Labor party members’ strong expressions of the feeling that it was not fair game for the president to address the Australian

249 Aitchison, *From Bob to Bungles and Now to Billy*, p. 29; Arthur Calwell, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 28 September 1966, updated 15 November 2012, Parliament of Australia, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-09-28%2F0004;orderBy=fragment_number;doc_date-rev;page=0;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20;Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2209%22%20Day%3A%2228%22;rec=3;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013; Daly, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?adv=yes;db=HANSARD80;id=hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1966-10-25%2F0050;orderBy=fragment_number;doc_date-rev;page=0;query=Dataset%3Ahansardr,hansardr80%20Decade%3A%221960s%22%20;Year%3A%221966%20Month%3A%2210%22%20Day%3A%2225%22;rec=10;resCount=Default, viewed 11 July 2013; See Williams, ‘Holt, Johnson and the 1966 Federal Election’, pp. 366-383.

250 Age, 24 October 1966.


public on the issue over which the election was fought bordered on vilification of their guest.\textsuperscript{254}

In sum, the different approaches taken by the government and the Labor party towards the Vietnam War which were highlighted in the months before and the days of Johnson’s tour allowed the government to present Labor as a party that could not be trusted either to take a hard line on communism, to honour the treaties Australia had signed, or to preserve the American alliance. Here was a series of lethal rhetorical grenades that the government lobbed directly into Labor’s lap. Gaining most Australians’ appreciation, the government was delivering on these precious concerns of which the most tangible evidence was the presence of the United States president on Australian soil. Crucially, however, not even at the peak of Australia’s commitment to Vietnam could the Australian government be accused of forgoing its nation’s security interests out of deference to its powerful ally. By keeping its troop commitment and defence expenditure minimal, the Holt government was able to honour and maintain the alliance without significant military or economic sacrifice.

\textsuperscript{254} Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
Chapter Three: People

Having established that not all Australian political leaders approved of President Lyndon Johnson’s conduct of the Vietnam War and the Holt government’s absolute support for this approach, this chapter examines the response of the Australian people to Johnson and his wife Lady Bird Johnson during their October visit. Three dimensions of this reaction will be explored. The first is the frenzied build-up to and euphoric celebrations during the event. Since opposition to America’s waging of war in Vietnam occurred not only inside parliament, but also outside of it on city streets, the following section will consider the organised demonstrations and occasional violent outbursts during the president’s tour. This unrest reflected an anti-war movement still lacking focus but undergoing slow, steady growth. Finally it will be shown that Australians had mixed responses to Johnson and Lady Bird as individuals. Whilst overwhelmingly positive media coverage improved Australians’ views of the Johnsons as leaders and human beings, the actions of Johnson and some of his staff emphasised the gulf between Australians’ and Americans’ understandings of appropriate guest behaviour. University lecturer Alison Broinowski has insisted that Australian complicity in the American alliance has made Australian culture an imitation of its senior ally, whilst another academic, Erik Paul, has argued that the Vietnam War was a ‘watershed’ period accelerating this process. The evidence presented here repudiates this argument for a culturally subservient Australia.

Johnson’s visit was covered extensively by all modes of Australian popular media, including the press, television and radio. Following its introduction to Australia in 1956, television’s ability to shape public opinion through current affairs programs grew steadily throughout the 1960s. However, as academics John S. Western and Colin A. Hughes have found, the press in 1966 was still viewed as the primary disseminator of news in Australia. For this reason, as well as the paucity of motion picture and radio sources available, an examination of how the media reported the preparations for Johnson’s visit and the event itself necessarily relies on newspapers and magazines. In order to obtain an accurate picture of the slightly varied slants taken on the tour by particular media corporations, this study considers not only broadsheet newspapers like the Sydney Morning Herald but also tabloid newspapers. In the most favourable view, tabloids have been associated with ‘the everyday concerns of non-elite readers’ such as women and young people. More commonly, and particularly since the early twentieth century, tabloids have been criticised for their dramatisation of news and unsophisticated news analysis. Nevertheless, neglecting the tabloids is to ignore an entire section of Australian readers. The inclusion of women’s magazines also contributes to a more representative media sample for study. Features on the Johnsons in the Australian Women’s Weekly and Woman’s Day are examined for what Australian women wrote and read about the visiting political celebrities.

The political inclinations of the various organs of the press were at times apparent in the reporting of the president’s swing through Australia. The Murdoch-owned corporation News Limited, which issued the Sydney tabloid the Daily Mirror and the national newspaper the

259 ‘Ibid.’.
260 ‘Ibid.’.
Australian, took an anti-Vietnam stance.\textsuperscript{261} This led to a 25 per cent circulation drop for the Australian after the 1966 election.\textsuperscript{262} As well as these Murdoch-owned newspapers, Melbourne’s Age was noted for its bias towards the Labor party in a 1973 Australian Broadcasting Commission report.\textsuperscript{263} This same survey found that the Sydney Morning Herald, owned by John Fairfax, was most biased towards the coalition of all the newspapers under consideration here.\textsuperscript{264} However, it is notable that Western and Hughes’ research determined that only a small percentage of Australian newspaper consumers in the late 1960s read one newspaper daily, with most reading newspapers from more than one of the main news ownership groups – Herald and Weekly Times, Fairfax and News Limited – per day.\textsuperscript{265} In sum, most Australians interested in current affairs gained their news from newspapers, and in reading across media ownership groups Australians were exposed to a relatively balanced view of Johnson’s tour.

Near delirium: The Australian reaction to LBJ

Following confirmation of an upcoming American presidential trip to Australia’s east coast in early October, Australian authorities articulated a keen sensitivity to the world-wide attention Australia would receive throughout the event.\textsuperscript{266} The extent of this attention was noted by New South Wales Premier Bob Askin, when he informed a group of retail merchants at a Retail Traders’ Association meeting that an expected 200 million people throughout the world would see Sydney’s welcome to the president on television.\textsuperscript{267} That ‘Australians with

\textsuperscript{261} Denis Cryle, Murdoch’s Flagship: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Australian Newspaper (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), p. 185.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{263} Western and Hughes, The Mass Media in Australia, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., p. 19.
\textsuperscript{266} According to the Courier Mail, the official announcement of President Johnson’s visit to Australia was made by Holt on the night of 6 October. See Courier Mail, 7 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{267} SMH, 19 October 1966.
power’ genuinely value the way others perceive the nation has been discussed by historian Richard White.\textsuperscript{268} Given that Johnson’s visit coincided with an uncomfortable but critical period of introspection on the substance of an authentic Australian nationalism, a concept developed in Chapter One, White’s observation of the outsider’s influence on Australians’ conceptions of themselves is particularly relevant for this study. Approval from the international community of Australia’s welcome and treatment of their distinguished guests would affirm the nation’s competence, creativity and maturity.

The prospect of such an occasion thrusting Australia into the international spotlight sparked an urgent and intense two-week preparation process, particularly in Canberra and Sydney, reflecting the authorities’ nervousness that their logistical management of the tour would invite judgments about Australians as hosts. The hotel that the Johnsons called home for most of their visit, the Canberra Rex, underwent a thorough makeover before the Johnsons arrived, as did the city of Canberra itself.\textsuperscript{269} For the barbeque at Lanyon Station held by the American Embassy on the Saturday of the visit, extensive catering was organised by the staff of the Canberra Rex and new amenities specially built.\textsuperscript{270} The demands placed upon the hotel by the visit’s coordinators caused one journalist to ask whether ‘other heads of state will expect the same kind of treatment if they stay at the Rex’, implying that the Johnsons were beneficiaries of unquestionably special efforts by their hosts.\textsuperscript{271} A visit by the American president and his wife instilled the usually ‘blasé’ Australian capital, to use a Sydney Morning Herald journalist’s term, with the drive to impress.\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{268} Richard White, ‘The Outsider’s Gaze and the Representation of Australia’, in Don Grant and Graham Seal, eds., \textit{Australia in the World: Perceptions and Possibilities} (Perth: Black Swan Press, 1994), p. 24. White has also pointed out what can be termed ‘Australian “touchiness” about criticism’ if the outsider’s gaze causes offence to Australians. Thus, in White’s view, Australians might also see visitors’ opinions as perceptions to be challenged. See p. 23 of White’s study.

\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Australian}, 19 October 1966; \textit{Age}, 20 October 1966; \textit{SMH}, 20 October 1966.

\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Sun Herald}, 23 October 1966.

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{Australian}, 19 October 1966.

\textsuperscript{272} \textit{SMH}, 20 October 1966.
The welcome arrangements for the president’s half-day stopover in Sydney were particularly elaborate. ‘Make Sydney Gay for LBJ’ was the theme announced by Premier Askin around which Sydney’s greeting was organised, and this theme applied not only to civic space but to individuals’ homes.\textsuperscript{273} Welcome signs, coloured beach towels and other brightly dyed materials were suggested as window decorations.\textsuperscript{274} Sydney Harbour, too, took part in the visual spectacle. Owners of boats that were anchored in the Harbour whilst the president’s own vessel was scheduled to cruise by were encouraged to ‘fly flags and decorate their craft appropriately’.\textsuperscript{275} Predictably overburdened trains and buses had the additional task of transporting New South Wales children under the age of fifteen to the city for free which, although costly, was for Mr Askin a worthwhile concession to create a ‘memorable’ experience.\textsuperscript{276} Sydney authorities engineered the city’s public reception of the Johnsons in order to promote a festive atmosphere and maximise crowd turnout, anxious to show that Sydney honoured the representatives of Australia’s principal ally.\textsuperscript{277}

Although both Canberra and Sydney deliberately planned their welcomes to the Johnsons, it was between Sydney and Melbourne that rivalry emerged over the most appropriate way to express enthusiasm for their American guests. Whereas Premier Askin announced that Sydney would give Johnson ‘an Australian welcome, but along American lines’, implying that Sydney’s Citizens’ Welcoming Committee aimed for a standout celebration of epic proportions, Victorian Premier Sir Henry Bolte remarked that ‘“Sydney can do what it likes.

\textsuperscript{273} \textit{Canberra Times}, 17 October 1966.  
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{Ibid.}  
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{SMH}, 20 October 1966.  
\textsuperscript{276} \textit{Canberra Times}, 14 October 1966.  
\textsuperscript{277} Telegram 1483, British High Commissioner, Canberra, to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 24 October 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
Melbourne’s welcome will be normal, spontaneous and unrehearsed’’. But Melbourne’s insurance was secured in an organised welcome put on stand-by, consisting of all the tinsel and trappings that the Sydney Committee had planned. The fretfulness of the state leaders over their cities’ preparations conflicted with the concerns of some elements of the Australian population who voiced their criticisms of Sydney’s ceremonial provisions in the *Daily Mirror*. One eighteen-year-old male believed ‘too much ballyhoo’ had been made of the visit in general and that Sydney’s preparations should have been ‘more dignified’. Two days later the same newspaper printed another claim that ‘Sydney folk hadn’t really planned [the welcome] at all’, suggesting a gap between the authorities’ and citizen body’s ideas about how the nation should receive the American president. Perhaps the most censorious opinion was given in the *Sun*: ‘There is a point at which welcome can become embarrassing for guest and hosts alike… Let us not go before the world as hero-worshipping juveniles’. It would seem many Australians perceived the welcome celebrations for Johnson as tests of the national character. But whilst most saw in the visit an opportunity to showcase unmatchable loyalty to their powerful ally, others saw the danger of being perceived as a fawning nation of sycophants, whilst still others simply favoured a ‘voluntary’ ‘Australian welcome’.

Johnson’s rapturous reception in New Zealand was repeated in Australia. Whether the welcome was planned or not, wild ‘Johnsonmania’ swept through the streets of Canberra,

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279 *Canberra Times*, 20 October 1966.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
286 *Sun*, 21 October 1966.
287 The *Canberra Times* claimed that the crowds which gathered to greet the Johnsons in New Zealand were bigger than those that assembled for the Queen in 1963. See *Canberra Times*, 21 October 1966.
Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Townsville. Reams of newspaper reports relayed scenes of Australians unable to contain their jubilation during this three-day period. The ‘spectacular scenes of tickertape, flag-waving and surging masses of people’ urged the editor of the *Courier Mail* to conclude that Melbourne residents’ ‘unbridled enthusiasm’ was of a sort unprecedented in Australia. This comment suggested that the ‘frenzy’ of the Queen’s 1954 Royal tour had been momentarily downgraded in the public memory, such was the tribute paid to Johnson. In every Australian city the president strove for union with civilians, hand-shaking, finger-touching, howdy-ing and grinning. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the combination of warm weather and the nervous thrill of being close to Johnson proved too much for some women who required treatment from St John’s ambulances outside the Sydney Art Gallery. It is therefore no understatement to conclude, even when considering the hyperbolic nature of the media coverage, that Johnson’s presence drove some Australians into a state of near delirium.

‘Pummelled’ repeatedly in each city by people desperately trying to reach the president, Johnson’s security guards were apparently in need of liniment to soothe the aches and bruises acquired over the ‘most strenuous three days of their careers’. But the security guards’ stresses were not only attributable to friendly clamouring crowds: protesters carrying placards, shouting hostility and in some cases physically lashing out at the authorities also took their toll on those accountable for the protection of the president.

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287 *Courier Mail*, 22 October.
289 *Courier Mail*, 24 October 1966.
Not all were ‘all the way’: Protests and demonstrations

The years of the Vietnam War called into question many of the established social and political assumptions for Americans and Australians, particularly the younger generations. Unlike television media coverage in America, few Australian television segments or programs were critical of the Vietnam War, but those that took this stance, such as ABC’s *Four Corners*, challenged the government’s framing of the Vietnam conflict. For Australians who admonished their government for its ‘lack of a distinctive Australian stand’ in foreign affairs, which was seen to have mired Australia in Vietnam, social protest became one way to confront politicians with the purportedly authentic feeling of the nation. To the disappointment of Australian radicals, many of the methods used to oppose American political supremacy originated in America itself, although this did not detract from the importance of protest in the Australian context. Thus Australian anti-war demonstrators, ‘seemingly mesmerised by foreign models of rebellion’, participated in demonstrative marches, vigils, strikes, concerts and teach-ins. Anti-war protests in Australia were initially monopolised by the Communist party, despite its members’ hopes for wider support. Change within the protest movement occurred following the early 1965 commencement of America’s bombing of North Vietnam and Robert Menzies’ subsequent troop increase announcement, when Australian anti-conscription groups such as Youth Campaign Against Conscription and Save Our Sons began their own vociferous campaigns against government

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295 Grey, ‘Protest and Dissent’, p. 60.
policy. Historian Jeffrey Grey has argued that the formation of these groups was symptomatic of the gradual shift of the anti-war movement away from the periphery and into the mainstream. Certainly public disapproval of conscription was gaining more exposure around the time of the president’s Australian travels, for example in the highly publicised case of school teacher and pacifist William White. His refusal to obey his 18 July 1966 call-up notice on the grounds of conscientious objection led to a gaol sentence after the election later that year. Whilst White’s obstinacy regardless of the personal cost attracted excessive media attention, headlines were also made by disruption in the streets. In an atmosphere where Australians, like Americans, were experimenting with ‘theatricality’ to challenge the status quo, authorities recognised that Johnson’s hyped-up arrival would provide the perfect stage for organised and spontaneous expression of anti-Vietnam dissent. Accordingly warnings were issued for the public to behave in the presence of a visiting dignitary. Queensland Police Commissioner Francis Bischof made an appeal to the public to cooperate during the welcome festivities. And with the Courier Mail editor’s acknowledgment that Johnson was a ‘tall and tempting target for the discontented’, potential protesters were advised to ‘cool it’ given that Johnson was first and foremost Australia’s ‘honoured guest’. Although the majority complied with this directive, it is important to consider the number who did not for the insight they provide into the Australian image of America at this time.

Labor leader Arthur Calwell anticipated that the demonstrations would cut across political party lines, for example with the involvement not only of Labor party sympathisers but of

299 Grey, ‘Protest and Dissent’, p. 60.
300 Judge Cameron-Smith, 1966, cited in Langley, A Decade of Dissent, p. 65.
301 Edwards, A Nation at War, p. 130.
302 Horne, Time of Hope, p. 57.
303 Courier Mail, 17 October 1966.
304 Courier Mail, 15 October 1966.
parents from the Liberal and Country parties whose “sons [had] been dragged off to war”. Indeed in Sydney, women carrying ‘Save Our Sons’ banners slipped past the barricades near Hyde Park and sat in front of one of the presidential motorcycles. But contrary to an image of the masses having gained purchase on the act of demonstrating as a vehicle for expression, historian Henry Albinski has shown that educated and professional people made up the bulk of the Australian anti-war movement. History lecturer at the University of Sydney, Dr Kenneth Macnab, was actively involved in the protest movement, contributing his signature to a list of names published in the *Australian* as an anti-Vietnam War advertisement. Other signatories on the list included academics, clergymen, teachers, journalists, medical professionals, architects and artists. Students and young people were also key constituents of the protests and their brazenness often made news. Preferring to let his actions speak for him, twenty-one-year-old John Morgan was sentenced to four months in prison and dealt a ten dollar fine for throwing an egg at a bus carrying pressmen in Johnson’s entourage. Youths were subject to police discipline in Melbourne, where the Langley brothers aged eighteen and twenty-one were arrested after pelting the presidential limousine with bags of red and green paint, splattering Johnson’s security guards as well as unlucky bystanders. In a written statement of apology to the president, the boys’ lawyer specified that ‘their action was not inspired by any malevolent feeling towards you or the great nation you represent’. Of most importance was the desire to prove that the decision to hurl paint at Johnson’s motorcade was motivated by opposition to the Vietnam War and was not

307 Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia*, p. 142. Although educated and professional people were disproportionately represented in the demonstrations, the anti-war movement was undoubtedly not confined to Australians belonging to these vocational categories alone.
308 Dr Kenneth Macnab, Papers, Box 1, Folder 10, Rare Book and Special Collections Library, Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
309 Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia*, pp. 142-162.
311 *Canberra Times*, 22 October 1966.
312 *Age*, 28 October 1966.
intended as a personal attack on Johnson.\textsuperscript{313} When Federal Labor Party President Jim Keeffe essentially encouraged demonstrations during Johnson’s visit, Calwell qualified that Keeffe did not request protests against Johnson himself.\textsuperscript{314} Similarly the demonstration of church ministers led by Reverend Alan Walker in Sydney intended to ‘express opposition to the president’s policies without being discourteous’.\textsuperscript{315} Facing the same dilemma as the Labor party, protesting the Vietnam War without criticising Johnson or offending the American nation was voiced as a primary concern for many demonstrators.

But not all demonstrators confined their protests to American policy. The \textit{Canberra Times} reported that demonstrations throughout the visit manifested both anti-Vietnam and anti-Johnson content.\textsuperscript{316} There were a number of Australian demonstrators who opposed Johnson as the leader of the nation conducting a reprehensible military offensive in Vietnam. These demonstrators brandished placards that read ‘Go Away, LBJ’ and ‘Try LBJ for War Crimes’, and chanted ‘Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?’\textsuperscript{317} Moreover, the \textit{Sun Herald} conflated protest against the president with protest against his policies by reporting that anti- and pro-Johnson mobs clashed at the Art Gallery in Sydney.\textsuperscript{318} One tabloid interpreted the sentiment of the Sydney demonstrations to encompass broad anti-Americanism. Thus the \textit{Daily Mirror} claimed that the disruptions by students were both ‘anti-Vietnam’ and ‘anti-US’ which was confirmed by an attempt to snap the flagpole from which the American flag flew.\textsuperscript{319} In an attempt to clarify Australia’s goodwill towards America despite the contrariness of the demonstrations, American Ambassador to Australia Ed Clark

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\textsuperscript{313} See the testimony of David Langley, the younger of the two brothers, in Langley, \textit{A Decade of Dissent}, pp. 57-58.
\textsuperscript{314} \textit{Age}, 10 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{315} \textit{Canberra Times}, 14 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{316} \textit{Canberra Times}, 24 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{317} Horne, \textit{Time of Hope}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{318} \textit{Sun Herald}, 23 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{319} \textit{Daily Mirror}, 22 October 1966. 

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told an American journalist that the demonstrations were ‘against [the United States] government rather than against the president personally’. Nevertheless, concern arose that the anti-Johnson, anti-American demonstrations had spoiled international opinion of Australians. An article in the *Age* stated that during Johnson’s visit, ‘national good manners were to some extent on trial, and it would be useless to pretend that [Australia’s] reputation for tolerance and courtesy suffered no damage from some of the violent scenes which broke out between the protesters and the police’. Although some American newspapers such as the *New York Post* and *New York World Journal Tribune* conveyed the protests as ‘the worst abuse’ of the president’s career, Johnson was no stranger to public demonstrations. The president himself stated that American demonstrations against the War had been conducted ‘with equal vigour’.

The intensity of the demonstrations and the public backlash towards them revealed the deep divisions in Australian society not only over conscription but over how to express opposition to a visiting dignitary, especially the head of state of the nation’s most powerful ally. The majority of the demonstrations during Johnson’s visit were heated, although security on both the American and Australian sides was arranged accordingly. Breaking through the barricades after learning of Johnson’s backdoor entry to the Canberra Rex on his first night in the country, Vietnam Action Committee protesters were only kept away from the hotel entry

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320 *Age*, 24 October 1966.
321 The *Courier Mail* reported that the anti-Johnson demonstrations had marred the image of Australia in the Philippines. One journalist for the *Manila Times* rebuked Australians for trumpeting their superior civility to Asians whilst they engaged in wild battles on the street during Johnson’s visit. See *Courier Mail*, 24 October 1966.
322 *Age*, 29 October 1966.
325 In the event of an emergency or particularly troublesome protest, the Australian security contingent was apparently supposed to lead the American one, although in reality the Americans ran the show. See *Australian*, 15 October 1966; Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
by a wall of policemen. Where emotions ran high, the demonstrations occasionally spilled over into physical skirmishes. Although these were reported, the British high commissioner commented that the ‘ugliness’ of the Sydney demonstrations, which caused the president’s limousine to speed past disappointed onlookers, was underplayed by the press. Dramas in Melbourne were given adequate attention, however, with the Age reporting that police on horseback charged through swarms of anti-Vietnam demonstrators which were uncontrollable even by numerous detectives and extra policemen armed with batons. Of course, such responses to the American president made eye-catching headlines which the tabloid newspapers repeatedly exploited. In the Daily Mirror, the Sun Herald and the Sun, the violence that punctuated some of the protests was presented in titles such as ‘Wild Brawls in LBJ Welcome’, ‘Police Charge 13: Wild Scenes’ and ‘Brawls, Riot and a Bomb Scare!’. It should be noted that the higher quantity of photographs showing police-civilian confrontation in the Daily Mirror compared to the broadsheets spoke not only to that tabloid’s anti-Vietnam stance but also to sales-generating tabloid shock tactics. Not surprisingly, some Australians responded to protest violence during the president’s tour with objections of their own. Defying Labor parliamentarian Jim Cairn’s demand that anti-Vietnam protests must ‘at all times and in all places be dignified and responsible’, many protesters ‘exceeded the bounds in expressing their dissent’ and consequently they did ‘the greatest disservice to the conscientious citizens who agree with their views but disapprove of their means of exhibiting them’. It was the manner in which the demonstrations took place rather than the act of demonstrating itself that was abrasive for Australians who defended public protest as ‘a very

326 Canberra Times, 18 October 1966; Canberra Times, 21 October 1966.
327 Age, 22 October 1966.
329 Daily Mirror, 22 October 1966; Sun Herald, 23 October 1966; Sun, 22 October 1966.
330 Of all the broadsheet newspapers surveyed, the only paper to publish a photograph of police-civilian confrontation was the Canberra Times, 22 October 1966.
331 Jim Cairns, 1966, quoted in Age, 10 October 1966; Age, 29 October 1966.
old and very valuable part of democracy’. 332 However as Grey has noted, for most
Australians political agitation on the streets whether peaceful or not was an unattractive
feature of the Vietnam era.333 Given this opinion of ‘ordinary’ Australians it was little wonder
that the fierce outbursts during Johnson’s visit only worked against the Labor party’s
electoral campaign. 334

Protests and demonstrations against the Vietnam War and in some cases the American
president were widespread and well-planned but conducted by a minority.335 With the
exception of the aforementioned tabloids, the media framed the demonstrations and protests
as blips in the proceedings or ‘aberrant’ incidents that marred the otherwise ecstatic
celebrations.336 Demonstrators marched in every city except Townsville, with numbers
reportedly peaking at two thousand in Sydney, but were always drowned out by thunderous
applause and ear-splitting cheering for both the president and his nation.337 The ultimate
evaluation made by the New York Times was that Johnson’s Australian tour was a ““marked
success”’.338 Nevertheless, the total number of Australians who dissented during Johnson’s
time in Australia was not insignificant and was a prelude to the larger demonstrations later in
the War.339 Regardless of the size of the demonstrations it was America’s decision to
extricate itself from the War in 1969 that provided the impetus for the Australian

332 SMH, 29 October 1966. A journalist in this issue of the SMH was of the view that ‘Demonstrators should
stick to the ground-rules laid down for non-violence in India by Gandhi… the technique of protest requires a
discipline and responsibility which some of our demonstrators have not learnt’.
334 ‘Ibid.’.
335 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
336 Gerster and Bassett, Seizures of Youth, p. 115.
337 BHC Australia: Visit of President Johnson. DO 193/80; Daily Mirror, 22 October 1966; Canberra Times, 24
October 1966.
338 Quoted in Courier Mail, 24 October 1966.
government’s own withdrawal of troops. In terms of its political decision-making and foreign policy conduct, America was viewed by many Australians as neither a responsible superpower nor a model nation. For these reasons, the argument that Australia in the mid-1960s was hankering to become America’s fifty-first state must be subjected to greater scrutiny.

Media coverage of the president’s three-day tour was not solely concentrated on maniacal crowd behaviour. Deeper reflections on Australians’ responses to their American guests by media commentators and the political elite at the time of the visit reveal multi-layered perceptions of the visitors who, for the most part, charmed and entertained but in some circumstances grated against Australians’ conceptions of propriety. Additionally, the media provided a complete background of the figures who had caused a level of commotion in the Australian community previously generated only by the Queen’s visits. Throughout the Johnsons’ stay, the nation was briefed on Mr and Mrs Johnson’s respective roles as president and first lady, which can be seen as an exercise in familiarising Australians with the seemingly elevated lifestyles of their guests. These comments plus media evaluations of the Johnsons’ actions during the visit reshaped the personal images of the Johnsons in the Australian public mind.

‘Strange and exciting’: Reactions to LBJ and Lady Bird

Australians were intrigued by the glamour of American politics brought to them from across the Pacific during Johnson’s visit. Johnson’s Pacific tour was ‘deliberately aimed at the

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340 Grey, ‘Protest and Dissent’, p. 62. An alternative argument has been proposed by Lavelle, who has claimed that the anti-war movement did influence the Labor government’s decision to withdraw troops from Vietnam. See Lavelle, ‘Labor and Vietnam’, pp. 119-136.

341 Don Watson has suggested that entry into the American union would adequately reflect the degree to which Australia has been culturally subservient to America. See Watson, ‘Rabbit Syndrome’, p. 54.
people’. The president’s employment of ‘United States electioneering techniques’ on the crowds gathered at Canberra airport and in the subsequent cities was somewhat ‘surprising’ for Australians, according to an *Age* journalist. Australians soon learned that hand-shaking, back-slapping and the occasional child-kissing were Johnson’s way of connecting with the public. Lady Bird, too, was not content to remain aloof, preferring instead to mix with the crowds in Melbourne and Sydney. Not only did this person-to-person diplomacy place the crowds firmly in the president’s corner, but Johnson himself seemed to derive ‘genuine pleasure’ from the interactions. He gained approval from the Australian public at a time when he was politically beleaguered at home, and his appreciation was made evident whenever he blared flattery and thanks through the loudspeaker in his limousine. But Australians were more than happy to oblige the political superstar. The chemistry between the president and the crowds was aptly described by one media commentator as ‘a sort of mutual intoxication’. For the British high commissioner in Australia, the crowds were enthralled not only by the ‘campaigning folksiness’ that underpinned Johnson’s conduct but also by the novelty of the visit. The security arrangements, undoubtedly intensified in light of President Kennedy’s assassination three years earlier, were ‘the tightest… ever seen’ in their country. Newspapers gave attention to the preparatory trips to Australia made by Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency officers, as well as to the security guard who threw himself across Johnson’s body when Kennedy was shot. The

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342 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
343 *Canberra Times*, 21 October 1966; *Age*, 21 October 1966.
344 *SMH*, 21 October 1966; Lerner, ‘“A Big Tree of Peace and Justice”’, p. 360.
345 *Age*, 22 October 1966; *Age*, 24 October 1966.
346 *Age*, 21 October 1966.
348 *Age*, 22 October 1966.
349 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
350 *Canberra Times*, 8 October 1966.
351 *Courier Mail*, 14 October 1966; *Sun Herald*, 23 October 1966.
cumulative effect of Johnson’s crowd encounters and elaborate planning for the president’s safety was that Australians found the whole event ‘strange and exciting’.\textsuperscript{352}

However some Australians became agitated and even offended by the actions of Johnson and his team. Although the president, the crowds and the photographers loved Johnson’s constant stopping of his limousine in order to step out and greet the buzzing masses, this often upset ‘the security men and the patient organisers who had had their timetable thrown out’.\textsuperscript{353} In fact the president seemed to have little regard for protocol, keeping the governor general and his wife waiting at Government House for forty-five minutes on Johnson’s first evening in the country.\textsuperscript{354} As the British high commissioner commented, ‘the Americans made it absolutely clear who was the boss’.\textsuperscript{355} This was particularly true of those responsible for the president’s personal protection. Having accompanied Johnson and his wife so often throughout their stay, Dame Zara Holt formed a mixed opinion of his personal bodyguards. Although Mrs Holt admired their dedication to Johnson, she also abhorred their callousness, claiming that it was ‘politically dangerous’ to behave with such disregard for the safety of the crowds.\textsuperscript{356} And when a detective suddenly appeared in the kitchen of the prime minister’s Lodge where the Johnsons and Holts dined on the first night of the visit, upsetting the staff with his incessant inspections and questioning why Mrs Holt was handling “the president’s grill”’, Mrs Holt received an uncomfortable reminder that the status of the Johnsons commanded security procedures unlike anything to which she had previously been accustomed.\textsuperscript{357} The president’s attempt to ‘howdy’ four Vietnam veterans standing on guard with crossed arms and bowed heads at the Australian War Memorial epitomised Johnson’s

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\textsuperscript{352} Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
\textsuperscript{353} Age, 21 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{354} Holt, \textit{My Life and Harry}, pp. 184-185. Zara Holt reported that neither the governor general nor his wife seemed displeased by the Johnsons’ late arrival.
\textsuperscript{355} Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
\textsuperscript{356} Holt, \textit{My Life and Harry}, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{357} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 187.
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own inability to sense let alone adhere to the more ‘dignified procedures’ typical in
Australia.\textsuperscript{358}

The president’s powerful office also inspired awe and fascination amongst Australians. In the
\textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, articles explained the authority vested in Johnson’s presidential role
and gave a recounts of a typical day in his life.\textsuperscript{359} More background to the president’s career
was given by the \textit{Australian} which described Johnson’s impressive legislative record in
Congress.\textsuperscript{360} Much interest was also expressed in the paradoxes and contradictions of
Johnson’s personality – the cruelty and compassion, the arrogance and sensitivity – and how
these influenced his staff interactions and behaviour as president.\textsuperscript{361} That Johnson carried
enormous responsibility was the message given by another article, which informed readers
that at all times, ‘vital communication links’, including direct lines to the White House,
Pentagon and State Department, and the hot line between the United States and Moscow,
followed Johnson everywhere.\textsuperscript{362} For one \textit{Daily Mirror} journalist, Johnson’s title and his
embodiment of the American nation were enough to warrant courteousness from the
Australian public:

\begin{quote}
The great majority of Australians, whatever doubts some of them may hold about
American policy in Vietnam, whatever reservations they may have about the
pre-election timing of the visit, will welcome President Johnson as the head of the most
powerful nation in the world… By coming here he pays us a great compliment.\textsuperscript{363}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{358} Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
\textsuperscript{359} \textit{SMH}, 20 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{360} \textit{Australian}, 20 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{361} \textit{SMH}, 20 October 1966; \textit{Daily Mirror}, 21 October 1966. Johnson’s personality has typically been depicted as
a series of dichotomies which arguably have ignored the shades of grey in between. For a moderate assessment
Press, 2006). See also Robert Dallek, \textit{Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times 1908–1960} (New York:
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a more critical account of Johnson’s life, particularly his early
years, see journalist Robert A. Caro’s four volumes: Robert A. Caro, \textit{The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to
Power} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Robert A. Caro, \textit{The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent}
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990); Robert A. Caro, \textit{The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate} (New
York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); Robert A. Caro, \textit{The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Passage of Power} (New
\textsuperscript{362} \textit{Courier Mail}, 14 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{363} \textit{Daily Mirror}, 20 October 1966.
The British high commissioner, too, observed that Australians were ‘flattered that so much attention should be paid to them by the most powerful man in the world’.\footnote{Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.} Johnson’s possession of unrivalled political power was a significant factor explaining why many Australians ‘lost their heads’ in his presence.\footnote{Holt, My Life and Harry, p. 189.}

The first lady was adored by the Australian media. In the lead up to the visit, the \textit{Courier Mail} gave the assessment that Mrs Johnson was a competent and dutiful wife to the president, predicting also that she was quite simply ‘a woman Australians will like’.\footnote{\textit{ Courier Mail}, 21 October 1966.} Noting her business intelligence and self-sufficiency, the \textit{Australian} described how Lady Bird managed to accumulate significant wealth before Johnson’s political ascendancy by investing in several Texan radio stations and a television station.\footnote{\textit{ Australian}, 20 October 1966.} This image of the autonomous Lady Bird was reinforced on both her visits to New Zealand and Australia, when her special interest in beautification and town planning allowed her to pursue activities separate from her husband whilst maintaining the tour’s focus on the public.\footnote{For an introduction to Lady Bird’s beautification projects, see Lewis L. Gould, \textit{Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady} (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000).} For example, Lady Bird’s schedule included the planting of an Arizona cypress tree in front of crowds at Regatta Point in Canberra.\footnote{\textit{ Age}, 19 October 1966.} Following Lady Bird’s departure, a feature in the \textit{Australian Women’s Weekly} noted that her passion for beautification, initially denied serious consideration by the American press, eventually resulted in the passage of legislation through Congress.\footnote{\textit{Australian Women’s Weekly}, 26 October 1966.} Thus Lady Bird was lauded as a consummate politician in her own right. In \textit{Woman’s Day} magazine a week after the visit, Lady Bird was presented as ‘a part and extension of the man
she is married to’, conveying her as Johnson’s political partner as well as caring wife. Lady Bird’s independence and influence on the male-dominated political world invited comparisons with other politically active former first ladies. For the Australian, not even Eleanor Roosevelt ‘was so directly involved in government business’. That the president so heavily relied on Lady Bird was communicated in New York Times journalist James Reston’s compliment, published in the Australian, that “Lyndon could never have made it this far without the help of [Lady Bird]”. Significantly, despite Lady Bird’s success, the Women’s Weekly observed that she had ‘dignity’ but ‘no artificial pomp’. Both during and after the Johnsons’ tour of Australia, Australians expressed approval of the first lady’s crucial role in the president’s career and admiration for her own business achievements and political activism.

The meet-and-greet with the Johnsons prompted reflections on their images in Australia. The Johnsons’ Texan folksiness certainly aroused the public’s curiosity. Reporter for the Australian Ian Moffitt, who spent some time in Washington before the visit, observed that Johnson’s ‘cowboy image’ was ‘striking’. Lady Bird’s ‘country flavoured Texan drawl’ was also ‘surprising’ according to Woman’s Day magazine. Playing on this cultural motif, recipes for a Texan style barbeque were provided in the Australian in light of the Lanyon Station barbeque organised by the American Embassy for Johnson and other diplomats. To this event, Johnson came dressed in ‘full Texan kit complete with everything except a six-shooter’ whilst the other attendees followed their invitations’ suggestion to dress in ‘lounge

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371 Lady Bird ran Johnson’s congressional office during his war-time service, assisted his return to politics after his heart attack in 1955 and campaigned for Johnson throughout the hostile South before the 1964 election. See Woman’s Day, 31 October 1966.
374 Australian Women’s Weekly, 26 October 1966.
375 Australian, 20 October 1966.
376 Woman’s Day, 31 October 1966.
For some, the cowboy stereotype which Johnson worked gave the visit a hint of the contrived. Thus an *Age* journalist commented that Johnson was the ‘grassroots, homespun, extrovert, folksy, how ya’awl president’ whose ‘folksiness [was] perhaps just lightly overdone’. Not all reporters, then, were devoted to perpetuating the Johnson-love. Questioning the honesty of Johnson’s earthy rancher demeanour, the British high commissioner’s view was that the tour gave the impression of ‘slightly bogus folksiness, of homely country manners served up as it were in cellophane for the consumption of big-city voters’. However the British high commissioner did not deny that the tour was a ‘brilliant public relations success’. The tour redefined the conceptions of the president and his wife in the Australian public mind:

The president was changed from a bellicose, crudely typical American politician to a wise, moderate father-figure seeking only peace and Asian brotherhood; Mrs Johnson was transformed from a sharp-faced businesswoman into a gracious figure full of Southern charm.

But the fact remains that the temporary euphoria experienced by Australians as a result of the physical presence in their country of the most powerful couple in the world did not translate into permanent longing to be more like Americans. Gerster and Bassett’s claim, that ‘Australia was there for [Johnson’s] taking’ given the proportionally few protests during the visit and the obvious public affection for the Johnsons as human beings, treats the demonstrations that did occur and criticisms of the tour as negligible. The perception of unwarranted American involvement and arguably criminal conduct in Vietnam, as well as the visitors’ inattention to Australian procedural mores did nothing to endear to Australians the notion of having an American identity.

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378 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
379 *Age*, 22 October 1966.
380 ‘Ibid.’.
381 ‘Ibid.’.
Chapter Four: Loyalty and Culture

A central concern of this study has been to challenge the view that Australia’s foreign policy was not only subservient to Washington but that its entire cultural orientation had drifted from Britain to America. As Chapter One tried to show, at the time of Johnson’s three-day sojourn through Australia, British race patriotism was beginning to crumble under the weight of significant domestic and international pressures. At the same time, the influence of American popular culture, which had been strong for much of the twentieth century, was given a new momentum.\textsuperscript{384} Without the myth of Britishness to give meaning to Australians’ national identity, some commentators and intellectuals, such as Robin Boyd and Geoffrey Serle, feared that the American influence would permanently smother a weak Australian culture that was attempting to assert itself in the absence of the once dominant British race myth. According to historians Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett as well as Serle, many Australians were supposedly content to allow such a takeover.\textsuperscript{385} But a reassessment shows that these claims and fears have perhaps overlooked the reality that the infiltration of American popular and consumer culture occurred alongside Australians’ continuing attachment to Britishness. By considering the form taken by Americanisation in Australia in the 1960s together with Australians’ enduring cultural attachment to the Monarchy, this chapter draws two key conclusions about Australia’s cultural orientation at this time. The first is that the prevalence of American-style popular and consumer culture in Australia was not the result of Australians’ attempt to build a second-hand American identity in the wake of the collapse of the British racial myth. The second is that although Australian politicians saw the need to shelve the deferential rhetoric of empire, Australian civic culture and national identity


remained anchored in Britishness.\textsuperscript{386} In short, although the idea of being ‘British’ was losing its once intense racial basis, Australians still saw themselves as very much in the British orbit.

The term ‘Americanisation’ is used here in reference to its relationship with Australian culture. Rather than simply implying assimilation of one nation’s customs with those of the United States, Americanisation has been described by historian Richard White as ‘the fundamental reference points of a culture, and the extent to which they can be located in the United States rather than in the culture itself’.\textsuperscript{387} The concept refers not only to ‘the measure of American content, but its impact (if any) on behaviour and ways of thinking’.\textsuperscript{388} Additionally ‘the examination of Americanisation should embrace not just the impact of Americanisation on popular culture, but its effect on the culture as a whole’.\textsuperscript{389} In other words, greater insight into the inroads that Americana had made on Australian culture by this time can be gained by considering the established cultural processes in Australia, and how they mediated or deflected American influences.\textsuperscript{390} For Boyd, it was the devotion of Australians in the architecture, design and advertisement industries to ‘the parrot’s imitation’ of the worst features of Americana that ensured Australian culture would sink ‘out of sight into the Pacific’.\textsuperscript{391} But Australian culture, underscored by Britishness, remained afloat. The continuum of Australians’ responses, from enthrallment to aversion, to American ways of thinking and behaving throughout the twentieth century, and most importantly in the Cold War period, always took place against the backdrop of Australians’ cultural Britishness.

\textsuperscript{386} Curran, \textit{The Power of Speech}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{387} White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{388} ‘Ibid.’.
\textsuperscript{389} ‘Ibid.’.
\textsuperscript{390} Philip Bell and Roger Bell, ‘Introduction: The Dilemmas of “Americanization”’, in Philip Bell and Roger Bell, eds., \textit{Americanization and Australia} (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1998), p. 6.
\textsuperscript{391} Boyd, \textit{The Australian Ugliness}, p. 65.
Working out their ‘own civilisation’: Americanisation in Australia

Several decades prior to the 1960s, Australians had found in American culture both laudable and deplorable features. Historian Richard Waterhouse has argued that before the First World War there was little fear that American culture, which had already made its mark on the theatre arts in Australia, posed a threat to the British customs Australians had adopted and adapted to their local context.\(^{392}\) In fact some political leaders such as Henry Parkes and Alfred Deakin saw America as a guide for Australia on the development of philanthropically-funded social institutions.\(^{393}\) On the level of sentiment, Americans were seen as Australians’ familial relatives in the Pacific.\(^{394}\) For historian Neville Meaney, Australians, having been ‘cut off from their [British] cultural roots’ for several generations, were brought back ‘into touch with their Anglo-Saxon cultural inheritance’ with the coming of America’s Great White Fleet to Sydney and Melbourne in August 1908.\(^{395}\) To a great extent the arrival of these vessels assuaged Australians’ fears of their nation’s geographic vulnerability to the perceived Japanese menace, but the visit also provided an opportunity for the ‘expression of Anglo-Saxon solidarity’.\(^{396}\) The bond of kinship espoused by leaders on both sides of the Pacific was matched by the widespread enthusiasm with which the Australians greeted the Americans.\(^{397}\) Additionally the American demonstration of naval strength was viewed by one Liberal senator as an exemplification of technological progress.\(^{398}\) At this time, then, America was seen as closely affiliated with Australia through their common British heritage and in


\(^{393}\) ‘Ibid.’.


\(^{396}\) Lake and Reynolds, Drawing the Global Colour Line, p. 203.


their shared occupation of the Pacific, and was even held up by some leaders as a model for the smaller nation. This view was voiced most clearly by Australian Labor Prime Minister William Hughes’ 1938 statement to Washington in which he proclaimed ‘What we are, you were; and what you are, we hope to be’. However between the First and Second World Wars, criticisms of American cultural influence in Australia from both conservative and left-wing circles became harsher and more frequent. Censures from the right wing were often based on the moral depravity of American comics, magazines and films, and denounced cultural products associated with the American ‘Negro’. Radical nationalists also saw American culture as “cheap”, lamenting Australians’ ignorance of their own uniquely Australian artistic talents.

But these interactions with American culture were shallow compared to the encounters with hundreds of thousands of American troops on the Australian mainland from March 1941 til the end of the War. Meeting Americans in the flesh during this period marked the most sustained contact Australians had had with another culture since the gold rushes of the nineteenth century. To their male and female American visitors, Australians had varied responses, although the governments of both nations presented the relations as categorically cordial. Whilst the Americans occupied Australian cities, “Americamania” spread like wildfire: the people of the nation Australians had seen in Hollywood movies were suddenly on their very doorstep. However, anti-American prejudices often accompanied person-to-person interactions. Emphasising the dissimilarities between the guests and hosts, historians 

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400 Waterhouse, ‘Popular Culture’, p. 46.
401 ‘Ibid.’.
402 ‘Ibid.’.
403 Potts and Potts, Yanks Down Under 1941–1945, p. xix.
404 Bell and Bell, Implicated, p. 100; Bell, ‘The American Influence’, p. 356.
405 Bell and Bell, Implicated, p. 101.
E Daniel Potts and Annette Potts have claimed that during the ‘friendly invasion’, ‘at all levels misunderstandings, emphasising different national practices, occurred’.406 Australians and Americans locked horns over issues of romance and the relative affluence of the American GIs, with disagreements occasionally sparking physical confrontations and even fatal brawls.407 Tension also arose over the presence on the Australian mainland of African Americans, who directly confronted the fierce commitment to White Australia by Australian governments since Federation.408 Dramatic as this period of cultural exposure was, in contrast the legacy of the American presence during the War was ambivalent. In the realm of popular culture, the impact of the American presence was virtually untraceable. White has shown that there was ‘no noticeable increase’ in American content or styles in the film industry or popular media following the departure of the visiting war-service men and women.409 Moreover, the extent to which the influx of American troops led Australians to assess their communal identity as a nation has been deemed significant but limited by historians. Potts and Potts have taken the most assured view in asserting that interactions with Americans ‘undoubtedly created a new awareness among Australians of themselves as a distinct people, able to import and adapt cultural baggage from Britain, the US or elsewhere, but still… able to take their country on its own way and to “work out its own civilisation”’.410 And although historians Philip and Roger Bell have argued that the American occupation of Australian soil ‘encouraged Australians to define, or to redefine, their sense of nationality in relation to a major, ethnically “European” nation other than the United Kingdom’, there was also ‘little evidence to show that the war generated fresh, new understandings of Australians themselves or of their visitors’.411 The forced temporary intimacy of the Australian and American

407 Bell and Bell, *Implicated*, p. 100.
408 *Ibid*.
411 Bell and Bell, *Implicated*, p. 107.
peoples did not produce change in Australian culture, nor did it bring the governments of the two nations closer together in the immediate post-war period. Indeed in this period Australian governments failed to get the Truman administration on board for a mutual defence agreement in the Pacific, and Truman even rebuffed Labor minister Dr Herbert Vere Evatt’s plea for a presidential statement of support for Australian security.

A new stage in the life of the Australian-American alliance commenced with the advent of the Cold War. As Chapter One has detailed, at this time Australian governments actively sought integration with American systems of ideology, consumerism and popular culture. For Roger Bell, this process reflected the ‘broadly shared living conditions and political traditions of the two societies and, of course, their shared language’.

As Australians began identifying the Liberal party with the future and aspirations of American-style living, the coalition’s monopoly on alliance management became tied to its ability to guide Australia towards a more Americanised economy and to facilitate a consumer culture. Australian radio and television were dominated by American content in the 1960s, and fashions and fads from across the Pacific gripped Australian youths. The motor car, one of the hallmarks of modern American culture, not only changed the way Australians travelled but was also the invention around which they designed facilities like supermarkets

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412 Bell, ‘The American Influence’, p. 356. After the Second World War, the Australian government worked even harder to confirm its relationship with Britain, whilst tensions arose in the Australian-American relationship over divergent views of Japan. Whereas the Australian government feared Japan’s resurgence, the United States had forces in Japan, had gained control over its economic development and thus no longer perceived Japan as a threat to the international order.
416 Bell and Bell, Implicated, p. 182, pp. 167-168.
and the drive-in cinema.\(^{417}\) Notwithstanding Australians’ hunger for American products, they were not passive recipients of a transfer of culture from their senior ally.\(^{418}\) Local forces negotiated concepts imported from across the Pacific.\(^{419}\) One example was the Australian-made television series *Homicide*, an interpretation of the forensic science/crime fiction television genre.\(^{420}\) Nevertheless criticisms of what was seen to be a corrosive American influence were made at the time by the public commentator Horne, architect Boyd and historian Serle. Additionally the rapid growth of American shareholdings in the Australian economy in the 1960s was opposed by Labor parliamentarian Tom Uren who, on behalf of what he labelled a ‘wide section of the Australian community’, bemoaned the apparent ‘loss of [Australia’s] heritage to United States investment’.\(^{421}\) For the majority, though, the intensification of Americanisation in the Cold War was largely perceived as a tolerable ‘price’ to pay for closer alignment with the United States – the so-called protector of freedom.\(^{422}\)

Viewing Americanisation as part of the broader process of modernisation challenges historians Gerster and Bassett’s argument that Johnson’s visit was an exercise in cultural imperialism and that Australians’ rapturous reception of the president reflected their culturally subservient mindset.\(^{423}\) In contrast to Gerster and Bassett’s claim that Australians latched onto American-inspired ideas and items because of an obsession with anything American, academic Mark Rolfe has argued that Australians ‘have loved whatever is

\(^{417}\) Bell and Bell, *Implicated*, pp. 165-166.
\(^{419}\) Bell and Bell, ‘Introduction’, p. 6
\(^{420}\) Waterhouse, ‘Popular Culture’, p. 56.
\(^{422}\) White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 120.
\(^{423}\) Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, p. 34.
“modern”, which has often meant “American”.

Additionally, Roger Bell has understood Americanisation as the central component in the Westernisation of the modern world. In European nations such as France, as in Australia, changes occurred in the industrial, economic and commercial sectors, and lifestyles were accommodated that were linked with America. Together, these were ‘uniquely placed’ as the ‘rational alternative to authoritarian communism’. Buying into American popular and consumer culture was therefore neither imposed on Australians by a domineering America nor an attempt by Australians to construct an identity of themselves as American. By following White’s suggestion to divorce the proliferation of American cultural forms in Australia from debates about Australia’s national identity, an alternative interpretation can be given to Gerster and Bassett’s inference that the crowd turnouts for Johnson were evidence of an Australian community grovelling at the feet of their ‘de facto leader’. Rather, as the Courier Mail explained, meeting Johnson at the various welcome parades gave Australians ‘the opportunity to show [their] gratitude with warmth and courtesy’ for American protection in the Second World War as well as for ‘the contribution’ which America continued to make, particularly in communist hotspots, ‘for the well-being of the world’. Although these tumultuous displays by Australians in October 1966 were perceived by the British high commissioner in Australia as the ‘public crystallisation’ of Australian-American relations since World War Two, for

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424 Mark Rolfe, ‘Suburbia’, in Philip Bell and Roger Bell, eds., Americanization and Australia (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1998), p. 62. At the same time, not everything that was modern was American. See Bell and Bell, Implicated, p. 158.
427 Bell and Bell, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.
429 White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 112; Gerster and Bassett, Seizures of Youth, p. 34.
430 Courier Mail, 20 October 1966.
historian David McLean, expressions of alliance hysteria by Australians was rooted in fears of Asia that had arisen long before that War. Thus:

the impulse behind Johnson’s welcome in 1966 was similar to that underlying the reception of the Great White Fleet: in both cases the fervour of the response expressed goodwill and gratitude towards a culturally-related great power to which Australians looked for protection in a threatening region.

By the time Johnson arrived in Australia, Australians of all social classes had been appropriating American concepts, novelties and trends for decades, but the claim that Americanisation had ‘conquered’ Australia is to deny Australians any agency at all in the process. It has been shown here and in Chapter One that elements of American culture were rejected by Australians. And although Johnson’s visit coincided with an arguably unprecedented saturation of Australia’s popular culture with American items and American-derived modes, differences between the Pacific allies’ cultural norms were emphasised privately by Australian and British leaders. When these critiques and cultural differences are considered along with the observations made by Zara Holt and Johnson’s insensitivity to Australian procedural mores elaborated in Chapter Three, as well as the evidence below, it is clear that many Australians who identified with the racial myth of Britishness continued to show greater commonalities with the British than the Americans.

**Enduring cultural sentiment: Britishness**

On an individual and cultural level, President Lyndon Johnson was considered out of step with Australian ways of thinking, contributing to the view that Australian culture resonated more with Britain than America. Visiting the White House prior to the president’s Pacific tour, Johnson asked Australian Treasurer Bill McMahon to deliver the message that Harold

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431 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
432 McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite?’, p. 73.
433 White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 120; Gerster and Bassett, _Seizures of Youth_, p. 32.
Holt was ‘the sort of man [he’d] like to get down behind a log with’. After McMahon explained that he could not deliver that message because the American’s expression would be interpreted rather differently in Australia, Johnson instead described Australians as ‘good people to go to the well with’. In a separate instance, speaking of their personal relationship Holt confided to the British high commissioner that although Johnson ‘probably [meant] more’ to the Australian nation, it was ‘difficult to get on the same wavelength’ with the president and that Holt felt ‘personally far closer’ to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. More than exemplifying the quirkiness of the Texan, these anecdotes were used by the British high commissioner to demonstrate deeper differences in cultural outlook between Australians and Americans.

The overt and overflowing intimacy of the Australian-American alliance at the time of the Vietnam War, which was epitomised in Australia by thronging Johnson-obsessed crowds and the mutual affection between Johnson and Holt, moved some British officials to comment privately and publicly on the state of Australia’s relationships with Britain and the United States. The very fact that British diplomats were impelled to write on such matters is itself suggestive of the wider social and cultural climate that they were observing at this time.

Tempting though it might be to dismiss such reflections as the idle jottings of bureaucrats trying furiously to maintain their credibility and relevance, they nevertheless offer the historian a unique insight into how the Australia-American relationship was viewed from the British perspective and the consequences the British saw for Anglo-Australian relations. The British high commissioner, reflecting on the luncheon held for the president at Lanyon Station in Canberra, admitted that ‘in the middle of this Vietnam-oriented Australian-

434 Correspondence, Charles Johnston to Sir Neil Pritchard, Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Commonwealth Office, 8 November 1966, DO 169/471, TNA.
435 Ibid.
436 Ibid.
American love-feast, the representative of the British government was decidedly the skeleton at the barbeque’. Insofar as this referred to Australian and American involvement in Vietnam without Britain, Johnston’s insight rang true. For Australia’s part, even as Holt endeavoured in 1967 to persuade British Prime Minister Wilson to reconsider withdrawal from east of Suez, any renewed efforts to intertwine Australia’s defence policy with Britain’s registered for the Australians as ‘faintly anachronistic’. But the British were concerned to present the essence of the British connection in Australia as unsullied. The British leader of the Opposition, Lord Carrington, on his own journey to Australia in the wake of the American president, publicly downplayed the significance of Australia’s increasing associations with America. To the *Sydney Morning Herald* Carrington remarked that ‘it is the most natural thing in the world for Australia to look to the United States, with all its power, when it comes to matters of defence’ but ‘the recent emphasis… on Australia’s relations with America – political, economic and military – does not mean that Australia is going American. The fact that Australia and America have strong ties is quite irrelevant to British relationships with Australia’. It is true that use of the term ‘irrelevant’ belied the role played by Britain’s inability to defend its dominion in motivating Australian attempts to enjoin America in a defence treaty. More importantly, however, Carrington spoke to the co-existence of strong Australian-American defence links with Australians’ enduring sense of affinity with Britain.

Given the starkness of Australia’s defence relationships at the time – that is, Australia’s exclusive reliance on American protection – Carrington had referred to the residual appeal of British cultural sentiment in Australia. Even as the proponents of the ‘new nationalism’ sought to articulate an authentic Australian myth following the dissolution of British race

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437 Telegram 1485, Johnston to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, ‘Publicity Coverage of Johnson’s Visit’, 24 October 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
440 Pemberton, *All the Way*, p. 331.
patriotism, the nation was not simply wiped clean of its British influences.\textsuperscript{441} These were entrenched in Australian society and continued to give shape and flow to intellectual and institutional life. As White has noted, ‘the universities, the professions, the parliament and law, the major protestant churches, the press and the book trade are all British institutions’.\textsuperscript{442} The Australian people, too, had seemingly not abandoned the idea of themselves as ‘British’. In a letter to the Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom three months after Johnson’s departure, British High Commissioner Johnston concluded that ‘British’ was still ‘a term which many, but by no means all, Australians regard as comprehending themselves’.\textsuperscript{443} As post-war immigration of non-British populations changed the complexion of Australia, the ‘language of intense Britishness’ became less relevant, yet the Holt government clung to a ‘homogeneous’ British culture as the unifying ideal for a cohesive Australian nation.\textsuperscript{444} Writing as late as 1985, Potts and Potts have concluded that ‘the emotional attachment to the concept of being British is weaker, but persists’, not in the least because of the absence of any credible alternative to replace it.\textsuperscript{445}

No more ‘old style Royal tours’: The LBJ effect on the Australian Monarchy

In the turbulent international environment of the 1960s, in which Britain initiated rapid decolonisation and its withdrawal into Europe, it is not surprising that the British government saw the need to re-examine particular assumptions about cultural belonging and loyalty in Commonwealth nations. This imperative was made all the more important in the case of

\textsuperscript{441} Curran and Ward, The Unknown Nation, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{442} White, ‘A Backwater Awash’, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{445} Potts and Potts, Yanks Down Under 1941–1945, p. 405; Meaney, “In History’s Page”, p. 384.
Australia given the potential meaning of the huge success of Johnson’s tour: that is, Australians’ exuberant welcome of the American president aroused the question of whether Australians’ allegiance to the British Throne had weakened.\textsuperscript{446} British High Commissioner Johnston’s evaluations of Australian attitudes towards Britishness and the Monarchy following the president’s visit included recommendations for future Royal tours, the Monarchy’s popularity amongst Australians, and predictions for the fate of the republic debate in Australia. Whilst Johnston’s observations were certainly in defence of Britain, they were a reminder that the tumult surrounding Johnson’s time in Australia denoted an ephemeral phase in the Australian-American alliance and did not reflect a nation that foresaw its future being entirely bound up in the American cultural sphere of influence.\textsuperscript{447}

The type of hyper-emotional displays by the Australian community that were seen during Johnson’s visit had previously been witnessed only in the presence of Royals. Yet Johnson’s casual, relaxed manner could not have contrasted more sharply with the rigidity of Royal tours. Even before Johnson had exited the country, an Age journalist saw that Johnson’s preference for informality ‘raises a question. Will the people who have enjoyed taking an active part in the LBJ Show be content with the passive role of dutiful audience in old-style Royal tours?’\textsuperscript{448} The answer from the British high commissioner was that the British government could no longer expect the ‘old-style’ Royal tour, with all the associated expenses, ‘over-formality’ and traffic disruptions to be enjoyed by Australians.\textsuperscript{449} Younger Australians particularly were less interested in ‘ceremonial’.\textsuperscript{450} They welcomed ‘working visits’ such as those made by Prince Philip in 1956, 1962 and 1965, but derived ‘special

\textsuperscript{446} Johnston, ‘Australian Attitudes Towards the Monarchy’, p. 917.
\textsuperscript{448} Age, 22 October 1966.
\textsuperscript{449} Johnston, ‘Australian Attitudes Towards the Monarchy’, p. 919.
\textsuperscript{450} ‘Ibid.’.
the visit of Princess Alexandra in 1959 and the Prince of Wales’ study exchange at a Geelong school in 1966 were notable examples. The 1963 Royal tour, having occurred only three years prior to Johnson’s visit, was a key point of reference for the British high commissioner gauging the direction of Australians’ loyalty compass. Johnston pointedly observed of the American president’s Australian journey that ‘press coverage, though prodigious, was actually no greater than that given to the first days of Her Majesty’s latest visit’. It followed for Johnston that Australians did not view a visit by the American president as having a more special place than that by the British Monarch in the collective mind.

The Monarchy, according to Johnston, still enjoyed widespread popularity but there were notable variations of opinion of the institution within the Australian community. Those groups whose monarchical loyalty remained unquestionable included the armed forces, Returned Servicemen’s League and older Australians. Rural and remote areas of the land, too, were seen as bastions of Britishness apparently uninfected by Johnson fever. Johnston reassured the British government that ‘one hears stories of shearers and other people in the country area who said things like “if it was the Queen I would go in to see her, but B[ugger] Johnson”’. However, as historian Mark McKenna has noted, the Monarchy in Australia up to the 1960s was seen as a symbol of ‘racial purity’ and of the ideal of White Australia. Thus the emotional connection to the Crown felt by those who took pride in its associations with Australia’s white, British status was, Johnston recognised, largely absent for many new

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452 Johnston to Bowden, ‘Publicity Coverage of Johnson’s Visit’, 24 October 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
454 Johnston to Sir Neil Pritchard, 8 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.
non-British migrants and younger Australians in the metropolises. And from within a ‘very small, but articulate, minority of intellectuals’, including Geoffrey Dutton and Horne, prolonged attachment to the Monarchy was execrated on the basis that it delayed Australia’s full realisation of nationhood.

Even with the arguments for an Australian republic gaining a certain momentum in this period, the Australian community had not been so concerned with or demonstrated such consistent commitment to the issue that constitutional change was seen as an immediate necessity. Johnson’s role as president and head of state did however encourage the British high commissioner to contemplate the attractiveness of Johnson’s dual office to Australians. Johnston noted that for some Australians, a head of state based overseas was considered impractical and unrepresentative of the independence gained from the ‘mother country’, particularly after her failure to defend Singapore in 1942 and her resistance to troop commitment to Vietnam. But it was the distinctiveness of Australians’ perspective in a different sense which made the election of a president seem like a rather un-Australian process for Johnston: ‘The Australians pride themselves on not being respecters of persons, particularly their own fellow countrymen. Their very irreverent attitude to the politicians suggests that it might be difficult for them to accept a local politician as a ceremonial president.’ While Australians were impressed with Johnson, the British high commissioner could declare that they ‘were in no way convinced that republicanism was the right solution for them’ and that ‘the Monarchy as an element of dignity, stability and continuity would be hard to replace’.

456 Johnston, ‘Australian Attitudes Towards the Monarchy’, p. 918.
457 ‘Ibid.’, p. 918; McKenna, The Captive Republic, p. 221.
460 ‘Ibid.’.
461 ‘Ibid.’.
Assessing more broadly the quality of the Australian-British relationship once the waves of Johnson-related euphoria had passed, the British high commissioner informed his government that:

there is no need for us to despair. The links which bind Australia and Britain are still strong. Australians are above all an independent-minded people. They have no wish to pass from British into American tutelage… The British connection so far has been a family affair, taken for granted and regarded as something solid if slightly boring.\(^{462}\)

Given the heightened importance of the American alliance for Australia’s security, Johnston felt that ‘now the Australians have a conscious motive for needing Britain to help hold the balance. We shall however have to work harder than ever to prove to the Australians that we are still around’.\(^{463}\) And indeed this suggestion was taken up by the British. With a focus on ‘private business plus fun and relaxation’, the visit in early 1967 by Royal family members Princess Alexandra and her partner Angus Ogilvy was deemed by the British high commissioner to be an outstanding success.\(^{464}\) Australians, Johnston believed, were ‘pleased’ that members of the Royal family could enjoy a trip to Australia without ‘fuss and formality’.\(^{465}\)

Convincing the Australian government that it had not become a mere afterthought for the British was a less realistic task with Britain’s announced withdrawal of its forces from east of Suez, an irrevocable step towards the realisation of the United Kingdom’s destiny in Europe. Despite knowledge of an impending military exit from the region, Britain’s enunciations of its intentions in April 1967 generated seismic shockwaves in the Australian government.\(^{466}\)

\(^{462}\) Johnston to Bowden, ‘Australia: Visit of President Johnson’, 24 November 1966, DO 193/80, TNA.

\(^{463}\) ‘Ibid.’.

\(^{464}\) Correspondence, Johnston to Sir Saville Garner, 9 March 1967, FO49/78, TNA.

\(^{465}\) Ibid.

\(^{466}\) Kristensen, “‘In Essence Still a British Country’”, p. 45.
was not yet ready to adjust to what were seen by some as cataclysmic events.\textsuperscript{467} Therefore, even as Britain cut the final rope tethering it to its Pacific dominion, Australia’s cultural Britishness, to use historian Jeppe Kristensen’s phrase, endured ‘underneath the rubble of empire’.\textsuperscript{468}

It has been shown here that the argument that Britishness competed with Americanisation for cultural supremacy in Australia was an idea based on two false assumptions. First, that Australians have been culturally subservient to Britain and then America, following the demise of British power and the contemporaneous rise of America in the Pacific, and second, that the embrace of Johnson in October 1966 showed that Australia had succumbed to a dominating American influence in the Cold War. These assumptions have failed to acknowledge the potential for multi-layered loyalties within a nation whose dominant cultural legacy originated in Britain whilst its defence priorities, always arranged by governments with Australia’s independent national interests in mind, were bound up in the geopolitics of Southeast Asia. Australians’ acceptance of modernising and Americanising forces was seen as integral to winning the Cold War fight against communism. But not all Australians admired the cultural output of America. Nor did all Australians, as the anti-Vietnam and anti-American protests during Johnson’s visit revealed, perceive America as a nation worthy of emulation. Confusion and disillusion over Australia’s national identity in this era did not give rise to an attempt to replicate American institutions or rituals. In this period and indeed beyond it, an idea of Britishness tied less and less to race and more to pride in a shared heritage and history continued to inform Australia’s political and civic culture.\textsuperscript{469}

\textsuperscript{467} "Ibid."
\textsuperscript{468} "Ibid.", p. 52.
\textsuperscript{469} Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia’, p. 133.
Conclusion

President Lyndon Johnson arrived in Australia at a critical juncture in the nation’s history, which has made the occasion particularly useful for what it can tell historians about Australia’s experience of the Cold War. The Macmillan government’s applications for entry into the Common Market in 1961 and 1963, an unexpected renege on previous British claims of the EEC’s incompatibility with the Commonwealth’s trade preferences, were the nails in the coffin of the British defence connection.\textsuperscript{470} Australia was thus pushed further under the protective wing of America. Beginning with the announcement in early 1965 that Australian troops would be assigned to the Vietnam warzone, the public face of the Australian-American political alliance over the next two years was given a particularly shiny veneer. Johnson’s tour of October 1966 was the apogee of the alliance, but it was a transient phenomenon. The effusive rhetoric of the visit was not matched by the Australian government in deed. Prime Minister Harold Holt demonstrated that he was not prepared to throw Australia’s economic and military heart and soul into Vietnam as America had done, despite the closer proximity of Asia to Australia than the United States. Holt was committed to utilising the alliance to secure Australian security. Therefore, contrary to the view purported by historians such as Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, the Holt government cannot be accused of derogating Australia’s national interest out of deference to the United States.

This thesis has attempted to use the Johnson visit as a window onto the cultural aspect of Australia’s foreign relations with both Britain and America in the Cold War. Australians’ responses to the war Johnson was waging in Vietnam revealed that the wider community was not totally pro-American, a fact which is often not emphasised given the generally euphoric

\textsuperscript{470} Curran and Ward, \textit{The Unknown Nation}, p. 33.
reactions to the president and first lady. At a time when Australian policymakers, intelligentsia and artists were searching for the source of a new binding national story in the absence of British race patriotism, it was significant that Australians knew that they were ‘not going American’.  

The ‘American influence’ has long been interpreted as a danger to Australia’s independence. Rather than conceptualising Americanisation in terms of an imperialist assault to which Australians conceded defeat, however, Australia’s alacritous integration into American webs of defence, economics and popular culture might be seen more broadly as part of the nation’s attempt in this era to insulate itself against communism and its perceived threat to Western culture and mores. Australians were undoubtedly attracted to American music, films and fashions, and the 1960s saw the zenith of the popularity of these artworks and trends. The contention of this thesis, though, is that Americanisation must be divorced from discussions of national mythmaking. Instead, since the early twentieth century, these American-derived cultural developments have been part of the broader movement of modernisation, a process undertaken by other European nations abroad. The ‘Australian way of life’ – the sturdy framework into which modernising and Americanising elements were accommodated – was never under siege. And although many Australians were fascinated by Johnson’s status as head of the nation and chief executive of government, the republican debate had not so impassioned Australians that constitutional change resulted. There was no attempt by Australians to remake the nation in America’s image.

In 1967, intellectual Geoffrey Serle wrote that conservative Australian leaders refused to ‘recognise that American influence and penetration must have the effect of replacing the

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472 Rolfe, ‘The Promise and Threat of America in Australian Politics’, p. 188.
popular sentiment for Britain. In a few years they will be sadly shaking their heads and wondering whatever happened to the British connexion’. Serle’s prophecy went unfulfilled. Time revealed that Britishness was entrenched in Australia’s political, institutional and civic culture. The Monarchy, too, retained its status as a symbol of Australia’s ongoing attachment to Britishness.

What did not last, however, was the alliance intimacy of 1966. The ‘special relationship’ forged between Holt and Johnson inevitably ceased with Holt’s mysterious death at sea in December 1967. Not even Holt, though, was granted special access to Washington’s decision-making processes over Vietnam, and successive Australian prime ministers encountered the same problem. President Richard Nixon’s announcement in June 1969 of the speedy withdrawal of massive numbers of American troops from Vietnam caught the Gorton government in Australia by surprise. One month later, the president stated on the island of Guam – a speech which became known as the Nixon Doctrine – that America would never again become involved in a land war in Asia, and that America would now expect its allies to take the initial and major responsibility for their own defence. Without an American presence in the region, the Australian government’s Cold War strategy had collapsed. Elected as prime minister in 1972, Gough Whitlam was determined to treat the alliance less reverently than his Liberal party predecessors. Consequently, navigated by Nixon and Whitlam, the alliance ship entered into stormy seas. It was a fate for the alliance that neither Johnson nor Holt would have foreseen in the glowing immediate aftermath of the president’s Australian tour.

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474 SMH, 22 October 1966.
475 Pemberton, All the Way, p. 337.
477 ‘Ibid.’, p. 163.
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