

LABOUR'S MIGRATION AND CAPITAL'S EMPIRE

A Political Economy of Migration in Australia

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Abstract

This thesis develops a classical Marxist account of migration as a social relation. It seeks to understand the contradictions of a global system increasingly shaped by brutal exclusion of migrants and reliance on their labour-power, through an investigation of Australia. It rejects attempts to explain migration through static categories of so-called ‘cheap labour’, ‘settlers’, or outsiders added to an internally coherent nation-state. Rather, it develops a processual account of migration in Australian history as part of the inner dynamics of capitalist accumulation. It does so through an explanation of shifts in the *longue durée* of migration from 1830 to 2025: Systematic Colonisation, White Australia, Post-War Boom, and Neo-Liberalism.

The thesis explains processes of migration through four categories of analysis: imperialism, settler colonialism, labour market regimes, and nationalism. Historical treatments of these dynamics in Australian migration history are interwoven with the interrogation and intellectual reconstruction of these categories grounded in Marxist political economy. It theorises migration as arising from relations within: (1) the circulation, concentration and accumulation of capital; (2) the reproduction of imperialism and colonialism; and (3) the ideological mediation of class formation by nationalism. By centring labour, it situates migration within an imperialist world economy that is dynamic, contested, and capable of being overturned.

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List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANOM	Adjusted Net Overseas Migration
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security treaty
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CBCS	Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics
CP	Country Party
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
EEC	European Economic Community
FILEF	<i>Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigranti e Famiglie</i>
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOR	House of Representatives
IWMA	International Working Men's Association
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LTFRP	Law of the Tendency to Fall in the Rate of Profit
MECW	Marx and Engels' Collected Works, Lawrence and Wishart, Vols. 1–50
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NLA	National Library of Australia
NOM	Net Overseas Migration

NSW	New South Wales
NuMAS	Numerical Multifactor Assessment System
NZ	New Zealand
OCC	Organic Composition of Capital
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RANOM	Relative Adjusted Net Overseas Migration
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
RSI	Relative Search Interest
SA	South Australia
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
UAP	United Australia Party
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
VDL	Van Diemen's Land
WAP	White Australia Policy
WHM	Working Holiday Maker

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*“Bloody nerve! Copying our White Australia policy
and then using it to keep out white Aussies!”*

Figure 1: “Bloody nerve! Copying our White Australia policy and then using it to keep out white Aussies!” Cartoon by Kenneth Mahood, *Punch*, 10 January 1973. © Punch Cartoon Library / TopFoto, reproduced with permission.

Chapter 1

Migration as a Social Relation

Introduction

While the white people of the world demand their right to exclude non-white people from the country of which they have taken possession by one means or another (sometimes even by force or fraud) they themselves want complete freedom to move about wherever they find it profitable to do so.

— LALA LAJPAT RAI, 1926, P. 332

Without such a provision it would be possible for an Asiatic Power to object to our migration Policy . . . This is a matter of fundamental principle and we cannot compromise on it.

— H.V. EVATT AND F. FORDE 1945

The cartoon that opens this thesis (Figure 1, Mahood, 1973) is, on the surface, little more than a haughty caricature from the motherland: Australians are parochial, impudent and more than a little racist. Behind the surface of this 1973 migration restriction, though, is a constellation of racial politics, imperial decline and economic stagnation—expressed through migration.

The restrictions on ‘white Aussies’ was a result of *racism* not, clearly, against whites, but because Australian entry was a casualty of the long racialisation of British politics, culminating in Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech and increased restrictions on migration from the Commonwealth countries (Alexander, 1987; Foot, 1965).

It was *imperial*, in that the collapse of the British empire had diluted the urgency of ongoing maintenance of the British-Australian migration route to support a British outpost, and spurred on by British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) (Tavan, 2012a). Imperial decline and racial politics were connected with each other and a third factor, the *economic* stagnation from the 1960s (Nairn, 1986).

Migration is saturated with empire, economy, and ‘race’, representing what Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, p. 30) call “*fabrica mundi*”—the process of world making. In 1973, the world was being remade. Looking at the cartoon from the inside out reveals transformations occurring in Australia, which was in 1973 facing its own constellation of racial, imperial, and economic pressures. In June, a few months after this cartoon was published, an Australian immigration minister toured Asia to spruik the death of White Australia (“give me a shovel and I will bury it”, Grassby, in Whitlam, 1985, p. 501). The announcement that Australia would attempt a non-discriminatory migration policy signalled a deep shift within Australia’s imperial relations and regional geopolitics, as well as its internal development and colonisation. A few months later, an oil crisis marked the first tremors of 50 years of protracted crisis that shook Australia’s industrial relations architecture, macroeconomic policy, and politics.

The task set forward by this thesis is to unpack, understand, and systematically theorise migration within the dense layers that lie behind this image—imperialism, racism, capitalist crisis—and the constriction and movement that inhere to this combined process. To do so, it asks two research questions:

First, *what explains the shifts in Australian migration in the longue durée?*

Second, *how is migration constituted within processes of capital accumulation?*

In seeking to approach the rich determinations expressed by migration, these research questions centre *Australian history*. This choice is justified by returning to the implications of Figure 1: the “copying” of Australian migration controls. This trope goes much further back than Britain’s 1971 legislation against the Windrush generation, and can be seen in the two epigraphs that open this chapter: the contribution of H.V. Evatt to defending border controls in the San Francisco United Nations conference of 1945, and in the 1926 International Labor conference in which he was positioned at the opposite pole to Indian Nationalist leader Lajpat Rai (Poy, 2023). In the more recent era, Donald Trump suggested that “[m]uch can be learned” by investigating Australia’s (Trump, 2019; see also, Miller, 2017 on Australia’s points system).

The fact that Australian migration has been such a persistent referent for the global far right (Geibel, Fozdar, and McGaughey, 2023; Raspail, 1973), whilst simultaneously exhibiting higher proportional levels of migration than most advanced capitalist countries, is not only puzzling but relevant to contemporary debates on migration.¹

In seeking to understand how migration is constituted so contradictorily within capital accumulation, this thesis also adopts a framing of the *longue durée*. The question posed is not one discrete cause and effect in the ‘long run’, as in processes market equilibration after all disturbances have gone away (Marshall, 1920/2013; Mas-Colell, Whinston, and Green, 1995, p. 340). It views history from the vantage point of its structural transformation, including for instance that of 1973, evoking the *Annales* historical school (Bloch, 1954; Braudel, 1958; see Callinicos, 1995).

In order to investigate these explanations and connections between migration and capital accumulation, as well as the process of historical dynamism, this thesis adopts a conception of immigration as a *social relation*. Migration appears at first sight as an extremely obvious, trivial thing (cf. Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 163). The peculiar way in which a person’s whole complexity and humanity is reduced, quantified and commodified through Australia’s immigration system—turned into a sum of 15 points for a bachelor’s degree, plus 30 points for their age falling between 25 and 33, plus another 10 points for a *de facto* relationship with a ‘skilled’ partner—hides a remarkable social relation between that person, Australia’s social formation, and global social order.

That social relation can be investigated on the basis of Marx’s approach to ontology and methodology. In a celebrated passage of *Grundrisse*, Marx lays out the internal connection between production, consumption, circulation, and distribution (Marx, 1939/1993, pp. 83–100). Marx criticises J. S. Mill for crudely tearing apart the real inner relationship of production and distribution, as if production develops according to trans-historic eternal laws (p. 87). Conversely, he criticises the shallow criticisms of political economists for focusing “too much” on production while distribution is “just as important” (p. 90), a view that just as much grasps these categories as “independent, autonomous neighbours” (pp. 89–90). Rather Marx stresses the inner connection within these categories, which are said to complete, create, and mediate

¹The following parties exhibit this contradiction: UK Independence Party and the Conservative party, France’s *Front National*, Germany’s *Alternative für Deutschland*, the Netherlands’ *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, and Austria’s *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (see Geibel, Fozdar, and McGaughey, 2023; Herrero, 2021; Morris, 2019; Polakow-Suransky, 2017; Scarpello, 2019). Migrants make up 30.4% (Australia), 25.5% (Austria), 19.8% (Germany), 17.1% (UK), 16.2% (Netherlands), 15.2% (US), 13.8% (France) of their respective populations (United Nations, 2024).

one another, as well as being identical. There can be no consumption, for instance, unless it has first been produced, but conversely the consumption of food is an act of social production of the body. The social process of production involves the productive consumption of the circulating capital, as well as of a part of the means of production. Simply put, “Production is consumption, consumption is production” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 93). This does not dissolve differences between the *relations* that social reality is comprised of. Rather, the process of intellectual understanding involves the careful and asymmetrical reconstruction of these categories. Marx’s dialectical materialist approach is to outline the ways in which production predominates over consumption and distribution not as external causation, but as “moments of one process” (p. 94), “members of a totality, distinctions within a unity” (p. 95). Production dominates over itself and other relations, even as “*in its one-sided form*, production is itself determined by the other moments” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 99, emphasis his).

This peculiar way of thinking about the world, not through a model of billiard balls bouncing into one another, but rather of an organism in a “fluid state, in motion” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 103), has been elaborated and enriched by Bertell Ollman (2003), as his *philosophy of internal relations*. Internal relations forms a key part of the methodological apparatus advanced by this thesis in understanding and explaining migration. The remainder of this chapter develops and justifies the methodology of this thesis, grounded in internal relations, by first comparing it to the prevailing treatments of structure and agency in migration studies.

1.1 MIGRATION STUDIES AND INTERNAL RELATIONS

Migration has made and remade the modern world. Capitalism was premised on mass movements of people: the slave trade, enclosure and attempted extirpation. Great mass movements of people after 1850 enabled a truly world market, and mass migration after 1945 enabled advanced capitalism. The reactionary mobilisations against today's unprecedented "human storm" (Kingsbury, 2025, para. 2) is the latest in a long line of fears about the changes in polities, economies and societies attributed to migration.

Conversely, each and every individual's 'migration' comprises an almost infinitely complex constellation of decisions and forces of circumstance, war, poverty, famine, 'natural' disaster, authoritarianism, oppression, economic crises, of tangled networks of information, misinformation, and lack of information, relationships, family connections, state laws, colonial histories, migration agents and firms. Each such occurrence then sets into play a dynamic and cumulative set of feedback loops that can reinforce, reproduce, or stymie migration flows—across not just 'host' and 'home' countries but social structures that span the two.

This polarity, between structure and agency, is difficult for any theory to grasp. This section outlines the distinctiveness and utility of a dynamic and dialectical ontology against prevailing approaches within mainstream migration studies. A brief survey reveals a tendency to navigate the contradiction between structure and agency via external relations rather than internal relations.

Two traditions in migration studies grasp the structurally determining impact of the economy. The tradition of neo-classical economics, rational choice theory and new household economics seeks to unify the mass of individual preferences and choices through rigid market interaction that produces international and domestic markets for labour (Bansak, Simpson, and Zavodny, 2021; Borjas, 2014; Stark, 1991; cf. Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2006; Canales, 2019). And structural forms of Marxism stress the negative consequences of an international regime of surplus labour, an international reserve army, and unequal exchange (Delgado Wise, 2022; Ness, 2023; Portes and Walton, 1981), alongside labour market segmentation and 'cheap labour' in destination countries (Castles and Kosack, 1972, 1973; Cohen, 2023; Piore, 1979). These approaches freeze and ossify the dynamism of migration described above, with theorists left to oscillate like a pendulum between optimistic and pessimistic structural

analyses (Haas, 2012).

Most migration studies invert or dilute this structural emphasis. This can involve emphasising migration as a radical form of agency (Magubane, 1996; Skeldon, 1997; Urry, 2007), which tends to occlude both structural dynamism and other forms of agency not based on relocation (Phillips, 2011, p. 3). A second, more prevalent, approach is to cobble together different theoretical frameworks, through pluralism and interdisciplinarity (Brettell and Hollifield, 2022; Scholten, Pisarevskaya, and Levy, 2022), or broad meta-theoretical frameworks of analysis (Haas, 2021; Massey, 1998; Morawska, 2009; O'Reilly, 2012/2024). The result of this has been a series of entrenched separations in the theory, with cause and effect relegated to separate chapters, the evolution of separate “co-citation networks” (Levy, Pisarevskaya, and Scholten, 2020, p. 16), and the field of migration studies left simultaneously a “surprisingly under-theorised” field of study (Haas, 2021, p. 1) and one that suffers an oversupply of “generally unconnected theories, models or frameworks” (Arango, 2018, p. 105). A perhaps larger problem is that there is no guarantee that this eclectic process of cobbling counteracts rather than exaggerates the respective deficiencies of its component parts (see Ollman, 2003, pp. 14–5; Wallerstein, 1974, p. 11).

The internal relations approach introduced in this chapter constitutes a different approach to the theoretical reconstruction of this polarity of structure and agency than seeking to transcend (O'Reilly, 2012/2024), integrate (Phillips, 2011), or collate (Brettell and Hollifield, 2022) theory. This is to centre social theory about that contradiction: as implied by Marx's phrase “Men [sic] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please . . . but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (MECW:11, p. 103). This approach has been extended in the framework of classical Marxism, which emphasises both the structures that constrain and enable agency, and the agencies that reproduce and challenge structures (Callinicos, 2004, pp. 264–5). Bieler and Morton (2018) argue that a combination of “historical materialist social ontology” and the “historicist method of analysis” (p. 49) can be used to reveal the internal relation between structure and agency. Structure and agency, in this reasoning, are not to be weighed and apportioned appropriately, but grasped as “distinctions within a unity” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 89). Society is conceived as “no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and constantly engaged in a process of change” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 93).

An internal relations ontology means, firstly, conceiving of the great mass of sep-

arate objects of analysis in migration studies, from migrants, migration networks, economies, nationalism, as component parts of a vast organism, totality (Lukács, 1923/1968). Second, this organism is not a static structure that replicates itself, but is rather going through a perpetual process of change: capitalist slavery, refugee movements, anti-migration politics, all genuinely shape and transform the nature of the system, even as they are each constructed and bound by it (Rees, 1998). Thirdly, the nature of organic evolution is not smooth or predictable but rather interactive, best understood through four key relations: that of identity/difference, the interpenetration of opposites, the transformation of quantity into quality, and contradiction (Ollman, 2003, pp. 15–8, 74–86).

Internal relations foregrounds not only the contradiction between structure and agency, but between incorporation and exclusion at the border, contradiction between classes, between the future and the past, and several other themes that emerge throughout the thesis. Utilising the philosophy of internal relations is the polar opposite of ‘solving’ migration studies’ structure/agency ‘problem’. In centring dialectical contradiction, theoretical reflection is forced to be more ambitious, systematic, dynamic, and self-reflexive. This requires a methodology dedicated to grappling with tension, movement, and contradiction, that seeks to constantly address any slips into the ossification of theory into stability, equilibrium, and structure, which are conceived as merely a “stage in a process” (Ollman, 2003, p. 27). Despite the extremes of structure and agency, the classical Marxist approach that this thesis advances (see Callinicos, 2004) is markedly absent from theoretical overviews of migration (Arango, 2018; Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2020; Kolbe, 2021; Massey, 2001; Massey et al., 1993; O’Reilly, 2023; Passaris, 1989; Phillips, 2011; Scholten, Pisarevskaya, and Levy, 2022).²

It is through the appreciation of processual and dialectical totality that the “fluid state” of historic forms is unveiled (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 103). In order to uncover this, research must not produce a patchwork quilt of distinct explanations for migration’s complexities or unidirectional arrows of causation. Ollman suggests rather a method

²Classical Marxism is a strain of Marxist theory seeking to produce the “theoretically clarified experience of the international working-class movement” via theoretical reflection, empirical study, and political organisation (Callinicos, 2004, p. 264; see also Rees, 1998). This approach helps to close the loop in Ollman’s account of internal relations by incorporating organisation within methodological and epistemological practices: it is not (only) workers’ vantage point of work (labour, factory, machine) activity that gives them a “better chance of understanding the workings of capitalism than do capitalists” (Ollman, 2003, p. 101) but rather first and foremost their industrial, political, and ideological activity in attempting to change it, and the shifts within consciousness. There are a number of methodological implications for this difference in vantage point and construction that emerge within the internal relations framework advanced in this thesis.

that foregrounds totality, first assessing the dynamics that embroil the whole social order, as well as those that animate each of its parts, both with respect to each other, themselves, and the whole (Ollman, 2003, p. 140). This captures the way that totality shapes, arranges, and expresses itself through its parts, while in turn those parts reproduce and distinguish the whole (Ollman, 2003, p. 140).

RECENT MARXIST MIGRATION THEORY

This study of Australia's migration history is situated within recent Marxist literature analysing immigration through a global and imperial lens. Although many of these studies have foregrounded internal relations, the present thesis differs in three ways. Firstly, studies have tended to focus on the present moment, to the exclusion of the broader history of colonial and imperial immigration policy. Secondly, insofar as Australia has been addressed (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Walia, 2021), it has been through a focus on the exclusionary moment in Australian migration, refugee cruelty, without integrating the wider regime of migrant incorporation. Thirdly, there have been few extended and systematic accounts of the theory of migration within historical materialist ontology. This section sketches the distinctiveness of the current thesis within this literature.

Within critical migration studies, Marxism has been represented by autonomist Marxists and what Favell (2022, p. 345) calls "Marxist-Foucauldian hybrid" theory. These studies capture the dialectical interplay between inclusion and exclusion at the border. The border is problematised as a social relation, with the "border spectacle" enacting hyper-visible exclusion while disfiguring the "obscene of inclusion" (De Genova, 2002, 2013), and also forwarded as a method and vantage point for thinking (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). These studies displace the assumed national perspective and stress changes in political subjectivity of labour (De Genova, 2005, pp. 56–94; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013), rather than analysing processes of state and class formation (cf. Ritchie, Carpenter, and Mojab, 2022a).

A newer body of theory explicitly seeks to centre capitalist imperialism, conceptualised from perspectives outside autonomist (Hardt and Negri, 2000) and world systems perspectives, and several are explicitly or implicitly informed by internal relations thinking. This body of theory is not only an important contribution to and break from migration studies, but also one in need of theoretical clarification. In particular,

open questions include: (1) what is the nature of imperialism and what is the nature of its internal relation with migration; (2) how can migrant agency be conceptualised; and (3) what intermediating concepts are required to adequately forward a Marxist theory of migration?

Labour markets and imperialism are frequently grasped externally, positing a general structure of social reproduction and ‘cheap labour’. For instance, Bohrer’s (2022) account of immigration as social reproduction and labour relies on David Harvey’s theory of accumulation by dispossession, which is problematised in chapter 2. Hannah Cross’s (2020) *Migration Beyond Capitalism* forwards a Marxist theory premised first and foremost on ‘cheap labour’, a phenomenon that advantages the middle class while disadvantaging poorer workers, ideas problematised in chapter 4; Cross adds the premises: (2) national chauvinism; and (3) class prejudice.

Harsha Walia (2021) provides an important account of global immigration as border imperialism. This weaves together settler colonial dispossession, global imperialism and the role of the border formation in this process, conceptualising immigration policy as “*fulcrum* between domestic and global warfare” (Walia, 2021, p. 40). This builds on her previous theorisation of “border imperialism” (Walia, 2014), based on: (1) displacement; (2) criminalisation; (3) racialisation; and (4) precarity. While most theorists emphasise the modern neo-liberal and global world (De Genova, 2016; Ferguson and McNally, 2015; Foster and McChesney, 2017; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013), Walia’s account engages a broader historical view, which helps her to bring into focus the various intersecting dynamics. Mainly discussing U.S. and European border policy, she includes a brief chapter on Australia’s refugee policy (Walia, 2021, pp. 93–104). Walia’s work is an outstanding contribution to debates on the conceptualisation of migration, but is conceptually eclectic, stitching together a wide variety of conceptual tools (racial capitalism, settler colonialism, labour precarity, apartheid of labour, the circulation of labour and capital stratifications). Providing a clear explanation of these terms and an account of their relations, such as through the philosophy of internal relations, has the potential to extend and clarify the empirical strength of the work.

Adam Hanieh forwards an internal relations account of migration framed through capital accumulation and uneven and combined development (Hanieh, 2022, p. 37). He conceptualises migration as a “type of class formation” that internally connects the capital–labour relation in the Gulf states to regional development (Hanieh, 2013,

p. 126). This is woven throughout his theorisation of Middle Eastern capitalism, including the political economy of oil, Palestinian state formation and Israeli capitalism, and the Gulf states (Hanieh, 2003, 2011, 2024). Hanieh's work is perhaps the most significant single contribution to a classical Marxist intervention in migration studies, and has been unjustly sidelined in mainstream migration studies (Hanieh, 2019, 2022; Hanieh and Ziadah, 2023).³ There are some similarities between Australian migration patterns and those in the Middle East, including the high numbers and proportion of immigrants in the Gulf states (Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2020, p. 8; Boucher and Gest, 2018, p. 24; United Nations, 2024). Key differences include its relationship to global imperialism, which underlies a different system of labour migration, including temporary migration. Although addressing a different context, Hanieh's internal relations conceptualisation of class formation and state formation has informed and inspired this thesis. Another thinker informing this thesis is Phil Marfleet, who situates patterns of colonial transportation, genocide and anti-colonial war on the Australian continent, suggesting historians should pay attention to those migrants and refugees who are not mythologised as central to nation-building (Marfleet, 2013, 2020, 2022).

These contemporary Marxist interventions provide the potential for a revitalisation of theory in migration studies. As is evident from this brief survey, a wide variety of intermediating abstractions have been identified and ordered such as to conceptualise migration. Secondly, the most significant contributions relate to capitalism in countries substantively different from the Western countries in which the current conjuncture addressed by this thesis. These debates ground the contribution of this thesis not only in the historical case study of Australia as it relates to today's political polarisation, but in the need for a careful and systematic theoretical treatment of immigration through the philosophy of internal relations.

³He suggests three general features of migration in the modern era: (1) migration as internally related with the dynamics of capitalism and class formation; (2) borders as demarcating "difference within national and global labour markets"; and (3) as key to the actuality and perception of *crisis* (Hanieh, 2019, pp. 52–3).

1.2 ABSTRACTING AND PERIODISING AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION

Marx's methodology utilises the "power of abstraction" (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 90). This involves the deliberate and reflexive use of abstract categories in order to intellectually reconstruct reality, without losing sight of the dialectical whole. The first mode of abstraction relevant to this thesis is that of the spatial and temporal extension of the study itself (Ollman, 2003, p. 74). Spatially, this thesis abstracts 'Australian migration' as the specific social relation under study. Such an analytical focus appears to contradict the philosophy of internal relations, which treats the capitalist system as a dialectical whole, and not of distinct social-formation-islands in a sea of external relations (McMichael, 1990).

The abstraction of Australian migration advanced in this thesis is explicitly counterposed to methodological nationalism. In the following chapters, not only is Australian migration explicitly situated within the imperialist world economy, but the very concept of a coherent national boundary marking the inside and outside of the Australian formation is subject to iterative critique and reconstruction throughout the following chapters from the vantage points of empire, invasion, class, and ideology. Through the philosophy of internal relations, political rebellions (Fenian, Taiping, Malaya), global processes of racialisation and economic processes are internal to and permeate Australian development, while conversely, the international itself comprises and is internally related to Australian migration, including especially the global regimes of immigration constructed after the two world wars which were influenced by Australia's full-throated defence of the right to restrict migration.

The ordering and reconstruction of categories of analysis is significant (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 106), and forms a key contribution of this thesis to an internal relations approach to migration. In *Grundrisse*, Marx (1939/1993) explains in a piece particularly relevant to the study of migration how the abstraction of "population" risks abuse if not constructed popularly (p. 100). Malthus's (1798) account of population stressed that a contradiction between the geometric (exponential) growth of humankind and the arithmetic (linear) growth of the means of subsistence meant that the enlightenment hopes of human perfectibility were mathematically absurd. For Marx, though, an approach that unreflexively adopts whatever concepts it finds ready to hand risks

producing a “chaotic conception of the whole” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 100). Population is an empty phrase for such a purpose, if one leaves out the classes that population is composed of, and the social system that comprises those classes (“exchange, division of labour, prices, etc”, p. 100). In the case of natural absolute limits of the kind discussed by Malthus, for instance, once their inner connection with capitalist production is stressed, these limits are revealed as “irreducibly socio-ecological”, explaining how it is that the absolute limits identified by successive generations of neo-Malthusians can be transcended (Moore, 2015b, p. 165). This does not mean, of course, that population is excised from theory. Rather, by intentionally reconstructing the category of population via the mediating categories that centre and correspond to the nature of the system, one can produce in the mind a “rich totality of many determinations and relations” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 100).

This thesis extends to the study of migration this method of intellectual reconstruction of categories of analysis, via three levels of structure that together undertake the explanation of migration in Australia. The first of these levels is the identification and exposition of four categories of analysis through which migration is intellectually reconstructed. These categories form the chapter structure of the thesis: imperialism (chapter 2), settler colonialism (chapter 3), labour markets (chapters 4–5), and nationalism (chapter 6). The four categories advanced through the thesis are approached as neither ontologically external (Morton, 2013), nor as graspable through separate modes of research and explanation. The conceptual movement integrates each new category into the mental reconstruction of migration in social totality, while the content of these category as they each relate to the social relation of migration in Australian history is elaborated in the empirical sections. The process of elaborating and investigating these categories in turn is the method by which the essence and appearance of migration in Australia is unveiled.

The second level of structure in the thesis is its presentation through successive theoretical and empirical movements. These movements, separated for the purpose of exposition, advance a Marxist social ontology and historical materialist analysis through which the internal relation between structure and agency is revealed (Bieler and Morton, 2018, p. 49). The introduction of these categories follows the method of non-deductive incorporation (Callinicos, 2001). This differs from approaches in which grand theory is brought successively closer to empirical reality by progressively relaxing simplifying assumptions made for convenience (no foreign trade, no competition).

It differs also from interdisciplinary or pluralist approaches in which new parallel concepts may be chosen arbitrarily for the purposes at hand, assuming a basic theoretical commensurability between them. Non-deductive incorporation, elaborated further in chapter 2, involves the “progressive introduction of increasingly complex determinations” (Callinicos, 2014a, p. 130). The origins of these four determinations are in the observed reality and studied history of Australian migration. Rather than ‘adding’ such observations unreflexively into theory, conceptual sections (section 2.1, sections 3.1–3.4, chapter 4 and section 6.1) elaborate and reconstruct successive categories within the system of capitalism and within the relation of migration conceptualised within an increasingly rich totality of determinations. The relation of each newly introduced ‘part’ with totality, in relation to itself and other ‘parts’, needs to be examined, ordered, and expounded carefully, in order to reveal the internal relations and reproduce the theoretical reconstruction of a processual and dialectical totality.

The process of sequential incorporation moves the thesis in a stepwise fashion towards an understanding of how migration is comprised within accumulation, in and through its study of Australian migration in the *longue durée*. The categories advanced are not arbitrary or *a priori* categories, but selected, ordered, and brought into internal relation through the process of historical inquiry and intellectual reconstruction.

The third level of structure in this thesis, after (1) the four categories advanced to explain migration as a social relation, and (2) the theoretical/empirical movements advanced to situate these categories within the dynamic process of totality, is (3) the periodisation developed in order to trace the development of Australian migration as a social relation. In the chapters that follow, this thesis develops a new periodisation of Australian immigration within the imperialist world economy.⁴ This form of “narrative historiography” forms an internal and necessary component of social theory (Callinicos, 1995, p. 210).

The process of neatly delineating periods of development, particularly within a given state, can appear to reiterate a stageism belying an external relations philosophy (e.g. Rostow, 1960). Such a method can be said to be ontologically exterior (Morton, 2013) in at least two senses: firstly the spatial externality of one state against others, and secondly the temporal externality of homogeneous slices of time (Wallerstein, 1974,

⁴After the Crimean war, Marx embarked upon a closer study of foreign policy, remarking that to “understand a limited historical epoch, we must step beyond its limits and compare it with other historical epochs” (MECW:15, p. 56; see MECW:39, p. 395).

pp. 5–8; McMichael, 2016, pp. 195–9; McMichael, 1990).

McMichael's (1990) "incorporated comparison" provides an internal relations methodology for periodisation. Against Rostovian modernisation theory, and traditional methods of comparison, McMichael develops an internal relations approach that enables historical sociology to reiterate the ontological primacy of the international while taking the 'national' as its unit of analysis (Morton, 2007, p. 618). The "multiple form" of incorporated comparison seeks to capture the "continuously evolving process in and across time" via a comparison that "reveals and posits a systemic process through the juxtaposition of instances in time" (McMichael, 1990, p. 389). In foregrounding totality, a study of Australian migration for instance is conceived via a unity of the general and the particular. Since social development itself is not discrete, the "particular expresses the general" (McMichael, 1990, p. 390). States themselves "constitute the social structure of the world market", through processes of financial mobilisation, centralisation, labour regimes, et cetera (McMichael, 1984, p. 242). Despite well known issues with 'neo-Smithian' theories of the interstate system (Brenner, 1977), which are implicit in the approach of Terence Hopkins and reflected in some ways in McMichael's analysis,⁵ there is nothing in the methodology that prevents theorists from developing an asymmetric internal relations analysis of production and circulation in their conceptualisation of international development.

This third level of structure, the periodisation produced via incorporated comparison, expresses through historical analysis each of the four abstractions as they develop temporally and spatially through the social relation of Australian migration, including their internal relation with the system of capitalism, and one another. The following four paragraphs provide a brief introduction to the four periods that will be later expanded, explained, and justified through the thesis.

The period 1830 to 1888 traces the emergent relations of class in Australian capitalism within global capitalism, and its inner relation with migration. This periodisation begins not with British invasion, nor the sealing industry, but following the pastoral boom of the 1820s which saw expanded general demand for labour-power and the transition from penal colonialism to settler capitalism. It centres the development of

⁵McMichael's methodology was inspired by Terence Hopkins (see McMichael, 1984, p. 242), who criticised the methods of comparative study and sought to establish for the research program of world systems theory an alternative heuristic, methodology, and logic of inquiry (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1982, pp. 29–35, 154–5) on the basis of a generally market-first theory of the interstate system (pp. 20–1) and a proportionality theory of crisis (p. 15, see chapter 2).

a class of free labourers, along with its moral and political economic dimensions, as internally related to the transformations within migration, from transportation to assisted passage, with the gold rush decisively defeating the former. This period stresses the ambiguity and flux in class relations and racial consciousness, with migration enabling the production of inchoate racial ideology that differentiates English from Irish and Chinese workers, while justifying and realising the trinity of expanded frontier warfare, pastoral development, and ‘carceration’. Conversely, migration impelled the uneven and combined subjective development of militancy in Australia’s working class. This is the other side to the well documented transformation from pastoral settler to urban capitalists between the 1840s and 1860s in particular, and the increasingly deep integration with British finance (McMichael, 1984; Wells, 1989).

The dialectic between international migration and capitalist imperialism develops in the years from 1876, culminating in the White Australia period from 1888 to 1945. These years see the coherence of the Australian ruling class, both within and across the fractions of industry and across the separate colonies, in response to two common enemies: the fear of Asia and the fear of workers’ struggle. The geo-strategic demographic logic to White Australia united the ‘external’ struggle against Asia and the internal struggle to invade, develop and secure the continent of Australia—uniting the internalisation of the Torres Strait and Papua, and the attempted internalisation of Aboriginal people via the regime of assimilationist racialisation from the 1880s (Wolfe, 1999). White Australia considered as a racial and imperial state strategy entails a much wider developmental, economic, and labour management strategy. Against, however, the image of united racial labour protectionism (Kelly, 2008), both imperialism and workers’ struggle antagonistically reproduce the dynamics of White Australia. Two contradictory poles in the political economy of migration emerge: state-led political economic strategy of colonial control and systematic racial thought; and the intellectual and industrial traditions of anti-racist and anti-arbitration struggles.

Global mass migration, internationalisation of capitalism, and the long boom in capital accumulation between 1945 and 1973 mark the third period covered by the thesis. This relatively short period expresses a concentration of contradictions, with strident colonial racism and imperialist geopolitics of White Australia contradicting the decolonial movements in the region and working-class multicultural struggle. The repositioning of Australia’s ruling class in the new imperial order aggravated and expanded Australian nationalism within and against British nationalism. The labour

market regime constructed in the 1930s and then after WWII systematised and extended the combination of paternalism and criminalisation in a national system, cyclically incorporating migrants into an increasingly industrialised economy (Connell and Irving, 1980). The dynamics of racism and discrimination against Aboriginal people and migrants was internally related to the second forward march of the labour movement at the end of this period, in the industrial upsurge that ultimately displaced White Australia.

The migration regime expresses the contradictions of the neo-liberalisation of the global and local economy from 1973. The contradictions of the post-WWII era produced significant concessions in the most significant break in Australian nationalism: multiculturalism and the regime of 'self determination' for Aboriginal people, adopted in a stumbling, uncertain, and extremely limited manner. The neo-liberalisation of migration, from the points system and the shift away from family migration, was accompanied by a reactionary reconstruction of a criminal border regime from White Australia to anti-refugee brutality. These shifts within migration, including the rise of a hybrid temporary-permanent migration regime from the mid-1990s, were internally related to broader shifts within Australian labour market regimes and workplaces in the 1980s–1990s, with a new mode of labour discipline through enterprise bargaining and casualisation facilitating a radical decline in Australia's organised working class (Humphrys, 2016; Watson et al., 2003). Studying history backwards reveals immigration as a site where global imperialism following the Gulf Wars and East Timor invasion in the 1990s, neo-conservative reaction against migrants and refugees, and the neo-liberal commodification of labour power collide. These 'structures' are but a moment however in a process through which a multicultural working class and the victims of imperialism and nationalist refugee cruelty are capable of sparking resistance, whether in anti-imperialist protests on the streets or in neo-colonial detention centres.

These four periods reveal the processes of migration through imperialism, settler colonialism, labour markets, and nationalism, seeking to search for key developments that lead organically to the most recent conjuncture, through the method of studying history backwards (Ollman, 2003, pp. 115–26), and in particular to outline the internal relation between migration and capitalism. The next section offers methodological reflections on the empirical component of dialectical research, before the contribution of the thesis is outlined.

1.3 CRITICAL METHODS AND EXPOSITION

Critical scholars have charged migration studies with serving and upholding the very state regimes and nationalisms they purport merely to analyse, and thereby reproducing global colonial and imperial processes (Anderson, 2019, p. 3; Mayblin and Turner, 2021, p. 11; Lentin and Titley, 2011). In Australia, Vasta (2006) describes three overlapping sources of immigration research: government commissioned consultants (e.g. Borrie, 1975; FitzGerald, 1988; Galbally, 1978; Vernon, 1965), academics, and non-government organisations (NGOs) and community organisations. Such analyses have played a role in constituting state approaches to immigration, such that even progressive scholars can be implicated in “new soft modes of governance” (Hess, 2010, pp. 98, 106).

The unreflexive presumption of particular standpoints is anathema to the philosophy of internal relations, in which vantage point forms an internal part of theory. The vantage points of migrations, borders, or migrants is a common one in studies of migration, which take place at the seams of the international order (Cowen, 2014). Foregrounding migration within Australian history is an important component in this thesis, to address the tendency towards “ambivalence” over the place of migration in Australian history (Balint and Simic, 2018, p. 2). But an approach of “border fetishism” (Ritchie, Carpenter, and Mojab, 2022a, p. 17) can also obscure the central importance of migrants and migration in totality, by focusing on migrants *qua* migrants, or, worse migrants *qua* migration. Within historical materialism, the agency expressed in moving through the system (whether migrating, leaving jobs, leaving relationships), while sometimes profound for the individual, is not comparable to agency operating through class struggle in comprehension of social processes.

The paradigm of labour-centred development grounds the approach to vantage point (Selwyn, 2014a). This conceptual move ‘centres’ the perspective of labour—rather than, say, NGOs, state-commissioned researchers, or academics. But, more importantly, labour cannot meaningfully be abstracted without its internal connection with capital. The actions of state and capital are not expressions of transcendental logics but rather processes of the relations between classes (Selwyn, 2014a, p. 21). Outcomes of these processes are not fore-ordained (Connell and Irving, 1980). They express the class struggles, structural transformation, and more concretely the minutiae of the “science and art of politics” (Menzies, 1970, p. 5; Gramsci, 2007, p. 73).

Selwyn's framework presents not one but "two political economies, with diametrically opposed objectives" (Selwyn, 2014a, p. 189). This thesis develops this relational political economy in which bourgeois and labour-centred political economies of migration are co-constitutive as well as mutually undermining (Selwyn, 2014b).

Seeking to centre this dual vantage point, this thesis employs the technique of visual essay. This draws on Connell and Irving's (1980) "visual essay on the history of class relations" in which pictures are collated, represented, and analysed in order to better describe class dynamics. It is no coincidence that the ongoing relevance of *Class Structure in Australian History* is in part thanks to its conscious attempt to bring together ruling and working class development within one analysis. Berger et al. (1972) argue that every image embodies a "way of seeing" (p. 10). Art, photography, cartoons, are made in and through real social relations, and the act of producing art embodies relations between artist and represented, and furthermore with the intended audience. The act of re-presenting them on the page reenacts as well as transforms those relations, infecting them with the intentions of the author. Through these ways of seeing embodied in image, this thesis advances a visual essay that collates vantage points across time and space in order to represent the movement and dynamism of totality. It presents a "dialectical montage" in the sense of Eisenstein's (1998) 'Strike' (1924), which splices images of lemon squeezing and workers, the slaughter of horses with the revolution. For Eisenstein, "the fertilisation of one series of exotic phenomena by another" helps to bring together "the 'manufactured' past of contemporary revolutionary reality" (Eisenstein, 1998, pp. 53–4). The tradition of film editing techniques pioneered early in the Russian revolution provides a further methodological referent, which attempts to jarringly juxtapose not only cartoons and images, but graphs, linear regressions, and tables, in service of engagement with Australian historiography, and the re-theorisation of immigration, workers, colonisation in the vice of empire, capital, and nation.

These methodological debates frame the empirical contribution of this thesis, which is not, as the saying goes, a historical work (Polanyi, 1944, p. 4). Its contribution lies in the arrangement of reality, rather than archival or textual analysis. The thesis merely rubs together various "conceptual blocks" in order to help them "catch fire" (Ollman, 2003, p. 77; Harvey, 2001, p. 9). Yet, this modest contribution answers the call for "new histories of capitalism" (Huf, 2019; Huf, Rees, et al., 2020; Huf and Sluga, 2019) and a "new materialism in Australian history" (Forsyth and Loy-Wilson,

2017). It unveils an understanding of the internal relations between political, racial, and ideological dynamics of migration and the material development of capitalism and settler colonialism (Forsyth and Loy-Wilson, 2022, p. 3). This thesis is inspired and guided by the *Annales* school and radical Australian histories of the 1980s (Connell and Irving, 1980; McMichael, 1984; McQueen, 1986; Wells, 1989).

One final methodological point is necessary. Temporal abstraction as advanced in this thesis is not confined to the periodisation outlined above. The future is internally related to the past and the present (Rees, 1998, p. 96). Just as the vantage point of the present shapes the relations uncovered in the study of history, the vantage point of the future necessarily impinges on the construction of the present (Ollman, 2003). This is not the teleological assertion that social revolution is written in the stars. It is the assessment that the dynamics of social totality are contradictory, dynamic and directioned, and the development of productive forces sufficiently developed, that revolution overturning capitalism is possible (Callinicos, 1995). The descent into mutual ruin of contending classes is another increasingly clear possibility (Marx and Engels, 1848/2002, p. 219). This conceptual insistence is anything but irrelevant. As the following chapters describe, a presupposition pervades much social theory that social revolution is impossible, laughable or so radically improbable it is not worth analysing.⁶ In abstracting out the possibility that the present society can be overturned, however, the social process is ossified into a static structure. No longer do contradictions run to the heart of the system. Process becomes structure. History becomes theory. Agency is caged.

1.4 OUTLINE

In the chapters that follow, this thesis advances a Marxist explanation of migration in Australia through a dialectic between ‘labour’s migration’ and ‘capital’s empire’. The title of this thesis summarises this dynamic, wherein ‘Labour’s Migration = Capital’s Empire’: the migration of labour and the development of capital’s rule cannot

⁶The “fantasy” of the 1850s that “we can destroy this capitalist system and we can build something entirely different” is an “impossibility right now” as most of the population is dependent on the circulation of capital (Harvey, 2019, 35:20). For Gellner, a “terrible postal error” occurred for Marxists where the “spirit of history or human consciousness” sent the “awakening message” to nations instead of classes (Gellner, 1987, p. 129). In Francis Castles’ conception of historic compromise, central to the theory of the so-called ‘Australian settlement’, the spectre of “social revolution!” is effectively dismissed (Castles, 1988, p. 76).

be separated; migration is not ontologically exterior to but a component part of capital accumulation, and vice versa capitalist accumulation requires the centralisation of workers. Conversely, the title disrupts the traditional account of migration as a tussle between the labour hungry capitalist and the worker protecting their job, suggesting 'Labour's Migration \neq Capital's Empire': the possessive apostrophe conveys a separation between the workers' migration and the imperialist dynamics attributed to capital. This relation develops through the chapters addressing empire, colonialism, labour, and nationalism:

Chapter 2 investigates the internality of migration and imperialism through two movements. First, section 2.1 grounds the internal relations between imperialism and capitalism through a critical comparison of two theorists of imperialism, David Harvey (2005b) and Alex Callinicos (2009). From this analysis, section 2.2 advances the periodisation of Australian migration history as a moment within not only Australian but global development of the imperialist world economy.

Migration is the basis of the capitalist social formation of 'Australia': the basis on which a continent was invaded, colonised, developed, with Aboriginal people and their complex societies facing attempted extirpation, appropriation, and internal transformation. Chapter 3 develops the identity/difference relation of immigration as invasion through a critique of Patrick Wolfe's (1999) theory of settler colonialism, while building on his empirical contributions in section 3.5.

Chapter 4 develops a critique of one common explanation of migration's relationship with capital accumulation: that of 'cheap labour'. Through an investigation of labour market theory, the category of labour-power, and the world market, this section develops the work of Ben Fine (1998) and Howard Botwinick (2018) in understanding labour markets as historically and morally determined, as well as internally complex.

Chapter 5 provides an internal relations account of immigration within labour market regimes as a process, elaborating the historical work established in chapters 2 and 3. Rather than an external account of wages, this periodisation outlines how migration constitutes accumulation via the processes of class formation, and how this internal relation evolves through the periodisation of Australian migration.

Finally, chapter 6 outlines the way migration expresses ideological and political contradictions arising from the previous chapters. The abstraction of nationalism is advanced to unpick, order, and clarify the contradictions between imperialism, labour

markets, class, and migration. Section 6.1 outlines an internal relations account of racism and labour markets, and the remainder of the chapter advances a political history in which migration plays two radically different ideological roles in Australian class development, reproducing and undermining class formation.

Through these chapters, this thesis investigates the two research questions: what explains the shifts in Australian migration in the *longue durée*, and how is migration constituted within processes of capital accumulation. To do so, each of these chapters reiterates and reconceptualises migration, expressing its internally related parts as moments within a process, or distinctions within a unity. This argument runs through the thesis structure: through the introduction of four determinations (over five chapters), the movements of non-deductive incorporation (through the conceptual–empirical movement), via the incorporated comparison of Australian history (through periodisation), and, finally, through its treatment of vantage point (including labour-centred development and ‘visual essay’). The result, summarised in chapter 7, is the intellectual reconstruction of migration in Australia as a rich totality with many determinations, summarised through three internally and asymmetrically related *premises* of migration, which explain its movements.

Chapter 2

Australian Migration in the Imperialist World Economy

Migration has made the Empire, and migration of one kind of people keeps it united

— HUGHES, 1929, P. 353

“Australia for the Australians” in the sense it is now commonly used, must not be looked on as a mere cuckoo cry. Attached to it is the deep meaning that the people of these colonies are resolved to have no outside interference with any matter affecting the interests of any portion of the Continent. It, in fact, may be termed the Australian Monro [sic] doctrine.

— WAGGA WAGGA ADVERTISER, 1889

To speak of inter-national migration is to presuppose the existence of relations between nations. Following the ontological framing of internal relations established in chapter 1, this chapter develops an understanding of nations and migration not as discrete things, self-contained billiard balls striking one another on the international stage (Keohane and Nye, 1977, p. 226), but foregrounding the inner connection within them, and with processes of capital accumulation. To do this, as per Callinicos’s (2001) methodology of non-deductive incorporation, this chapter introduces the first mediating category to understand and explain migration within the international: imperialism. It does so through two movements.

The first movement situates migration conceptually within this international system—the internal and contradictory dynamics between accumulation and empire. It devel-

ops an understanding of relations between states situated within an internally dynamic world economy (Ashman, 2006), through an investigation of two strong attempts to conceptualise the intertwined relations of accumulation and inter-state competition (Callinicos, 2009; Harvey, 2005b). First, David Harvey's (2005b) *The New Imperialism* provides a framework for the internal relations between what he calls "territorial and capitalistic logics of power" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 183). As among the most influential academic Marxist theorists (see Castree, Charnock, and Christophers, 2023), Harvey's concept of 'accumulation by dispossession', central to his account of modern imperialism, is a prominent explanation of the driving force of migrations (e.g. Delgado Wise, 2022; Glick Schiller, 2015; Lima, 2022; Mayblin and Turner, 2021; Rajaram, 2018).¹ This chapter critically compares Harvey's work to a parallel account by Alex Callinicos (2009), who purports to have "converged" on Harvey's formulation of "capitalist imperialism" (p. 71). Through an intellectual reconstruction of imperialism, tracing the economic foundations of Luxemburg (1913/2003) and Bukharin (1917/1929), this chapter justifies and develops the internality of capital and empire.

The second movement in this chapter is to establish a periodisation of Australian migration within this imperialist world economy. Building on the periods of global imperialism outlined in the first section, section 2.2 develops a historical account of Australian migration within the development and ongoing dynamics of this dialectical unity of capitalist imperialism, and the ways that Australian migration was coimbricated with this process. Four subsections propel an account of the establishment and deepening of the internal relations within accumulation and imperialism through Australia's migration. Building on conceptions of Australia as a sub-imperial power in its own right (Glanz, 1990; Kuhn, 2002; O'Lincoln, 1980; see generally, Kuhn, 2005; Lourenco, 2023), this chapter situates Australian migration within capitalist imperialism, thereby taking the first step in understanding how migration is constituted within processes of capital accumulation.

¹In *Border as Method*, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) provide a critical account that suggests a new weighting of accumulation by dispossession (pp. 244–6). Foster (2024) charges Harvey with failing to conceptualise "imperialism as dialectically connected to capitalism" (Foster, 2024, p. 18).

2.1 PERILS OF THEORISING IMPERIALISM IN 'TWO LOGICS'

Harvey (2005b) situates imperialism within two interconnected processes: economic and geo-political. Capitalist imperialism is the “contradictory fusion” of “the politics of state and empire” and “the molecular processes of capital accumulation in space and time” (Harvey, 2005b, p.26). Harvey presents the two logics—territorial and capitalist—as internally and dialectically related. The relationship between the two logics “should be seen, therefore, as problematic and often contradictory (that is, dialectical) rather than as functional or one-sided” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 30). They are “distinctive and in no way reducible to each other” but also “tightly interwoven” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 183). He sketches out how each can impact the other. Economic accumulation creates a “need to create a parallel accumulation of political/military power” (Harvey, 2005b, p.183). And in the reverse direction, when “political control shifts within the territorial logic, flows of capital must likewise shift to accommodate” (p. 183).

Harvey’s analysis of capitalist geographical dynamics are integrated with the economic picture he presents of capitalism. Probably the greatest strength of Harvey’s work is precisely his ability to weave together contradictory and dialectically opposed elements into a dynamic history of capitalism. It is not the case that his economics of over-accumulation sits in one chapter, followed by a disconnected discussion of US policy. He seeks an “internal relations” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 183) account of the two logics or powers of capitalist imperialism, and that his account of the geo-political juncture is inherently bound up with his account of the rebounding crises of capitalism.

For instance the fact that surplus capitals, meeting internal resistance, were deployed externally through imperialist spatial fixes from 1870 required a shift in territorial power that could only be realised through the consolidation of bourgeois political power in the European states.² It was the economic motive force of over-accumulation that demanded the re-carving of the world for the export of social capitals, of the state powers to defend those interests, and which together produced the conditions for the consolidation of bourgeois interests. And US leadership (“dominance and hegemony”, p. 57) in the post-1945 liberal order was secured through a financial world order, in-

²Bukharin (1917/1929) makes a similar point.

stitutionalised combination of open trade and privileged trade, and collective security agreements such as NATO (Harvey, 2005b, pp. 52–6). This was not an economically liberal cooperative ideal but was underpinned by the US's “strongest card—military dominance” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 79). It is in the concrete and united application of Harvey's geography and economics that he is at his clearest. After 1970, as can be seen below, Harvey struggles to meet his aim to keep the “two sides of this dialectic simultaneously in motion” and never lapse into “either a solely political or a predominantly economic mode of argumentation” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 30). He notes in general that at “any given historical-geographical moment, one or other of the logics may dominate” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 33).

However, his approach to the framing of the nature of imperialism through ‘two logics’ produces an open framework, liable to abuse. Harvey positions his formulation as a set of “simple truths” and “a general framework for thinking”, hoping to “go beyond polemics” (Harvey, 2005b, pp. vii–viii). Readers are invited to draw their own interpretations, conclusions, and versions of the two logics approach to imperialism, across the following six dimensions: (1) the relation between “territorial and capitalistic logics of power”; (2) the “form” of US imperialism; (3) the “‘inner-outer dialectic’ of US society”; (4) the role of predation; (5) “distinctions” in US (especially foreign) policy; and (6) movement tactics (Harvey, 2005b, p. vii–viii).

Fine (2006, p. 142) criticises this “duality” of logics, and the suggestion that at particular moments one might dominate. In particular, he asks how a “a conceptually universal logic (of territory) [can] dominate over a historically-specific one, of capital” (Fine, 2006, p. 142). To properly integrate the two dynamics, Fine argues “the logic of territory must be the logic of capitalist territory, and not an antithesis to the logic of capital” (Fine, 2006, p. 142). The methodology by which such a concrete analysis of territory could be obtained is by “incorporat[ing] the historically specific in moving from the abstract to the more concrete” (Fine, 2006, p. 141).

The problem is not with using phrases such as “geopolitics” and “economics” to describe countervailing or mutually reinforcing dynamics, but in the account provided for the relationship, whether explicitly or implicitly. Merely elevating the phrases to a conceptual framework is certainly not sufficient for this task. Moreover, the excessive stress on the intentional and deliberate separation of ‘logics’ may fail to attune theorists to the underlying account of mutual and internal dynamic unfolding of capitalism and empire (Bieler and Morton, 2018, pp. 109–11).

2.1.1 THE LUXEMBURGIAN ECONOMICS OF DAVID HARVEY

In the generation after Marx, theorists attempted to develop conceptualisations of imperialism (Howard and King, 1989). Lenin's (1933/1964) *Imperialism* was only the most famous. These treatments distinctively stressed the economic roots of imperialism as a key focus, and for this reason, migration played an important role. Two such thinkers who have had an ongoing influence are Rosa Luxemburg (1913/2003) and (Bukharin, 1917/1929). Luxemburg's account stressed the relation of capitalism with the non-capitalist world. As well as trade, she stressed the dynamic of migration from the non-capitalist world as performing a crucial role for capitalism. Marx is charged with ignoring the "incessant transition from non-capitalist to capitalist conditions of a labour power that is cast off by pre-capitalist, not capitalist, modes of production in their progressive breakdown and disintegration" (Luxemburg, 1913/2003, p. 342), by locating it in a 'primitive' rather than ongoing phase of capitalism. She writes also that if there were nothing other than "natural propagation" (that is if only birth and not migration were the genesis for new workers), "accumulation, in its periodical swings from overstrain to exhaustion, could not continue, nor could the productive sphere expand by leaps and bounds, and accumulation itself would become impossible" (Luxemburg, 1913/2003, p. 341). In migration and in markets, she stressed the need for capitalism to grow into non-capitalist world in order that its need for expansion be fulfilled. Although this led to underconsumptionist theory, it was born of an internationalism which sought to integrate the advanced capitalist countries analytically with the brutality in the colonies.

Bukharin also sought to integrate the understanding of imperialism into capitalism, basing his theory in the world economy, production on a global scale (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 18). On the basis of commodity exchange (the most primitive form) is the movement of the two great "poles of capital relations": labour-power on the one hand and capital on the other, with money capital and finance of particular importance in the second case (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 40). The creation of a world market in the supply and demands of "hands" and a grand international division of labour are fundamental to the new internationalised order (Bukharin, 1917/1929, pp. 39, 106).³

³The relevance of his account can be seen through a contents summary aside: "movement of money capital", as well as "emigration and immigration; migration of the labour power; partial transfer of the wages of immigrant labour ('sending money home'); establishment of enterprises abroad, and the movement of the surplus value obtained; profits of steamship companies, etc" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 26).

Bukharin's *Imperialism and the World Economy* influenced Lenin's interpretation of competition between states.

David Harvey's work is influenced by the former account. Despite the force of his analysis, there are two key issues in his theory, which are related to Luxemburg's influence.

Accumulation by Dispossession

Drawing on Luxemburg, Harvey suggests that capital accumulation has "a dual character" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 176). On the one hand is "expanded reproduction", the process accumulation through circulatory processes on the market, and "accumulation by dispossession" on the other. These "two aspects of expanded reproduction and accumulation by dispossession are organically linked, dialectically intertwined" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 176), but one aspect may become more decisive at particular times.

The key tenets of Harvey's economic analysis are developed in *Limits to Capital* (1982/1999). He refers to "accumulation through exchange" (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 174), governed by a particular "inner logic of capitalist accumulation" gleaned from the reproduction schemes in Capital Volume II, in the proportionalities of the departments for consumer and capital goods (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 175). Although he tends to emphasise proportionality and Volume II of Capital (Marx, 1885/1978), Harvey roots the secret of accumulation, via exchange, to production (p. 176) and the dynamic of exploitation (p. 29). Expanded reproduction requires both the proportionalities in the means of consumption, the means of production, money and credit, as well as the reproduction of the capital-labour relation from the standpoint of exchange (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 175).

Accumulation by dispossession acts as a theoretical "substitute" for the process of primitive accumulation (Harvey, 2004, p. 74), which was for Marx, the "historical basis, instead of the historical result, of specifically capitalist production" (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 775). Harvey's usage varies from more careful Marxist analysis of the devaluation of capitals and the absorption of devalued capitals by others, acting as a 'fix' for over-accumulation,⁴ and at other times, he can use the word to mean any

⁴Both Harvey's care and the implicit issues can be seen in this passage: "What accumulation by dispossession does is to release a set of assets (including labour power) at very low (and in some instances zero) cost. Over-accumulated capital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 149).

number of predatory aspects of the capitalist system.

Harvey's usage of accumulation by dispossession varies across an extremely broad array of capitalist ills. These include: the privatisation of nationalised industries (Harvey, 2005b, p. 146), "ponzi schemes" and "[s]tock promotions", "inflation", "corporate fraud", "stock and corporate collapses", "asset-stripping through mergers and acquisitions" (p. 147), "speculative raiding carried out by hedge funds and other major institutions of finance capital" (p. 147), patents and biopiracy (pp. 147–8), "depletion of the global environmental commons" and the "wholesale commodification of nature" (p. 148), the "commodification of cultural forms, histories, and intellectual creativity" (p. 148), "corporatization and privatization of hitherto public assets" (p. 148), the "rolling back of regulatory frameworks designed to protect labour and the environment from degradation" and "reversion of common property rights" (p. 148), and even house flipping (private property renovation, pp. 152–3).⁵ This is an extremely broad category.

But while accumulation by dispossession is a concomitant feature of capitalism throughout its historical development, at certain historical points, it moves to the very centre of Harvey's analysis. In his assessment of the modern period of imperialism, Harvey argues that "accumulation by dispossession emerge[s] from this background state to become the *dominant form of accumulation relative to expanded reproduction*" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 153, emphasis mine). It was "increasingly more salient after 1973, in part as compensation for the chronic problems of overaccumulation arising within expanded reproduction" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 156) mainly via the U.S.-controlled financial system. Harvey draws out some of the wide-ranging implications of this theory. Where the classic view had centred the "contradiction was between capital and labour in and around the point of production" with the proletariat the "key agent of historical change" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 169), now the movement must "acknowledge accumulation by dispossession as the primary contradiction to be confronted" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 177).⁶

There are several serious problems with Harvey's concept of accumulation by dis-

⁵A related issue is "shifting the balance of power and interests within the bourgeoisie from production activities to institutions of finance capital" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 63). "Finance capital, in short, moved centre-stage in this phase of US hegemony" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 64).

⁶More specifically, "the forms of left-wing political organization established in the period 1945–73, when expanded reproduction was in the ascendant, were inappropriate to the post-1973 world, where accumulation by dispossession moved to the fore as the primary contradiction within the imperialist organization of capital accumulation" (Harvey, 2005b, p. 172).

possession, and thereby with his whole account of imperialism after 1973. First, logically, accumulation by predation cannot be a substitute for accumulation on a social scale. The dynamics of “predation, fraud, and violence” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 144) are constant companions of capitalist competition, and these techniques can be greatly advantageous to those capitalists that participate in them. But there are real limits to the capacity for predation to reproduce capital on the social scale. In Marx’s account, capitalists do not (simply) rob, cheat and steal, but are sustained on the systemic dynamics of exploitation of workers’ labour-power. The question of transfers of value between capitalists presume that production of value; the dynamics of ongoing predation presume the ongoing reproduction of the whole society. For instance, some capitalists repurposed the state machinery of war to great productive advantage after WWII, and failing firms were sold off cheap in 2008. The accumulation by centralisation for the lucky firms, and the ensuing system-wide restoration in profitability, cannot be confused itself with system-wide accumulation! Profitability has been restored on the basis of the destruction, not creation, of value. The growth of the “social capital is accomplished through the growth of many individual capitals” rather than at the expense of one against another individual capital (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 776).

Corporate frauds, Ponzi schemes, and environmental degradation are all bad things, and all entwined with capitalism, but they cannot provide an equivalent or symmetric motor for the system as does the accumulation of capital by the exploitation of labour power. Privatisation of public assets certainly increases the size of private capital, but has not fundamentally changed accumulation on a social scale. The ‘flipping’ of houses combines the speculation on land with productive labour for private exchange. Environmental degradation is related to, but not a replacement for, accumulation (Parker, 2017). ‘Frauds’ are an ongoing feature of capitalism, but one of Marx’s main contributions to political economy was to show that capitalism could function without the defrauding of one capitalist by another, but precisely through the ‘fair’ exchange of labour-power for wages (Marx, 1898/1935).

After 1973, when this wide group of phenomena are raised to the driving contradiction of capitalism, Harvey’s theoretical account collapses. Once production is displaced entirely, becoming a marginal or secondary dynamic force of the system, the logic collapses in on itself. The logic of value is replaced by an amorphous list of forms of predation and violence. Fine argues for instance that while privatisation promotes private accumulation, it is “far from conducive to systemic accumulation”

(Fine, 2006, p. 146). Accumulation by dispossession can only become the prime mover of capitalism if it is able to substitute for accumulation on a systemic scale, which would require the production of surplus value (which Harvey calls accumulation by expanded reproduction).

Over-Accumulation

The conceptual issues in accumulation by dispossession are rooted in Harvey's political economy, in a second major issue: over-accumulation. Drawing particularly on Volume III of *Capital* (Marx, 1894/1981, pp. 359–67), Harvey argues that the technological change and the social imperative for “accumulation for accumulation's sake” causes capitalists to produce “a surplus of capital relative to opportunities to employ that capital.” (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 192).

His theory of the “spatial fix” came out of this “chronic tendency within capitalism, theoretically derived out of a reformulation of Marx's theory of the tendency for the profit rate to fall, to produce crises of overaccumulation” (Harvey, 2001, pp. 87–8)—which produce capital and labour surpluses “side by side” (Harvey, 2001, p. 88). The capitalistic logic of imperialism operates then “against this background of seeking out ‘spatio-temporal fixes’ to the capital surplus problem” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 89). The two main strategies for capital, often combined, of avoiding “devaluation” are to turn to “[g]eographical expansion and spatial reorganization” or “temporal shifts” (for instance long-term capital investment, p. 88).

Centring crisis formation on surplus capital in this way reproduces underconsumptionist conceptual issues. Fine argues that Harvey's account is a “generalisation” of Luxemburg's theory of underconsumption, in that he takes Luxemburg's idea that non-capitalist markets are required by capitalism, and augments it with a wide array of “external safety valves” under the label accumulation by dispossession (Fine, 2006, p. 143). Harvey explicitly rejects Luxemburg's underconsumptionism (Harvey, 2005b, pp. 138–9) and Keynes' effective demand (citing Brewer, 1990), but reiterates that the “operative term” is “the capital surplus” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 149). Luxemburg is “quite correct” in her criticism of Marx for failing to develop a theory of effective demand to realise the “value of commodities in exchange” (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 175; cf. Pivetti, 2015). Harvey's emphasis is on the surpluses in Department I (capital goods) rather than Department II (consumptive goods). Over-accumulation is the condition where

“surpluses of capital (perhaps accompanied by surpluses of labour) lie idle with no profitable outlets in sight” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 149).

These issues relate to Harvey's dismissal of the Law of the Tendential Fall in the Rate of Profit (LTFRP, Marx, 1894/1981, p. 317–75) as merely a surface representation (alongside underconsumptionism) of over-accumulation. Harvey (1982/1999) complains of Marx's “infuriatingly ambivalent” writings, such as his admitting the possibility of long-run secular decline alongside a rejection of constant “periodic over-production” and the merely “transitory over-abundance of capital, over-production and crises” (cited in Harvey, 1982/1999, pp. 190–1). Ollman (2003, p. 4) suggests that Marx's use of ambiguous bat-like words (seeming to be simultaneously birds and mice, Pareto's 1902 complaint) is a clue for internal relations at work: here, the internal relationship between the tendencies and counter-tendencies. On such a reading, Marx's ambivalence could be taken, rather, to mean that over-production is cyclical and periodic rather than perpetual, alongside a long-run tendency of declining profit rates. Harvey however asserts that checks to the rising organic composition of capital mean there is no LTFRP, although that Marx's argument for it has important ramifications for the contradictions between the forces of production and social relations of capitalism (Harvey, 1982/1999, pp. 176–89).⁷

The theory of over-accumulation is the very “heart of the problem that generates pressures for imperialist practices in the inter-state system” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 107). Surplus capitals are unable to be profitably employed at ‘home’ and must therefore be exported outside the state. That is, even ‘accumulation via expanded reproduction’ tends towards the production of surpluses that must be exported.

The result is not merely logical flaws around crisis development, but deep explanatory problems in theorising capitalist development. The surplus capital problem lurks in every temporal corner. Surplus capitals are at the heart of the depression of 1846–50 (Harvey, 2005b, p. 42). Surplus capitals were “forced outwards to swamp the world in a massive wave of speculative investment and trade, particularly after 1870 or so” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 43). Again, they are behind the depression of the 1930s (Harvey, 2005b, p. 46), and the lead-up to the crisis of the 1970s. The “ability of the US to absorb surplus capitals internally began to flag in the late 1960s, so overaccumu-

⁷“Balanced accumulation through exchange is indeed possible in perpetuity, provided that technological change is confined within strict limits, provided that there is an infinite supply of labour power which always trades at its value, and provided that there is no competition between capitalists and no equalization in the rate of profit” (Harvey, 1982/1999, p. 176).

lation emerged as a problem and economic competition sharpened” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 59). Harvey’s concepts of over-accumulation and accumulation by dispossession come together. For instance: the solution of privatisation after the 1970s “helped stave off the overaccumulation problem, at least for a while” by opening “new terrains for profitable activity” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 158). But “once in motion, however, this movement created incredible pressures to find more and more arenas, either at home or abroad, where privatization might be achieved” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 158). The confusion between the devaluation and the accumulation of capital tend to transform Marx’s “accumulation for accumulation’s sake” into “privatisation for privatisations sake”, “house flipping for house flipping’s sake”, “environmental degradation for environmental degradation’s sake”, and so on. Capitalism is a rapacious ravenous system forever seeking external surplus taps.

Harvey’s Luxemburgian missteps serve as a parable for theorising migration in the imperialist world economy. Classifying migrations as ‘accumulation by dispossession’ only suffices as an explanation insofar as that theory itself grounds those dynamics within the development of capitalism. Insofar as accumulation by dispossession is a classifying tool of capitalist ills, the ‘theory’ is nothing but a classification. Conceptualising the inner relationship between migration and imperialism must proceed on the basis that immigration, itself a moment within the processes of circulation and centralisation, feeds the inner asymmetries within the dialectic of capitalist imperialism. When seeking to understand the essence of migration, it does not suffice to name it ‘accumulation by dispossession’.

2.1.2 PERIODISING IMPERIALISM IN WORLD CAPITALISM

Alex Callinicos (2009) in *Imperialism and Global Political Economy* provides an alternative methodological and conceptual approach to the problem of identifying the dynamics of capitalist imperialism. Callinicos’s (2009) account mirrors Harvey’s, representing an advance in terms of understanding the dynamic economic foundations of imperialism with respect to theories of crisis, and in forming a stronger methodological foundation, but reproducing its own issues in his treatment of geopolitics. This section follows Callinicos’ argument and compares it with Harvey for the purpose of conceptualising the inner relation between capital accumulation and imperialism, but also in developing a periodisation of imperialism. As discussed in chapter 1, this periodisa-

tion provides the groundwork from which an incorporated comparison of Australian migration history is developed.

Callinicos proposes a similar meta-theoretical framework of ‘two forms’, conceptualising the “intersection of two forms of competition, namely economic and geopolitical” (Callinicos, 2009, p. 15). He furthers Harvey’s open reading, playing down differences with Harvey and claiming to have independently arrived at the formulation in his analysis of two “forms” of competition (Callinicos, 2003; Callinicos, 2009, pp. 15, 140).

Callinicos seeks to put Harvey’s account on firmer methodological footing. From Marx’s *Grundrisse* (1939/1993) and *Capital* (1867/1976a; 1885/1978; 1894/1981), Callinicos forwards a methodology of reconstructing social totality by “starting from the abstract concepts which delineate its essential features”, going through a number of intermediary stages (Callinicos, 1995, p. 130). The process of theory production is to introduce successively more concrete determinations, rather than merely to deduce them from categories to be found in the commodity form. Callinicos draws an analogy with Marx’s introduction of financial markets in Volume 3 of *Capital*. Imperialism should be dealt with in the same way for Callinicos, with the “state system” being therefore be “non-deductively” introduced into the general framework Marx builds in *Capital* (Callinicos, 2009, p. 81)

Although the multi-state system predates capitalism, capitalism adapted itself to this preexisting set of institutions. The two are completely intertwined today (Callinicos, 2007). From the end of the nineteenth century, the “process of inter-state competition became subsumed under that between capitals” (Callinicos, 2007, p. 451). This competition between capitals is taken from *Grundrisse* to be fundamental, “nothing other than the inner nature of capital”, with capital necessarily existing “as many capitals, and its self-determination therefore appears as their reciprocal interaction with one another” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 414). In this way, not only does capitalist competition come to fundamentally shape the dynamics of geo-political competition, but the integration of inter-state capitalist competition therefore fundamentally transforms this inherent feature of capitalism, competition (Callinicos, 2007, p. 540). Competition on the world market has been used to explain the subordination of state capitalist USSR to the law of value (Binns, Cliff, and Harman, 1987; Cliff, 1988). Callinicos’ analysis marks a “historical moment” at which “interstate rivalries” can be said to be “integrated into the larger processes of capital accumulation”, starting in the 15th but

culminating at the end of the 19th century (Callinicos, 2009, p. 15). Despite this more rigorous account of the coimbrication of geopolitics and capitalism, there are still issues with the definition of imperialism through the two logics approach: the definition of imperialism as economic and geo-political competition or of capitalist and territorial logics.

He also grounds capitalist imperialism in a rich way. Against Harvey's account of overproduction, Callinicos suggests over-accumulation can only be relative to the profitable employment of capital: the only reasonable referent to which it can be said to be *over*-accumulation (as opposed to accumulation) is its relation to the profitable reinvestment of surplus. Without a clear integration of rates of profitability, there is no reason capitalism will not experience crises of under- as well as over- production (which in fact it does). The assertion of the perpetual dynamic of capital surpluses have to be explained in an "ad hoc" manner by "a manifestly inadequate disproportionality or under-consumptionist explanation of crises" (Callinicos, 2009, pp. 257–8, n. 8). Disproportionality and under-consumptionism are in this way reproduced in the theory. Related to this, and more importantly, is the LTFRP (Callinicos, 2009, p. 140).

There are real potential strengths to this approach. Following the methodological approach of non-deductive incorporation allows for theoretical progression and extension, whilst reanimating and complicating the underlying dynamism within Marx's political economy. Centring the nondeterministic but directioned dynamics of capital accumulation help to keep the structure/agency dialectic alive, so critical in conceptualising migration in the imperialist world economy (Callinicos, 1995). This is a methodology capable of developing a rich, patterned and asymmetric ontology of capitalist imperialism.

Although promising and useful, Callinicos' analysis of the interrelation between capitalism and imperialism often delves into external relations. His insistence to defend the form of the two logics (Callinicos, 2003) obscures the particular nature of dynamic between the two forms of competition/logics/powers, carries risks of dismissing of their inner connection. Callinicos argues that there must be a "realist moment" in Marxist analysis of international relations (Callinicos, 2007, p. 542). This is because it is the "distinctive properties" of the state system that give it an "explanatory role" (Callinicos, 2007, p. 542). This judgement has been criticised.

This insistence on an explanatory role for the state system is misguided in at-

tempting to account for those properties external from capitalist development. It is not unreasonable to speak of a ‘realist moment’ in Marxist international relations, just as one might speak of a liberal moment in the account of the post-WWII order.⁸ The realist moment can even be said to dominate the liberal moment, though not because of “distinctive properties” (Callinicos, 2007, p. 542) of geopolitics, but because the uneven and combined development of capital within that system produces limits to the success of any such liberal moment (in practice and in thought). The dominance of a liberal moment presupposes relative stability. Callinicos’ account constructs geopolitics and capitalist accumulation as distinct forms, and therefore prevents him from making an account of their contradictory unity. In place of the “broad definition” of imperialism as transhistorical political dominance that Callinicos (2009, p. 3) tries to avoid, a new broad definition has been constructed of imperialism as transhistorical political discord.

Harvey (2005b)	Callinicos (2009)
Rise of bourgeois imperialisms 1870 – 1945	Classical imperialism 1870 – 1945
Global US Hegemony and dominance 1945 – 1970	Superpower imperialism 1945 – 1991
Neo-liberal hegemony 1970 – 2000	Imperialism after the Cold War 1991–

Table 2.1: Two periodisations of imperialism.

Table 2.1 compares the two periodisations discussed in this section. Section 2.1 outlined the issues in Harvey’s economic account of this relationship, and in particular the problems it faces after the 1970s. The first and second hinges of this periodisation are well known, while the third is more troublesome. The end of the nineteenth century is reminiscent of Lenin’s (1933/1964, pp. 109–111) “epoch of capitalist imperialism” from 1871–1914, and Bukharin’s (1917/1929, pp. 85–7) similar period from the 1870s to 1914.⁹

⁸Realism and liberalism are not epiphenomenal theories, but systems of thought that arise in and impact the very real dynamics in the state system. Callinicos comes close to, but avoids, this recognition but he suggests Marxists are “like liberal internationalists . . . *free to recognize* the significance of the development since the 1940s of a liberal world economy in providing the leading capitalist states strong incentives to cooperate, rather than to balance against each other” (Callinicos, 2007, p. 546, emphasis added). See for an interesting version of the opposite argument, that liberal tends to dominate realist moment, Smith (2003) on absolute and relative geography.

⁹Bukharin (1917/1929, p. 87, n. 1) writes “beginning from 1871, all international conflicts are caused by colonial policy”.

Callinicos' stress on geopolitics as an external structure with distinctive properties and explanatory power pervades his work, including a periodisation with political events "at its hinges" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 141). The stage of "classical imperialism" was set by the American Civil War, Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars, "superpower imperialism" by the end of WWII, and final phase is literally called "imperialism after the cold war" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 141). He notes that outcomes of each of these wars were not inevitable but rather deeply politically contingent, as "wars notoriously turn on the uncertainties involved in strategic choices and the chances of battle", pointing to the Cuban missile crisis (Callinicos, 2009, p. 141).

Despite a stated insistence on the dominance of geopolitics, Callinicos' explanation of the subsumption of imperialism into capitalist accumulation, reaching a peak in the 1870s, is a compelling and developed, internal relations account. This builds on Bukharin's theory of the inter-penetration of economics and geo-politics in this period. On the one hand, Bukharin theorises the "internationalisation of economy" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 38) through the "ever thickening network of international [economic] interdependence" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, pp. 41–2)—the flow of capital, people, and commodities. But at the same time, this requires the "nationalisation of capitalist interests" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 62) and deep transformations in the "inner structure" of the state (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 127).¹⁰ The state apparatus becomes increasingly not merely a 'managing committee' for the contradictory interests of the bourgeoisie but an embodiment of their "collectively expressed will" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, pp. 127–8). This accompanies a quantitative "growth of its military organisation, the army and the navy" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 125), which in turn necessitates a spiralling in tariffs, protectionism, to feed the "fighting capacity of the state" (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 124).

For all the problems Callinicos points out with Bukharin's emphases, including overstating state capitalism and his disproportionality theory of crisis,¹¹ this account of the dynamics between capitalist accumulation and imperialism is precisely what

¹⁰The technical development of the productive forces for instance was a key basis for imperialism, including transportation and telecommunications (Bukharin, 1917/1929, pp. 28–30). Economic interpenetration, nationalisation and internationalisation, were inconceivable without these technical means, in Australia as much as anywhere else—where the first telegraph was connected in the 1870s.

¹¹Callinicos makes much of the theoretical maxim that the echoes of Hobson's England and Hilferding's Germany on Lenin and Bukharin respectively left their respective analyses excessively focused on the economies—an argument made by Kidron (1974). Therefore the analysis of imperialism must centre the "diversity of simultaneously existing 'models of expansionism'" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 70). This point is well made, but it does not justify hinging his account in this way on geopolitics.

needs extension in the periods that follow.

Conversely, for Callinicos, after the subsumption of imperialism, geo-political competition is elevated into a structure with distinct dynamics. Periodisation of imperialism becoming a succession of unstable institutional arrangements. Periodisation can allow for geopolitics to play determining role, such as at the end of WWII, or in Callinicos's (1995, p. 109) counterfactual, the 1962 nuclear catastrophe. But the identification of geo-political shifts does not suffice to determine major changes within capitalist imperialism.

The end of the second world war was a golden spike of geo-political-economic transformation, but the economic order that followed it is also remarkable, influenced by the militarisation and nationalisation of the preceding period, and the dynamics of internationalisation that followed it.¹² Kidron named this period "international capitalism", wherein a new permanent arms economy acted as a stabiliser for profit rates while capital itself became increasingly international (Kidron, 1965). Kidron's integration of capitalist dimensions provides a critical contribution to accounts of imperialism following WWII. These considerations are somewhat lacking in Callinicos' account of what "makes the imperialism we encounter today historically distinctive" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 6): the US' disavowal of an imperial status and the formal non-subordination of other countries to the US, and the resulting "imperialism of free trade" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 9). Shawki and Harris (2017) for instance draw on this analysis to criticise Callinicos' version of post-1945 imperialism, though suggesting the state is on the decline.

Callinicos insists that his ultimate goal is to "differentiate phases of capitalist development or specific institutionalized variants of capitalism" such that all shifts be "set in the context of an analysis of the dynamic of capital accumulation at a global level" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 140). But the geo-political focus in the "elements of a sketch of an evolutionary history of imperialism" (Callinicos, 2009, p. 140) tend to neglect internal developments within the capitalist system (see Callinicos, 2009, p. 73). As well as the need to provide an "account of capitalist development", the 1970s economic profitability crisis also needs to be centred. A re-periodisation of the world economy is beyond the scope of this thesis, but to provide a schematic sketch

¹²The "golden spike" refers to the search for stratigraphic markers in geology (see Angus, 2016, ch. 3), which in economics too speaks to the need to find key variables that help mark the shift from quantity into quality

of these movements inspired by Kidron’s (1974) collection of essays: the development of a world market circa 1850–75; financialised export of capital and internationalised trade in primary production goods circa 1875–1914; the nationalisation of capital and international regulation circa 1945–73; increased internationalisation of production and trade in intermediate goods circa 1980–.

The following section (section 2.2) develops this periodisation critically. This proceeds on the basis of stressing the internal relations between the world economy and imperialism, avoiding the over-accumulation account of David Harvey and the stress on geopolitics by Alex Callinicos, the two horns of the two logics framework. In its place, an integrated account of contradictory capitalist development is sought. The periodisation Hobsbawm develops in his four volume account of the history of capitalism intersects and contradicts this schema, as shown in Table 2.2. Two moments in particular, the years following the 1848 revolution and the years about WWI, complicate and add to the rhythmic grid.¹³

Hobsbawm (1975, 1989, 1994, 1995)
Age of Revolution 1789-1848
Age of Capital 1848-1875
Age of Empire 1875 – 1914
Age of Extremes 1914 – 1991

Table 2.2: Periodisations of capitalist imperialism.

This first section of the chapter delivered a critique of two theorists of the new imperialism (Callinicos, 2009; Harvey, 2005b) in order to intellectually reconstruct this category for the purposes of understanding migration within the accumulation of capital. This conceptual reconstruction stressed that migration itself comprises a moment within the circulation of variable capital, and that long-standing dynamics of imperialism came to be subsumed by capitalist mode of production around the end of the nineteenth century. Capitalist imperialism as a contradictory unity expresses the

¹³Periodisation acts as a ‘grid’ that helps to frame dynamic processes, but such a mode of thinking does not rule out syncopation, and unstressed and implied beats. In an article in *Perspectives of New Music*, Benadon (2009) theorises the “gridless beat”, a “beat containing onsets that are not aligned with its isochronous subdivisions” (Benadon, 2009, p. 136).

internality of economic processes of competition between many capitals and the forms of competitive struggles within many capitals (including state capitals). Migration comprises a moment within these processes. Although supporting Callinicos' methodological and conceptual approach to this project, it rejected his 'realist moment' argument, which risks collapsing this contradictory unity into a realist geopolitics. Rather, in the periodisation adopted by this thesis, the transition to neo-liberalism identified by David Harvey was stressed.

This conceptual reconstruction is the first major step in understanding how migration is constituted within processes of accumulation, through the introduction of the determination of imperialism and the explication of the utility of that methodological approach.

2.2 AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION IN THE WORLD IMPERIALIST ORDER

The conceptual groundwork established in section 2.1 provides a basis on which to develop the periodisation of Australian migration in the *longue durée* discussed in chapter 1, stressing the internality within economic growth and inter-imperialist rivalry. The following four sections of this chapter develop this periodisation, by stressing the moment of migration within the expression of accumulation and empire as emergent internal relations. The first section, outlining the development of capitalist social relations in Australia, adds a further period to those Harvey (2005b) and Callinicos (2009) in the previous section.

2.2.1 INTEGRATION INTO THE WORLD MARKET 1830–88

In explaining the shifts in Australian migration, this first section establishes the first period considered by this thesis, running from 1830, by outlining the processes leading up to that year, and then providing three moments through which migration was decisive in the transformation of capitalist relations of production in the years in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Migration in Australia underwent fundamental transformation from the establish-

ment of a garrison penal economy,¹⁴ the growth a pastoral economy, and the wider development of capitalist social relations. Capitalism and imperialism underwent a process of internal development through the period, without which these transformations cannot be understood.

The question of the ‘migration’ of British officers and convicts to Warrang/Sydney Cove was internal to that dynamic of British imperialism. The nature of the internal relations between empire and capital in the 1788 invasion are a matter of some controversy: what factor predominated in the invasion of 1788? Roe suggests it is impossible to separate the motivations of convict disposal (stressed in all official documentation) from the conscious extension of a second British empire (Roe, 1958).¹⁵ Australian invasion set out not simply to replace the American dumping grounds and raw materials sealed off by the American revolution, but in a new strategy towards a world trading empire (Madgwick, 1937/1969, pp. 1–6). The new empire was not at first economically central to the British economy (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1969, p. 2). The second British empire was still to be built, on a combination of naval bases and ‘free’ commerce (Shaw, 1969, p. 85; Bayly, 1989/2016); the British invasion combined a colonial position against the French, a strategic prison outpost within the Eastern empires, as well an outlet for convicts considered human refuse (see for e.g. Madgwick, 1937/1969, ch. 1).

The relations that were exported at first were those of a predominantly-male open air prison, under the dictatorship of governors and officers. Economic activities, in state-led construction, mining or transport, were under the direction of an officer class, and the social structure was strictly dictated by the British Crown (McMichael, 1984, p. 35). That officer class came with “capitalism in their bones” (Baran, 1957/1968, p. 141): bones cultivated generally in the cradle of the British agricultural gentry. Relatively quickly, a system of convict task work evolved into the tickets of leave system in 1801, allowing convicts to occupy certain districts and seek pay for working (Hillier and O’Lincoln, 2013), though it was not ‘free’ employment, as tickets could be revoked. The sealing economy developed very early, peaking before 1810, followed by a later rise in whaling (Butlin, 1994, p. 135). Transportation of convict labour was the basis of this social relation (Maxwell-Stewart, 2010), with the British both supplying

¹⁴“Each of our societies began as a garrison-outpost of one European empire or another, and was located by strategists whose concerns were military and geopolitical rather than economic.” (Denoon, 1983, p. 221).

¹⁵The 1788 invasion of the continent has an “unquestionable place in the history of England’s new imperialism” (Roe, 1958, p. 213).

the convicts, and supporting the extension of assignment in order to decrease costs of the prison camp from 1819 (Ritchie, 1970, p. 173; Maxwell-Stewart, 2010). Even at this early stage, settler initiative often ran forward faster than the British commands. Using the example of the pastoral industry, which settlers had already set up and even exported samples to London by the time the British state formally encouraged wool growing for export, McMichael makes the case for the “immanence of capitalist social relations within the original colonial military bureaucratic state” (McMichael, 1984, pp. 35–6).

A relatively narrow relationship between migration and empire underwent a transformation along with the development of capitalist social relations. Transportation after 1815 expressed both imperialist and economic motivations of Britain. The NSW colony grew glacially before a sharp rise in transportation after 1815, as shown in Table 2.3. The demand for soldiers and labourers in Britain during the Napoleonic wars had made convict export less significant. There was also a wider imperial revolution in the nature of emigration, with migrants recast from troublesome paupers and convicts to more active agents of colonisation (Belich, 2009, pp. 148–56). Active warfare and convict transportation from Britain and Ireland were inversely correlated during the eighteenth century (Maxwell-Stewart, 2010). Convict resistance helped to foment from within a transformation towards free labour (Maxwell-Stewart and Quinlan, 2022). But the internal relations between migration and empire had not yet bloomed.

Colonial population increase	
1788 – 1805	7,707
1805 – 1815	7,356
1815 – 1825	37,442
1825 – 1835	60,849
1835 – 1845	165,794

Table 2.3: Absolute increase in colonial populations in selected periods before 1850, across all Australian colonies, including immigration and natural increase of the colonial population. Calculated as difference between total colonial population at 31 December in the two relevant reference periods, except for 1788 which is set to zero (Department of Immigration, 1968, p. 7).

As capitalist social relations developed domestically in Australia, empire, immigration, and accumulation became increasingly coimbricated. This poses the question “whether capitalism was inherent to Australian settlement or the consequence of a

‘transition’ from the penal to capitalist economy” (Huf and Sluga, 2019, p. 407), a kind of Australian transition debate. Humphrys has suggested that the NSW colony was from the beginning “capitalist because . . . that goal served an important social purpose for British capitalism” (Humphrys et al., 2012, p. 111). Even though it was not yet integrated into world markets and though there was not yet free labour, the new “imperial and colonial states instituted new social relations that, as a result of class formation and struggle at the global and local level, became *more fully* capitalist over time” (Humphrys et al., 2012, p. 111). For Hillier and O’Lincoln (2013), from around 1820 “state-run prison with capitalist features was transforming itself into a full-blown capitalist society in eastern Australia . . . The profit motive had taken command.” It was certainly not yet “full-blown”, even if the class relations were quickly developing in fertile conditions. Marx noted that the production of capital requires that the worker “be free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power, as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of his labour power” (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 272–3). In Australia, transportation of a labouring class had freed them of land holdings, but forced labour and reliance on state provisions meant it was not yet free and not yet dependent on capitalist markets. Only gradually did space grow for commodity purchase and production in retail, with the NSW and VDL Commissariats “providing meat, flour and other products for convicts purchased from local settlers” (Quinlan, 2018, p. 14).

Class transformations shifted the relationship between Australian colonial economy and British empire. The emergence, transformation, and cohering of an Australian ruling class cannot be understood without comprehending the dynamics of British imperialism. From relatively early: (1) the garrison economy had been the material basis for local ‘settler capitalists’ (Huf, 2019; McAloon, 2002); (2) the British market was the most important destination for its exports; and (3) Britain financed the military society. But further development of capitalist relations as a result of class contestation within Australia saw the dynamic interrelation of capitalism and imperialism develop. The result of Australian ruling class formation was relative autonomy within the British empire.

This dynamic process was a story of migration in three ways: the rise and fall of transportation, the rise and rise of assisted migration, and the gold rush.

Pastoralism and Transportation

Pastoralism marked not the first but the most expansive development of these prison relations into participation in the world market. Even if there was capitalism in their bones, “the new opportunities of the nineteenth century—capital, migrant labourers, technology, and markets—enabled an obscure and remote outpost to grow rapidly into a relatively prosperous and populous society” (Denoon, 1983, p. 6). Though wool sales to England had existed for a decade, these increased from 1820, a key movement towards the increased labour demand of the 1820s and the early foundations of expanded white migration (Willard, 1923/1967). Fitzpatrick stresses the “first wool export of consequence from Australia” in 1821, and a new flow of private capital from Britain to Australia expanding from 1834 (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1969, pp. xvii, 31). The booming demand for wool in the centre of the Empire drove a sharp rise in wool prices in the 1830s provided new possibilities for profitable exports (far above those possible from sealing and whaling), and moreover the foundation of the first large expansion running from 1820 to 1850 (Ford and Roberts, 2013). After wool came gold, “silver-lead, copper, coal, sugar, grain, beef and butter” thus inflating the significance of the colonies to empire (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1969, p. xviii). Beyond its export markets and of equal significance was a booming internal market for goods (Belich, 2009). Alongside this expansion, fueled by convict labour, was a surge of convict resistance. Maxwell-Stewart and Quinlan (2022) outline a significant industrial relations crisis produced by an upsurge in convict resistance running from the increasingly brutal regime inaugurated by the Bigge report in 1822 to the protests of Castle Forbes revolt of 1833 (p. 295). The unwinding of the logic of penal colony into an imperial zone of production had a basis both within the development of class relations within the boundaries of Australia, and the world market more broadly; both within the imperial military regime of Britain and its designs for a second British empire.

The pastoral boom, which was a key vector in dispossession and in the transformation of labour relations, was premised on British capitalism, combined with the rapacious desire for more land with the military struggle for territory (Gapps, 2025). There were several ways in which these developments relied on integration with British capitalism. Firstly, British wool demand enabled the growth by weight of exports by 16 per cent per year (Buckley and Wheelwright, 1988, p. 80). Secondly, up until 1838, it was the British Army taking charge of massacres of Aboriginal people to clear the

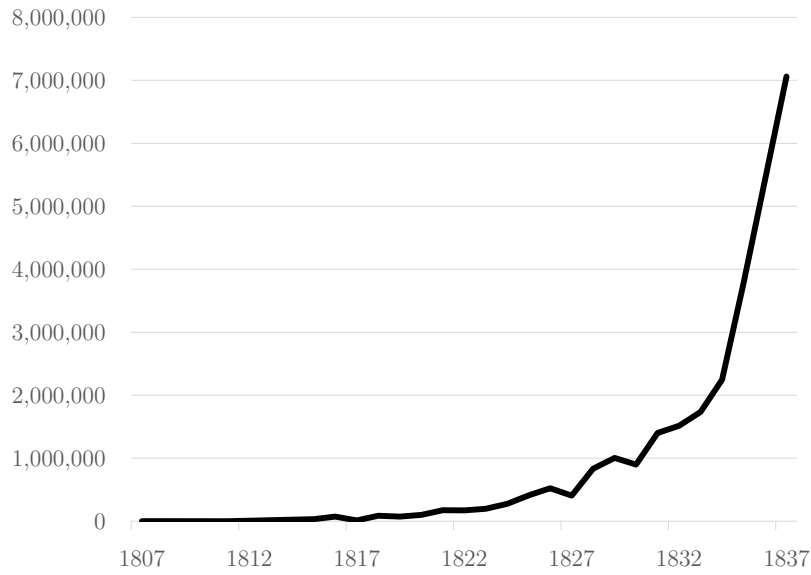


Figure 2.1: Contemporary estimates of wool exports from NSW 1807–37 (Intending Emigrant, 1838, p. 66).

land (Connor, 2002/2005). And third, Britain provided a supply of labour, including from 1830 an increasing amount of free migration, as shown in Figure 2.2.

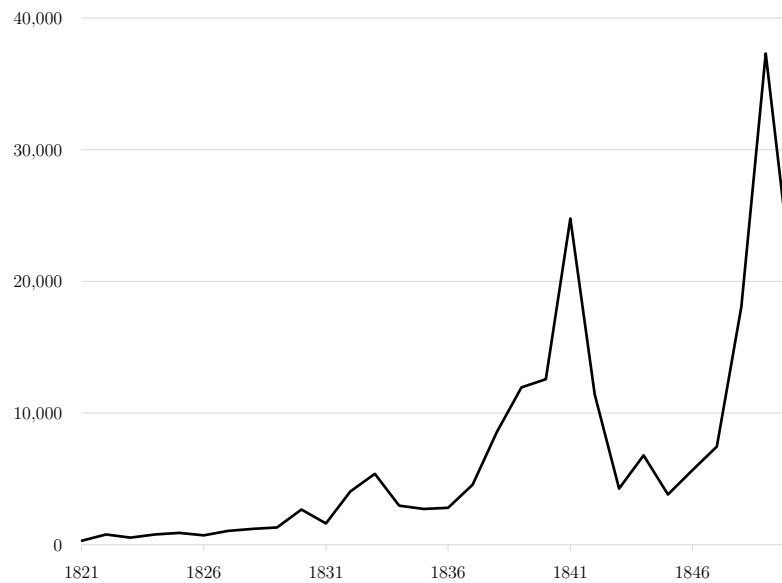


Figure 2.2: Free immigration 1820–1849 (Butlin, 1994, p. 22).

Anti-Transportation and Assistance

“Whichever aspect of social life we survey, 1830 marks a turning-point in it” (Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 141). As will be addressed below in chapter 5, the 1830s were a key decade in the transformation towards assisted passage and free migration. In that

year, the colonial office finally accepted the “conception of a colony in which land would be alienated by auction, instead of grant or tender, and the proceeds used to finance the emigration of unemployed English workers” (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1969, p. 33). From 1834 to 1840, Fitzpatrick (1941/1969, p. 32) notes the concurrent rise of immigrants (threefold), land sales receipts (eight-fold), and bank capital (twenty-fold). For Willard (1923/1967, p. 1), the “cry for labour arose in New South Wales” in 1825. This meant that the firming up of colonial migration regimes, with the end of convict transportation and the start of assisted migration from 1831.¹⁶ Jupp concludes the 1830s were a “crucial decade in the transition from convict to assisted immigration” (Jupp, 1998, p. 11). Even before NSW achieved self-government, there was an increasing assertion of local needs in the demand to stabilise the male population. From 1831 assisted passages were “designed to send out single women, many of them from Ireland” (Jupp, 1998, p. 10), and by 1837, this has changed an emphasis on male labourers and their families (Jupp, 1998, p. 11). The result of deliberate prioritisation of women can be seen in the decrease of the male population across the colonies from 75% in the 1820s, to 60% in the 1850s and 55% from the mid-1860s. Assisted migration played an increasing role over the pastoral boom in the delivery of labour to Australia, increasing from 32 per cent of immigration over 1830–1835 to 78 per cent over 1836–1841 (Haines, 1995, derived from Tables 1–2).

The shift towards assisted passage from 1830, combined with the relative decline in transportation before it ended to NSW a decade later, is addressed further in chapter 5. But this transition between migration regimes marked the beginning of a qualitative shift within the colonial economy. The year 1830 hinges the periodisation of this thesis about this transformation. These growing relations of production and the classes associated with it would come to define Australian capitalism. It also marks the beginning of 140 years of mass importation of whites under regimes of free labour to feed a new social system under construction, which shapes the considerations in chapter 3, and forms a material foundation of White Australia. That freedom was not total but relative, and marks not a discrete shift but the start of a process that was coimbricated with the abolition of the convict system, requiring the break with Masters and Servants Acts.

The colonies before the 1860s can be called a “transitional form” (Callinicos, 2009,

¹⁶The shift from transportation to assisted migration was not automatic but conflictual (Burkett, 2021, ch. 3).

pp. 113–4) that comes to express the logic of value in an emergent way. Connell and Irving (1980) suggest the production of two systems: “the assignment relation in the pastoral industry” and the “mercantile capital and small production in the towns and gradually extending as wage-labour relations in primary industries” (Connell and Irving, 1980, p. 56; see Williams-Brooks, 2019). This echoes Marx’s judgement that agricultural production in particular is not carried about on a purely capitalist basis in the colonies. Despite this, though, “the whole colony exploits the capitalist mode of production of the OLD COUNTRIES” (MECW:34, p. 325; see Mayer, 1964, pp. 132–4), through the growth of industry, wages, and population. This second system presupposed and grew out of a regime of free labour, which required a different form of migration. The transformation of migration from convict transformation to assisted passage, cuts across these distinctions.

Migration was a component part of this development. But workers and capital could not merely be imported to Australia, as learned “[u]nhappy Mr Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 933).¹⁷ Marx remarks in chapter 33 of *Capital* that Wakefield’s “aims at manufacturing wage-labourers in the colonies” were flawed since “capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 932). This develops the argument from *Wage Labour and Capital* that “capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other” (Marx, 1891/1976b, p. 31).

From 1840, a crisis in social relations produced an opening for the demise of the pastoral relations of production. By 1840, the colonial economies were sufficiently integrated with the British market that a collapse in wool prices could cause a depression (McMichael, 1984). That same year that the labour supply represented by convicts was cut off (McQueen, 1986, p. 256). This crisis itself sets off a contest between those pastoral relations of production to urban-based ones, with this depression spurring the “process of commodification” of “the land, labour and capital markets”, with “dominant relations of production before 1860 are defined as ascendant, though contradictory, Anglo-colonial merchant capital” (Wells, 1985, p. v). This debate represents a real historical period of contestation and controversy, impelled by a contradic-

¹⁷The “London authorities had resorted to noncapitalist relations to relieve Western Australia of its Mr Peels” (McQueen, 1986, p. 256)—that is, convict rather than free labour.

tion between capitalist development, a model brought from England and increasingly taking hold of England, and the colonies' penal origins. Respective emphases on the development of class as a relationship within the colony, and on the creation of a world market and various local markets, reflect the emphases in the wider transition debate. The development of capitalist social relations was premised on imperialism, and on migration.

The ending of the regime of transportation by the colonies was linked back to British empire. There were also growing financial, moral, and economic case against convict labour, as discussed further in chapter 5. This included the proposal to shift costs of transportation from Britain to NSW (Priestley, 1967), a rise in convict resistance (Maxwell-Stewart and Quinlan, 2022), and a moral transformation in the construction of the convict (Jupp, 1998, p. 27; Arnold, 2019). These transformations informed the Molesworth Committee in London, 1837, which opposed the stain of homosexual sex amongst the convicts (Smith, 2009, p. 212). Transportation was formally ended for NSW in 1840. Assigned convicts shrunk more than 80 per cent from 1840 to 1843 (Turnbull, 1999).

A growing urban grouping had begun to outline an alternative interest to the pastoral mode, and even a resentment at being a minor British colonies. The dynamics of the anti-transportation make this relation clear. The movement against transportation, taking off in the 1830s, was politically dominated by liberals and emerging middle class, though workers certainly participated (Turnbull, 1999). The growing anti-transportation movement, including migrationists such as Henry Parkes, represented an alternative set of social relationships.

The end of transportation, and the beginnings of assistance, were economic, imperial, and dynamic forces within the transformation of Australian relations of production. Migration expressed and reproduced capitalism and British liberal imperialism together.

The World Market and the Gold Rush

The third representation of migration in the transformations in this period was the 'rush' of migrations searching for gold, which qualitatively transformed the colonial economy, and helped shift the balance towards the urban grouping. It produced not just gold for the world market, but also a rapid flux in Australian class relations, and a

detonator for capitalism in Australia—“the real industrial foundation” was laid in the decade from the Gold Rush (Wickens, 1928, p. 51). This alternative source of labour supply was “perhaps a decisive impetus” (Roe, 1965) against transportation (the class dependent on convict labour would have to resort to indentured labour instead). It was little deterrent to be sent to the land of purportedly plentiful gold. Despite the population surge heralded by the gold rush (including an inflow of money-capital and labour), the attendant labour *shortage* pushed employers further towards what Burgmann (1980, p. 12) calls a “policy of unrestricted immigration”. The slapdash measures taken to restrict Chinese immigration in this period were racist and short-lived, but also about the restriction of labour supply for imperial, colonial, and only in the last instance economic pressures. As explored further in chapter 3 and chapter 6, developing racisms and settler colonial practices were produced not from outside but within the colonies, with anti-Chinese and anti-Aboriginal racism constructed differently within British, imperial, liberal thought and policy (see also: Curthoys, 1973; the brilliant collection Curthoys and Markus, 1978; Lake and Reynolds, 2008).

The years from the 1850s saw the development of the world market. The development of worldwide steamship navigation made the world round for the first time (MECW:10, p. 506). Australia’s economy became increasingly integrated into the world economy, and the British economy in particular. After the crisis of 1846–50, an inflow of British long-term investments in infrastructure affected its many colonies (Harvey, 2005b, pp. 42–3), and was felt in Australia from the mid-1870s to 1890 (Ville and Merrett, 2022, see). The impact of the massive inflow of British investment in this period can be seen particularly in the sharp rise in manufacturing and construction figures in figure 2.3. Balance of Payments data show the Australian economy’s integration with the British advanced considerably from around 10% of exports and imports in 1860 to 20% exports and 25% imports in 1890 (calculated from Butlin, 1962, pp. 410–13).¹⁸ The *world market* was still in the process of development in this period (Hobsbawm, 1975), and the material infrastructure still under construction including telecommunications and railways. This period of colonisation completed the “creation of the world market” (MECW:40, p. 346), a step Callinicos (2014a, p. 241) integrates into the beginning of self-perpetuating cyclical crises (see Callinicos, 2014a, p. 253).¹⁹

¹⁸British imports and exports are steady at around 70% of foreign trade over the period

¹⁹There were “symptoms of an approaching industrial crisis” since “there must ever, without any particular accident, in due time arrive a moment when the extension of the markets is unable to keep

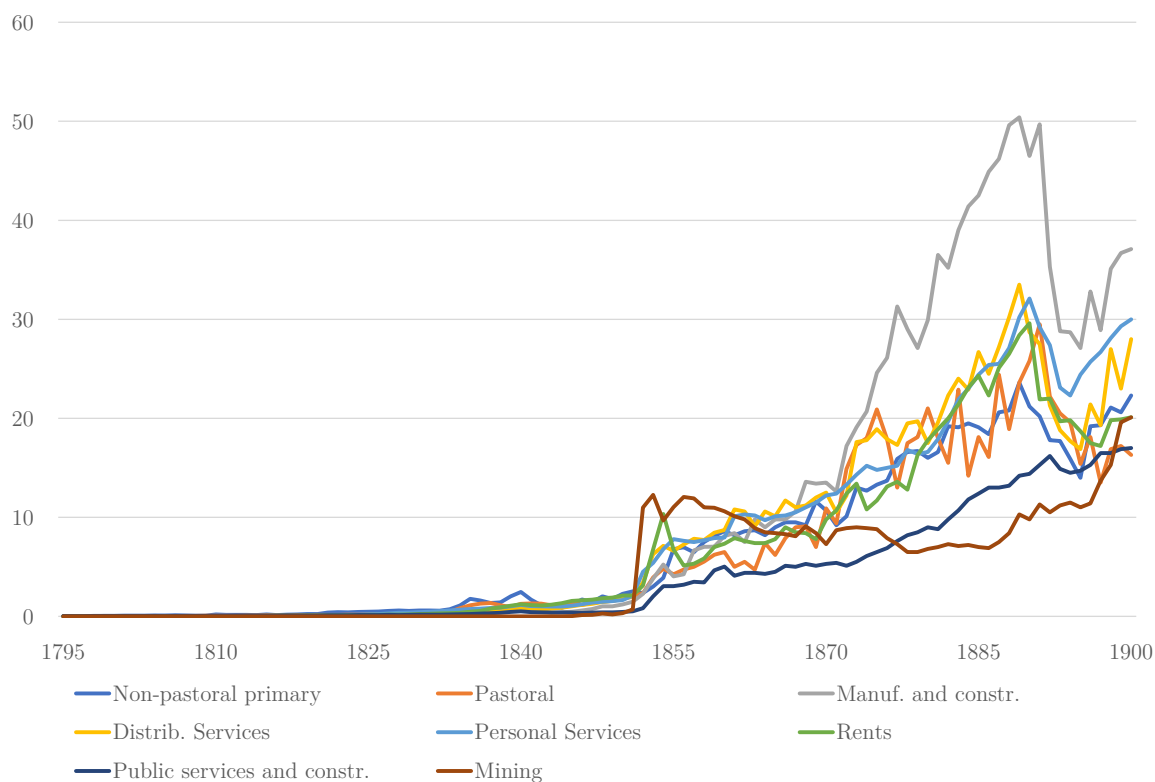


Figure 2.3: Nominal GDP, thousands of pounds, 1795–1890, compiled from Butlin (1962) and Butlin and Sinclair (1986). Figures are indicative. Two relevant issues are that the data for mining before 1860 is for gold only, exclude all South Australian mining, and the NSW pastoral figures in the key years from 1828–1838 are likely underestimated. In addition, the fact that “authorities partly lost control of the expanding settlements” from 1825–1840 create issues for the data in this period (Butlin and Sinclair, 1986, p. 126). Butlin’s categories shift substantially after 1860 creating inevitable issues, but his similar methodology means a general picture of colonial GDP before the depression of the 1890s can be taken.

As Wells notes, the 1860s saw the re-configuring of the relations of land and the rise and fall of pastoral capital, replacing them with wider capitalist relations of production represented in the urban regions (McMichael, 1984; Wells, 1989). These land acts were a critical moment within the dominance of those urban classes. They also deepened Australia’s relationship with Britain from an economic perspective.

Even before the development of the dialectical interrelation between capitalist imperialism and the world market, Australian migration presupposed British imperial developments, and the developing British and then world market. Migration was woven through class formation, the transformation in the domestic relations of production,

pace with the extension of British manufactures, and this disproportion must bring about a new crisis with the same certainty as it has done in the past”. (MECW:12, p. 95-6), cited in Callinicos (2014a, p. 244).

and relations between colony and motherland, a process not expressible through two logics. That is, migration was a moment within the mutual expression of capitalist accumulation, and imperialism, and thereby, transformations within the dynamics of accumulation during the nineteenth century occupy the centre of understanding what explains shifts in Australian migration in the *longue durée*.

2.2.2 CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM 1888–1945

This section develops an understanding of the period of capitalist imperialism starting with the increasing rivalries of the 1870s that led to the consolidation of White Australia in the 1880s, sketching briefly developments in the middle years which are developed later in chapters 5 and 6. This section takes up from this global shift discussed in section 2.1 wherein capital accumulation and imperialism become contradictorily combined towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Global developments in the inter-imperialist rivalries in Europe and the scramble for colonies were proceeding apace with Australian integration with the world economy. In his military history, Mordike points to the first telegraph link to Britain in 1872 as a “significant turning point” in the shifting in the defence consciousness from “local and colonial” to “imperial” (Mordike, 1992, p. 3). The cabling of the latest “news of tensions and skirmishes, common to this age of imperial expansion, reached the streets of Sydney and Melbourne on the day it was published in London” (p. 3). Meanwhile, steamship technology was decreasing the relative distance to the fray. This “heightened atmosphere of military tension from the late 1870s” (Griffiths, 2006). The telegraph connections in 1884, pictured in Figure 2.4 provide a snapshot into the positioning of Australia with respect to the world, with a lifeline to Britain figuring disproportionately to geography. The growing imperialist tensions brought Germans closer into the South Pacific. In 1888, Arthur Patchett Martin wrote “Australia is now in direct hourly communication with the Motherland by means of the magic submarine cable” (cited in Schreuder, 1988, p. 15). On the northern approaches of Australia, see McGregor (2016).

In the 1870s and 1880s, a process of political centralisation around imperialist migration and annexationist policy “more than ever” (Bukharin, 1917/1929, p. 127) brought together the Australian bourgeoisie from different colonies into a unified and organised class. From the late nineteenth century, “Australian political leaders jostled

for geopolitical advantage in the Pacific” in response to the “deteriorating geopolitical environment, with a growing emphasis on the martial capacity and racial solidarity of the British Empire” (Holbrook, 2020b, p. 65). This proceeded along with the financialisation of pastoralism in the 1870s and 1880s (Wells, 1989, p. 123, see Thorpe, 1990).

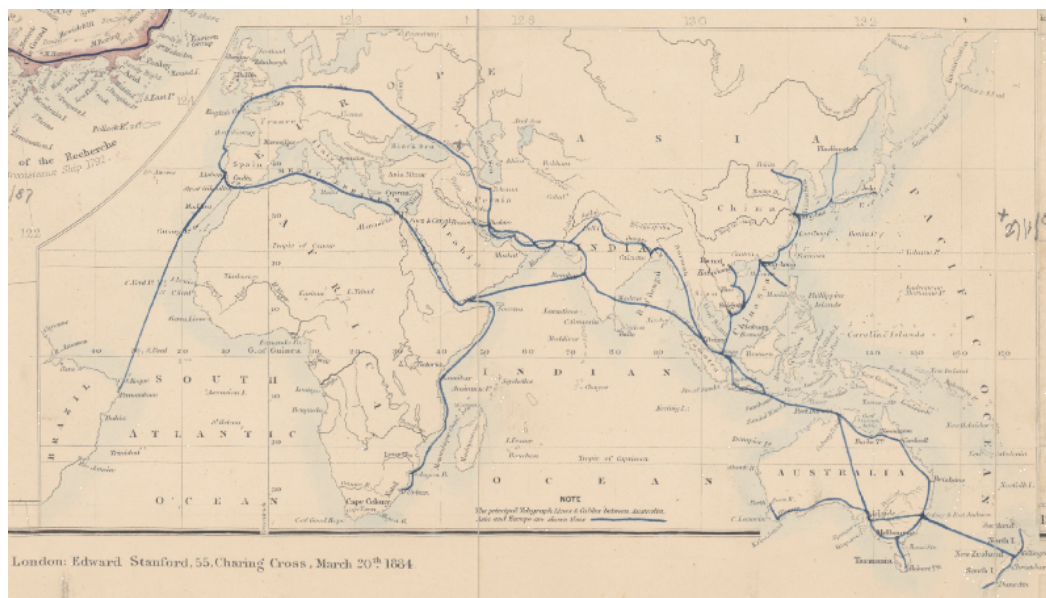


Figure 2.4: Imperial Telegraph Connections 1884, digitally stitched from a multi-sheet inset in Edward Stanford Ltd (1884)

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The White Australia policy took shape in the 1880s, and it is the consolidation of this colonial process that marks the critical hinge of 1888 utilised in this thesis. For White (1981), “until the 1880s, the general trend was towards a widening of the gap between the six colonies, at least politically” (p. 63). Previous legislation in response to Chinese migration in the form of poll taxes had been removed, running from 1855–1865 in Victoria, 1858–1861 in South Australia and 1861–1867 in New South Wales (see Charteris, 1927). The legislation that developed from 1876 to 1888 on the other hand would be transformed but not repealed until 1973. Though informed by European thinking, it was “Chinese invasion” that would be the top local concern, and after the 1890s, Japan (Griffiths, 1990). The dynamics of imperialism would not be the same in Australia, which was fundamentally shaped by its position as a “Colonial Settler State in Asia” (Griffiths, 1990, p. 9).

The round of immigration restrictions aimed at the Chinese started in Queensland with the *The Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act of 1877*. The descent of twenty to thirty thousand people to a remote part of Cape York following the ‘discovery’ of



Figure 2.5: Palmer Goldfields, ‘The Chinese Invasion’, (Illustrated Australian News, 1877).

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gold at Palmer River in 1873 would be the trigger for a new round of immigration restrictions. It was an isolated settlement, outside the pastoral frontiers, without infrastructure, and far from the government (Kirkman, 1980). But most importantly, the Chinese population was three times the European at around 1875, and this would only increase after Europeans left for the next mine, with up to 18,000 in February 1896, at a time the European population was less than 2,000 (Kirkman, 1984, p. 55). This garnered a widespread fear that to allow Chinese entry would be “smear” the population of the colony, eliciting a sharp elite response (see Griffiths, 2012).

These developments worked through two sets of relations of production. Price (1974, p. 159) describes two main poles of response. On the one hand were those around the planters “glad to see the entry” of non-whites at no expense to themselves,²⁰ and, less significantly, “a few liberal-humanitarians” denying the myths of Chinese vice and uselessness. On the other were the “professional, industrial and small-trade Liberals” who were “developing strong opinions against all coloured labour” (Price, 1974, p. 159). He describes four fears of this group: (1) the “Chinese imperial giant”; (2) the development of a fifth column; (3) concerns of the Californian situation; and (4) social disorder (Price, 1974, p. 159). The presence of the first pole makes the Queensland leadership on the issue of White Australia all the more remarkable. Willard writes in his classic history of the white Australia policy, “fear arose that the Chi-

²⁰The racist belief at the time was that whites could not work in such a climate as northern Queensland. “white labourers could not thrash the cane in the sun”, Queensland Attorney General, 22 May, Legislative Assembly, Hansard.

nese might practically overrun the north of the colony. Fully one-third of Queensland was still unsettled—a foreign race must not be allowed to occupy it” (Willard, 1923/1967, p. 40). Of working class politics, Price concludes it was “not a major issue and was effectively mentioned only once in the legislature” (Price, 1974, p. 159). This ideology of white supremacy over the continent relied contradictorily on the appropriation of Aboriginal knowledges and labour, and their being dispossessed of the land (Ngai, 2021, pp. 26–31). Ngai contrasts the approaches to ‘protection’ of Chinese and Asian peoples, based on strategies of racial management developed through the British empire, and the ‘protection’ of Aboriginal people which was conceptualised as a “temporary measure that gave a gloss of civility to elimination” (Ngai, 2021, p. 125). She also points to particular racial anxiety to separate Chinese and Aboriginal peoples in Australia’s north (Ngai, 2021, pp. 168–9), while both were excluded in visions of progressive labour legislation.

Between the Queensland bill of 1877 and the *The Intercolonial Conference on the Chinese Question* of 1888, the framework of anti-Chinese White Australia migration laws were generalised. As Collins puts it, the “national interests of a white Australia won out over the sectional interests of Queensland employers for cheap black labour” (Collins, 1988, p. 205). The excitement and significance of the decision in 1888 can be seen from the remarks by NSW Governor on hearing the news: “For the first time in the history of this country, I believe, Australia is now compelled by force of circumstances to have a foreign policy, and I believe in the main that Australia on the Chinese question has come to a unanimous decision” (cited in Griffiths, 2006, p. 480). As discussed in later chapters, this was radically changed in the 1880s and 1890s. The period from 1887 to 1888 consolidated the process of what Cherry-Smith (2021) calls threats to the ‘ontological security’ of the Australian colonies. Figure 2.6 represents the unity of the 1888 anti-Chinese movement, and the moral and spiritual role it had in the process of federation, discussed further in chapter 6. In the second half of the 1890s, the particular elaboration of White Australia that would dominate the federal system was built in response to a fear of Japan (Yarwood, 1964, pp. 7–8), and in conversation with British legislation, discussed further in chapter 6. All the mainland colonies were joined in a united migration policy. Tasmania’s Andrew Inglis Clark, representing the colony politically and militarily the furthest from competition of empire, was the only hold out to this agreement.

While other inter-colonial conferences had been focused on inter-colonial issues,



Figure 2.6: 'The Only Way', Cartoon (Melbourne Punch, 1888). The caption reads: "Girls. There's but one way to rid ourselves of the unsightly thing, and that's by all taking hold together. A strong unanimous heave with this lever and the job's done". COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

such as tariffs, free trade and protectionism (still the defining divide in the political elite), the question of White Australia pitted the colonies against the British, who were more worried about the diplomatic frustrations of the upstart colony's racist policy in dealing with China, than they were with worries about a fifth column, Chinese invasion, and setting up a 'harmonious' white polity in Australia. As discussed in chapter 5, tariff policies were internally related to these relations of production, and development. This period saw imperial tension between Australia and Britain over the imperial and national (and the "race homogeneity" that purportedly required, Lake and Reynolds, 2008, p. 41) relation with the Chinese, and a growing Australian racial ideology.

One other factor of 1880s Australian geopolitics bear mentioning. The 1883 inter-colonial conference marked a significant step within the processes of Australian sub-imperialism in the Pacific, when the annexation of Papua was the top item (Oakman, 2004, p. 6), though was unfortunately (in Parkes' view) eclipsed by a broader (and less achievable) imperial vision. Parkes looked back, "if there had been a central government in Australia—if Australia could have spoken with one voice in the year 1883, New Guinea would have belonged to Australia" (Henry Parkes, cited in Mordike, 1992, p. 6). Parkes wrote "So far back as the year 1874 I had urged upon Sir Hercules Robinson, as Her Majesty's representative, the sound policy of colonising New Guinea" noting in particular the risks of "colonisation by a foreign Power" (Parkes, 1892/2001). The 1870s had seen similar pleas about Fiji. The impetus for Queensland's colonisation were reports in February of a German newspaper discussing the annexation of New Guinea in order to create "a German Java, a great trade and plantation colony, which would form a stately foundation stone-for a German colonial kingdom of the future" (Sydney Morning Herald, 1883), which outraged McIlraith.²¹ But while the British took Queensland's colonial possession from it, the British would not have their way on White Australia.²²

White Australia was the key statement and consolidation of Australian foreign policy, one of the Commonwealth's "first essays in imperial and external relations"

²¹See McQueen (1986, p. 27). Engels suggests further that it is "the attempted annexation of New Guinea, etc., by Queensland was designed directly for the slave trade. On nearly the same day as the annexation expedition left for New Guinea, a Queensland ship, the *Fanny*, also left for New Guinea and for the islands east of it to kidnap labor, but returned without it and with wounded on board and other unpleasant signs of battle" (cited in Mayer, 1964, p. 136)

²²Cf., their annexation of the Torres Strait had been approved in the early 1870s (Farnfield, 1973), and followed in 1872 and 1879 (Mullins, 1992).

(Yarwood, 1964, p. 1), which Griffiths describes as a product of “relatively unsettled colonial settler state” (Griffiths, 2012, p. 16), owing to the anxieties arising from the failure to properly colonise the North in particular. Percy Spender (1944, pp. 3–4), later Liberal minister under Menzies, would write in 1944 that White Australia was “a first glimmering of the independent ultimate trend of our foreign policy”, evidence of the ability to “trust its own judgment and act accordingly in matters which might affect the relations of the United Kingdom with foreign powers” and acquiring a growing importance thanks to being “inextricably interwoven with Australian foreign policy towards Eastern countries”. In 1901, after it had been formally instituted, Australia’s first Attorney General Alfred Deakin summed it up:

We may have in the future some development which may call for the application of the Monroe doctrine in the Pacific. But far more important than that, and a far more significant declaration at the present time, is this for a white Australia. It is the Monroe doctrine of the Commonwealth of Australia. (Hansard, 12 September 1901, cf. Norris 1975)

White Australia expressed a moment in Bukharin’s account of capitalist consolidation, by bringing together colonies and capitalists of different inclinations, playing a key role in the federation of Australia. The ruling class view of the White Australia policy was that of populating Australia so as to secure it. This reflected a generalised and ongoing anxiety about the security of Australia’s grip on the continent. Figure 2.7 outlines this critical moment. The standpoint represented in this figure challenges the later mythologies that White Australia represented a working class spirit of exclusion of labour competition. For Australia’s ruling class, military competition justified not merely exclusion of non-whites but mass inclusion of whites in a geo-strategic demographic population policy.

The Australian Constitution has apocryphally been called a “declaration of dependence” (Connell, 2014, para. 5; see Stephensen, 1959, p. 4; Tout, 2018, p. 155). The difference with the American declaration are clear. This was a foreign policy expressed within and through as well as against the British Empire. Through combination, the colonies were to have a louder voice within it, and against its aloof leaders who failed to protect the advance of the Empire in the Pacific. Far beyond the Constitution, Australia’s ruling class were persistently anxious about securing and maintaining British

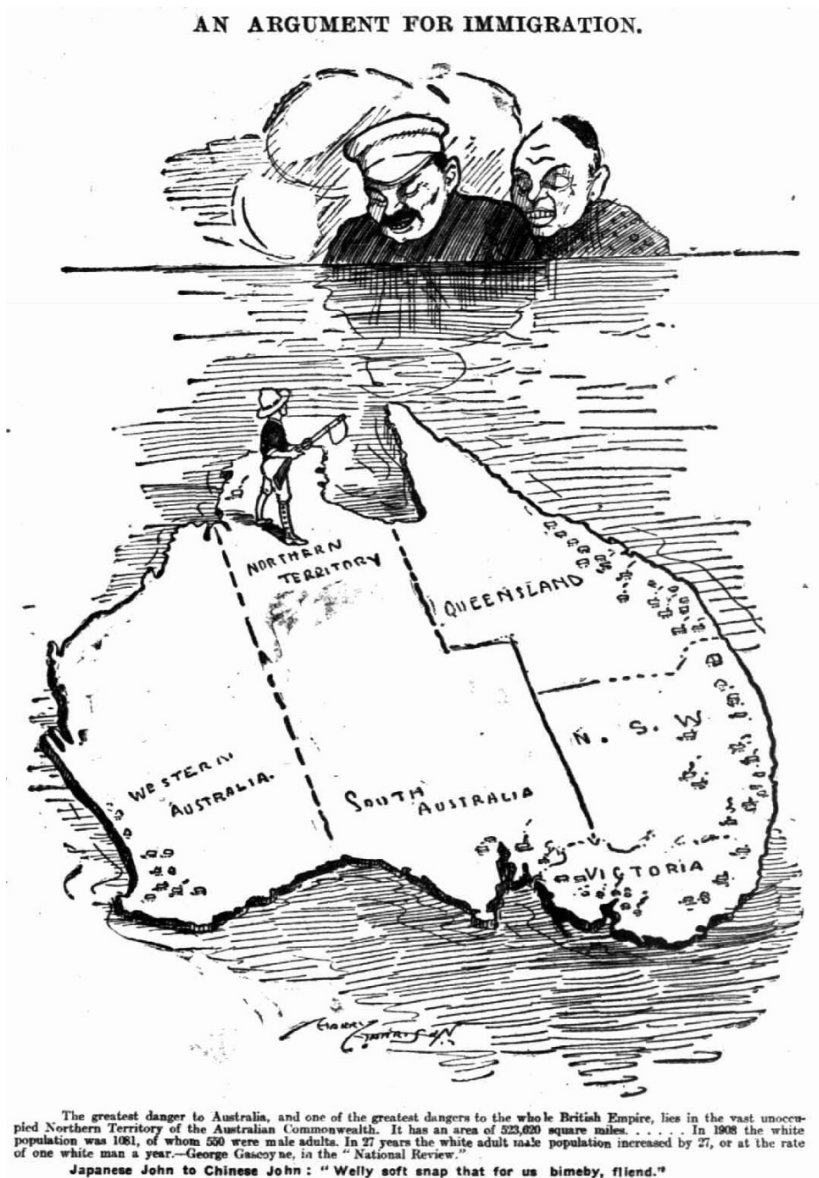


Figure 2.7: 'An Argument for Immigration' (Observer, 1912).
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military support. This phrase was also used in the critique of Nationalist Prime Minister Hughes' policy in 1922 for insufficient independence of Australia in military and international affairs (Roe, 1995b, p. 61). The dynamics of White Australia and federation simultaneously reiterated commitment to the British empire and also the need for a united and therefore stronger collective voice. That is, Australian policy tended to express a contradictory unity of dependence and independence. O'Lincoln (1980) described Australia as occupying a "new category, that of a small, white, and rich nation acting as an independent spearhead and springboard for the great powers" (p. 44).

From the 1880s into the twentieth century, there grew a nexus between empire, settlement, colonisation, and labour markets. Migration growth in the 1920s was when Australia took control of migration selection and recruitment from Britain (in 1920 and 1921).²³ Note also in this period the 1926 Development and Migration Act aiming to attracting immigrants and “absorbing overseas capital” (Charteris, 1927, p. 538). But the key tenet of migration policy, White Australia, remained solidly in place, despite the Japanese protestations of 1918.

Chapters 5 and 6 trace the developments within White Australia through its consolidation as an ‘education test’ in the late 1890s, its ebbs and flows through the early 1900s, and its ongoing internal relation with labour markets, protection, development, and nationalism. This chapter seeks merely to sketch the seams of Australian capitalism in empire: the overlapping spatial seams of migration and temporal seams of periodisation.

The years of war reset the economic and imperial scene for the period that would follow. Australian colonies and then the new Commonwealth became increasingly integrated in imperialist ventures of the British, eagerly participating in the Boer war and ‘Boxer rebellion’ before there was even a centralised military force (see Mordike, 1992). Australia’s WWI imperialism in New Guinea and modern Turkey are key referents of Australian national mythology, though less its documented war crimes in Palestine and Egypt or earlier forays into the Sudan. Despite its relative insignificance in world military terms, it required the arming of Australia. Steel had to be produced locally in WWI, spurring forth Newcastle industry. For Connell and Irving (1980), this represents a key shift towards industrialisation and the defeat of the sugar planters. There was a growing rather than stagnant trend of, neo-Listian developmentalism (Selwyn, 2009). Hughes (1929) had pitched for Australia to be granted further colonial acquisitions at the Paris Peace Conference of 1918 to keep European powers out of the Western hemisphere (Oakman, 2004, p. 6). Re-armament, plummeting employment and sky-rocketing state expenditures were the result of factors including Australia’s trade war with Japan in the 1930s, Australia’s focus on Japanese expansion during WWII, and the militarisation after Australia decided the Japanese threat was too great. Add to this the evident failure of the British to protect perceived ‘Australian’ interests (after they abandoned Singapore) and the scene is set for post-war recon-

²³“In 1921 the [Australian] Commonwealth took over all immigration machinery in Great Britain, abolished the system of capitation grants to agents and appointed a number of medical referees throughout Great Britain to examine applicants” (Charteris, 1927, p. 535).

struction. Considerable shifts within Australia's economy in this period impelled the movement towards the dynamics in the following period.

The years from 1888 were marked by national, economic, and colonial consolidation. They saw the development of the assimilation policy for Aboriginal people discussed in chapter 3, the development of an amalgam of Australia's peculiar system of industrial relations discussed in chapter 5, and the development of Australian nationalism discussed in chapter 6. These combined processes were critical in the political combination in particular of Australia's ruling class, which followed that of the working class. Most importantly, White Australia represented the consolidation of a state-led development strategy (Selwyn, 2009), as outlined in these later chapters, and it is through their combination that migration constitutes processes of accumulation. The persistence of White Australia and the state economic strategy it represented through this period, however, should not blind us to dynamic shifts occurring within it, as will be developed in chapter 5. Capitalist imperialism is anything but static. What the *longue durée* focus contributes is an understanding of large scale shifts within migration and its role in accumulation.

2.2.3 INTERNATIONALISATION 1945–1973

1945 represented the zenith of White Australia, not merely the beginning of the end. This section describes the two well-known poles of a contradiction enveloping this period, which both centre shifts within capitalist imperialism (and therefore imply accumulation dynamics). These migration shifts are a flag of the geo-political economy of the period: a contradiction between the same geo-political fear of the white settler colony in Asia that had dominated the previous period, and on a recalibration within a shifting geo-economics under US hegemony.

The mass migration program that Australia embarked on after the second world war is sometimes been conceptualised as the “triumph of economics over prejudice” (Teicher, Shah, and Griffin, 2002). In Jock Collins's (1988) influential history of the period, he writes that, quite against the stated intentions of those who designed the post-war migration regime, the economic requirements for more workers needed an increasingly diverse workforce. This led the “goal of a White Australia” to be “abandoned, so that today Australia is one of the most cosmopolitan societies in the Western world” (Collins, 1988, p. 44). This is a one-sided account, however. It is true that

the incorporation of European migrants presupposed the international accumulation regime with high levels of growth and labour market demand; a capitalist collapse in this period would likely have destabilised the strategy.

But it is not state capture by labour-hungry capitalists that describes the post-war period, but the opposite, the sharp advance of Bukharin's (1917/1929) prediction of the unity of state and capital in this period. It was not Bukharin but Robert Menzies who in 1964 concluded that the boundaries between government and industry had "disappeared under the pressures of modern complexities . . . Politics and industry are deeply involved with each other, acting and reacting to the other" (Menzies, 1964, p. 2). The geo-political dynamics of the cold war led to the extension of White Australia, rather than its abandonment. The central plank of the post-war migration policy was summarised in Arthur Calwell's August 1945 phrase "populate or perish".²⁴ Australia's first Immigration Department would start on Chifley's first day in office. The main policy bounds were formulated in the years before the end of the war, with a debate on the "maximum absorptive rate" at which the Australian population could grow, which settled at around 1% from 'natural' growth (births minus deaths) and 1% from migration (see Zubrzycki, 1995). The implementation of this plan was Australia's then largest planned immigration program, where average annual net migration increased from 1945–1970 to its highest ever levels, contributing about 0.8 per cent per annum to Australian population growth. The compiled dataset of derived migration population figures (presented in table 2.4) show the significance of the post-war migration in numerical terms. Although in relative terms, migration would never be as important as in the colonial and Gold Boom periods, the relative importance of migration to demographic growth had been increased to relative levels it had not seen since the 19th century, and to unprecedented levels in absolute terms.

These phrases have sometimes been presented as a rhetorical move to pull the working class behind high migration, such as Castles' argument that "Calwell used this sentiment [populate or perish] to help overcome traditional working class suspicion of immigration" (2018, p. 55). While there was certainly an emphasis on economic absorption rates in the Labor party debates at the time and advocacy for lower levels, the emphasis on economics has generally been seen as secondary to Australia's strategic aims. For Zubrzycki (1995, p. 2, emphasis mine), "economic balance and prosperity

²⁴Calwell and Chifley were bringing to life a slogan used by the Fusionist Cook (Holbrook, 2016, p. 408).

	Period	Av. Net Migration		Av. 'Natural' increase	
		Abs.	Per cent	Abs.	Per Cent
Colonisation	1788–1849	4,848	7.7%	1,158	0.4%
Gold Boom	1850–1875	31,635	3.8%	27,014	2.2%
Imperialism	1876–1913	21,256	0.7%	57,573	1.7%
Inter-war	1914–1944	10,264	0.2%	68,874	1.1%
Post-war	1945–1970	79,371	0.8%	125,108	1.3%

Table 2.4: Average annual population growth per year as absolute figure and percentage of total population, derived from Vamplew (1987, pp. 47–57).

were not seen as the aims but as *indispensable preconditions* of the continuing planned immigration program” (Zubrzycki, 1995, p. 2, emphasis mine). Healthy labour demand after the war helped to discourage attacks from anti-immigrant attacks on the policy, with unemployment averaging 1.9 per cent from 1940/41 to 1973/74, after which it rapidly increased (Borland and Kennedy, 1998). But it was not the only consideration, as can be seen by the non-response by the state to the 1961 recession.

The initial impetus was the peopling of Australia in response to Australia’s concerns about: (1) the fear of Japan, and (2) waning British military enthusiasm for adventures in the Pacific. After Japan had taken Singapore in 1942, Australian assurance about British military support was weakened. For Australia, WWII was, from December 1941, focused on Japan rather than Germany. Walker (1999, 2019) discusses the repositioning of Australia towards Asia from 1939, and from 1941, fears centred Japan. Deputy Labor Leader Frank Forde summarised the threat from Japan in 1944: “This war has taught us that the financial and man-power obligations and other difficulties associated with the defence of Australia must be spread over a very much bigger population than our 7,000,000” (Sydney Morning Herald 27th May 1944).²⁵ Fear and hatred of Japan was more-or-less unanimous across the Australian political landscape (Griffiths, 1990). Markus surmises: “Labor leaders were genuinely convinced of the urgent necessity to increase population for reasons of defence” (Markus, 1984a).²⁶ Much of the argumentative framework had in fact been set up in these years. In 1942, Calwell argued:

Europe may be quiet in another 25 years, but while Australia remains an outpost of white civilization and insists upon the maintenance of the White

²⁵See Markus (1984a) and Griffiths (1990).

²⁶Markus over-states risks of Japanese invasion, see (Griffiths, 1990).

Australia policy and while we have very few people in this country, we shall naturally excite the avarice and covetousness of our coloured neighbours to the north. (Hansard, 1942)²⁷

There is no evidence however of this purported avarice and covetousness during the 1930s and 1940s (Griffiths, 1990).

The second dynamic force arose from the collision of the internationalisation of the economy and the geo-political-economic reformulation of the world order. Australia's second long boom was upheld at international level, with increased economic interconnections between states, when it comes to trade, production, finance and immigration. At an international level, this involved the geo-political re-ordering of the world, the ascendancy of a US global Monroe leadership, Bretton Woods financial order, and the Marshall Plan. But alongside internationalisation was also nationalisation, where the ruling Liberal and Labor parties coalesced around state-led development, powered by mass immigration. In response to anxieties about the alternative economics of the Cold War and out of a fear to "avoid repeating this experience [the crisis of 1929]" (Clarke, 2001, p. 83), Australia built a "post-war protectionist state" (Bell, 1993, p. 5). After the war, a major post war "reconstruction" was attempted, building on both the economic reorganisation produced by the war itself, and the disaster of the great depression of the 1930s (Macintyre, 2015). The policies of reconstruction under the Chifley and later Menzies governments, the initiatives of H. C. Coombs, and their results cannot be understood apart from the geoeconomic regime that the post-WWII order inaugurated. This post-war protectionism had its roots much earlier, developing from the nineteenth century in Victoria, and nationally consolidating during the inter-war years. After the war, anxieties were put to bed: Australia's economic elite believed they had solved the problems of cyclical crisis.

The same dynamics infected Australia's relations with the region, with Australia not simply following America's lead in McCarthyism at home but also spruiking a capitalist developmentalist alternative to the Soviet Union in the region. The wave of successful independence movements had totally reshaped what Australia regarded as its backyard: the Philippines in 1946, Pakistan and India in 1947, Ceylon and Burma in 1948, Indonesia in 1949, Nepal in 1951, Cambodia in 1953, and Laos in 1954. "South-East Asia was no longer a series of colonies ruled from Europe, but now

²⁷Of 39 references to the "white race" in the House of Representatives from 1940-1945, the largest proportion, 14, were from Arthur Calwell

a series of independent nations incorporated into the western camp” (Griffiths, 1988).

Harvey links the US’ geo-strategy of global Monroe, the economic order it allowed, and the threats of military actions behind the American order. As “struggles around decolonization became fiercer, so the seamier and more nefarious side of imperial rule became more salient” (Harvey, 2005b, p. 2). From the Suez Canal and the Korean War to Vietnam, US military power was the trump card for ‘Pax’ Americana, the seams that kept imperial rule together.

For Australia, this post-war dynamic fundamentally shaped its White Australia policy. Australian imperialism in the Pacific War had been every bit as brutal as Japan’s, with not only the mass civilian targeting that the firebombing of Tokyo and the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki represented, but a general reputation of killing surrendered soldiers, and a slew of other war crimes (see O’Lincoln, 2011), and the war also unleashed hideous anti-Japanese racism in Australia (Griffiths, 1990; O’Lincoln, 2011, pp. 53–9; Saunders, 1994). Saunders calls it a “race war”. Such an account challenges the popular account of the second world war as a war for democracy or a contradiction between an imperialist and a “people’s war” (Gluckstein, 2012, p. 212). Blackburn (2001) notes regional protests against Australia’s policy as Calwell embarked on public deportations in 1947 led to thousands of protesters meeting an Australian aid delegation in mid-1948.

The end of the war positioned the Pacific, South East Asia and South Asia to press an anti-colonial agenda. White Australia was a clear object of scorn in the region, both symbolising racist colonial subjugation, and actually enacting racist expulsions (Gurry and Tavan, 2004; Tanni, 2006, see). One Malayan seaman, Louis Wee deported by Arthur Calwell in 1947 after living in Australia for six years and serving on British ships, writes:

the coloured races were not fighting for liberty and humanity for the people of European origin only. East and West marched side by side to fight for the common cause of human rights and it should be divided equally among all peoples of the world, irrespective of race, colour or creed . . . Australia’s racial prejudice is not only an insult, but creates fear and hatred, degrades moral faith among all people and is a menace to world peace. (Wee, 1948, p. 2)²⁸

²⁸Blackburn (2001) suggests this letter was published in 1947 rather than 1948.

This statement was made just months before the British declared a ‘Malaya emergency’ (Newsinger, 2015, pp. 33-61; Arifin, 2014).

Decolonisation was the single most important factor that began to undermine the strident racism of the post-war order typified by Calwell. Rather than conceptualising Monroe as an inherently progressive form (even if just vis-à-vis the colonial brutalities that preceded it), the fact that Australia’s own Monroe doctrine was dissolved from without, rather than from within, puts the dynamics of class struggle in the global South at the centre of the analysis. Australian post-war racism received a kind of “reverse tutelage” (Gopal, 2020, p. 8), where the previously acceptable imperial racism would become a liability (Griffiths, 1988).

These geo-political shifts would reverberate into the Australian state. While Australia’s newly formed Immigration Department was busying itself building a White Australia, Australia’s diplomatic wing had to deal with the impacts abroad. As early as the late 1940s, cracks were becoming evident, with a long-recurring “tension between the Department of Immigration and Department of External Affairs over application of the [White Australia] policy” in the post-war decades (Gurry and Tavan, 2004, p. 130). External Affairs felt the backlash to White Australia, whilst Immigration implemented it dutifully.

The first real expression of Australian adaptation to the new geo-political economic order was in migration policy. As early as 1948, the Labor government implemented regional student visas and scholarships, but by 1951, it had developed into the Colombo Plan. This would become an “indispensable plank of the Menzies Government’s policy towards Asia” (Oakman, 2004, p. 3), combining its most well-known aspect, student visas, as well as impacts on “almost every aspect of Australian foreign policy” including diplomacy and foreign aid. The whole vision of the policy was informed by the geopolitics of regional development, and in the Cold War paranoia (especially of the Menzies era). ‘Developing’ local network of capitalists, linked back into Australia, was vital.

Prime ministers were resistant to change such a central Australian value as White Australia, but bit by bit a new foreign policy framework was being arrived at (Gurry and Tavan, 2004). The slow degradation of White Australia occurred over following decades, under successive Labor and Liberal governments. The important but rarely

used dictation test would be abolished in 1958.²⁹ The 1958 Immigration act was so important a change that it still stands today.³⁰ As Alick Downer, Immigration minister of 1958 to 1963, noted, “distinguished and highly qualified Asians” may enter. Even more important was the shift in the Migration Act 1966.

Conservative politician Percy Spender articulated this imperial shift in Australian foreign policy. Lowe’s (2010) biography situates Spender’s Australian advocacy between the US and British empires in the following three ways. First, Spender developed his conception of Australia as a “Pacific power” (Spender, 1944, pp. 25–6) with at least a degree of independence as an imperial centre in the Pacific. But this needs immediate qualification for his two imperial allegiances. Second, he retained a British imperial sensibility, sceptical of decolonisation and criticism of White Australia. But third, apt to his time, Australian regional dominance after the war was to be underpinned by the one of the “primary aims” of pulling the American Century into South East Asia (Lowe, 2010, p. 152), justifying the ANZUS treaty to the US as an extension of their Monroe doctrine (p. 182).

The era of Lenin’s division and re-divisions of the colonial possessions was coming to an end on the world stage, though Australia would cling on to its own colonial possessions until 1968 in the case of Nauru and 1975 in the case of Papua New Guinea. But dynamics of capitalist imperialism discussed during section 2.1 continued through this contradiction that developed through the period, expressing international capitalism, the cold war, and decolonisation, without erasing Australia’s ruling class demographic fears as a white colonial outpost in Asia. If White Australia had been Australia’s Monroe for the first half of the twentieth century, a new one was to be constructed for the second half (see chapter 6). The dynamics of capital accumulation that proceed through the second period also propelled the dynamics towards economic crisis that defined the following period

²⁹The dictation test was the centrepiece of the policy, but from 1901 to 1958, just 1,932 were excluded (Jupp, 1995). The other component was the fining of carriers who brought any “undesirable” immigrants—a fine deterrent alongside the public knowledge of Australia’s *de facto* policy amongst prospective immigrants. The origins of the dictation test are in fact in negotiations in 1897. The dictation test had been “forced upon an unwilling Parliament by the British Government for diplomatic reasons in order to avoid hurting the feelings of friendly nations” (Charteris, 1927).

³⁰Though not mandatory in law, 1958 introduced the policy of locking up those without a visa, the basic groundwork for the neo-liberal period (Betts, 2001).

2.2.4 NEO-LIBERAL TURN 1973–2025

From the 1970s, the interpenetration of the world economy including its production relations (for instance, the internationalisation of production of intermediate goods), led to an increasingly interconnected world of capital (finance) and labour (migration). The neo-liberal period was predicated, however, not on less state involvement in migration, but on the part of Australia a deeper state-led form of commodification, alongside a vicious transformation of White Australia racism into racist brutalities inflicted on refugees at the border, and migration as foreign policy to handle Australia's anxieties about a shifting multi-polar imperialist world.

There was an inner link between the crisis of the 1970s and the post-WWII boom. The success of capital accumulation within the boom period, along with a steady rate of exploitation thanks to wage rises in line with productivity, contained the conditions for decreasing profit rates, displayed in Figure 2.8. This started with a sharp fall in net profit rates in the US from 1965 to 1970, later in Japan (in the mid-late 1960s to 1975) (Brenner, 2004, p. 7) and the Soviet Union (1979 to 1985) (Harman, 2010, p. 202). This result is described further in chapter 5. With workers in many wealthy countries winning wage rises in line with productivity, the rate of exploitation was steady. The result was a decline in the global profit rate, expressing itself particularly harshly in the 1970s.

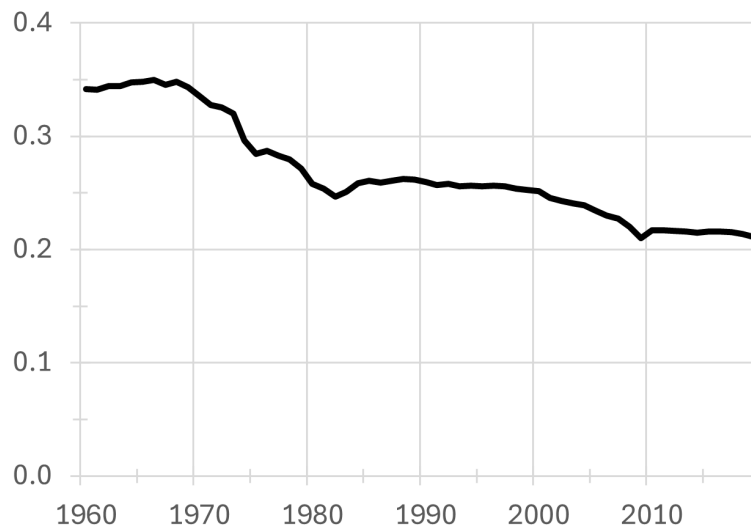


Figure 2.8: Global profit rate, 1960–2019 (Basu et al., 2025).

The development of economic crisis reshaped and shifted the tensions and contradictions in Australian migration policy as an expression of capitalist imperialism as a

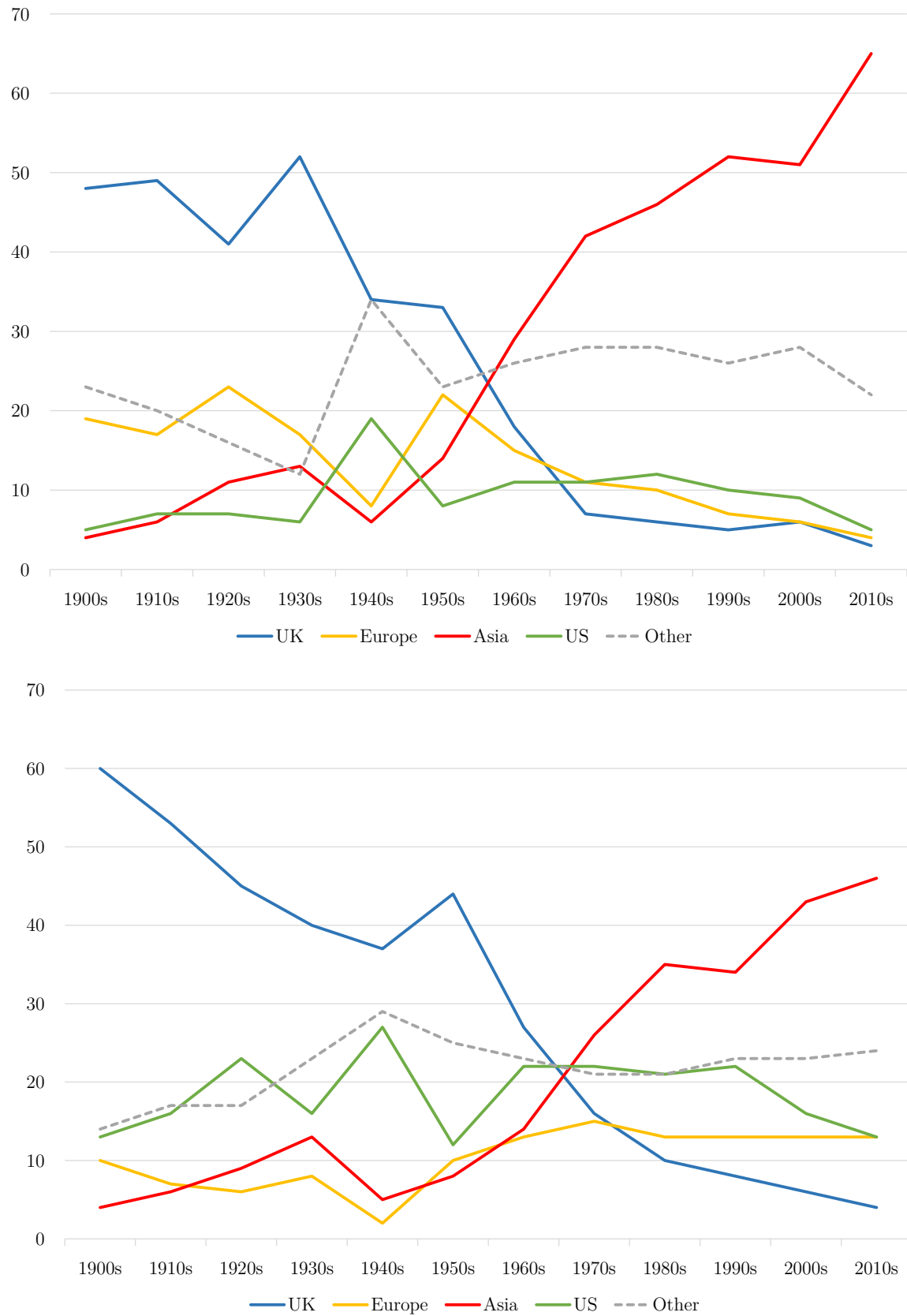


Figure 2.9: Proportion of Australian exports (top) and imports (bottom) by region (RBA, 2023). “Asia” is sum of the following countries: Mainland China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam.

contradictory unity. The first major dynamics was an internationalisation of the economic base of global capitalism, in terms of trade, production, finance, and migration. The relative distances were continually getting shorter, with container ships, telecommunications and cheapening of flights. Figure 2.9 represents the surface appearance of the increasing interconnections between Australia and the Asian region.

The increase in foreign investment in Australia led some theorists to suggest Australia was becoming a client state to transnational corporations (Wheelwright and Connor, 1981).³¹ Kuhn (1982) notes a few issues with this formulation. Firstly, Kuhn argues the Australian bourgeoisie were advantaged rather than disadvantaged by investment, and that the profit rates rather than ‘deindustrialisation’ caused the crisis of the 1970s (Kuhn, 1982). Secondly, it can tend to underestimate the outflows of capital from Australia (Utrecht, 1980). And third, the presumptive protectionism tends towards conspiracy explanations of the Australian ruling class’ adaptation to the new scheme. Australia’s state managers were neither fools nor compromised by foreign influence. This chapter conceives of the effective management of Australia’s position within international capitalism as including the facilitation of regionalisation as well as the furthering of Australia’s particular interests.

Australia’s increasing economic reliance on Asia meant that regional political and economic stability played an even more important role in its own economic wellbeing. Moreover, as capitalism developed in an uneven and combined way, the stability of the post-war order was increasingly brought into question. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chinese growth would outpace Japanese growth and change the geopolitics of the region fundamentally. See Figure 2.11 for a graphic summary of the weight of Chinese economy on a global scale. The Australian ruling class is split on how to balance the economic facilitation of Chinese capitalism and geo-politically outmanoeuvring China in the region, including trying to pull the US into the region Brophy, 2020. These dynamics are still in play. From the migration perspective, this precipitates a shift not just in Australia’s attitude to China but its relationship to the Pacific region.

Figure 2.10 represents an illustration of the 1976 white paper. This appears as a quite unremarkable world map, but it expresses a remarkable shift in the nature of the geo-strategy of migration policy. Its assessment of Australia’s changing geopolitics

³¹Wheelwright argued the “second stage of industrial capitalism based on multi-national corporations” started in 1945 (Wheelwright, in Wheelwright and Buckley, 1975, p. 7).



Figure 2.10: Illustration popularising the Defence 1976 White Paper (Royal Australian Navy News, 1976)
COURTESY NLA

is that the “withdrawal of former imperial powers and the proliferation of sovereign nation-states in numbers unprecedented in history have established a new world order” (Royal Australian Navy News, 1976).³² No longer is Australia being thought about as the outpost of empire in Asia. Its position in the Asia Pacific is presented baldly. As discussed in the beginning of this thesis, and as developed in chapter 5, White Australia was brought to a final end, following the previous shifts. The geo-strategic militarised demography that had required mass white importation was transformed into a question of negotiating relations with Australia’s immediate neighbours. The intervening years are discussed further in later chapters, but this transformation located in the 1970s, the end of ‘populate or perish’, the end of ‘white Australia’, and a migration policy positioned in a new military geography, are what mark this period.

Despite the significant shift in form, Australian ongoing fears around its “secure northern approaches” in the contemporary era (Department of Defence, 2016) bear a striking similarity to over 100 years of ‘yellow peril’ racism. In the new geo-political

³²This relates also to the internal transformation in the Chinese economy in the 1970s, which were reflected in Defence repositioning.

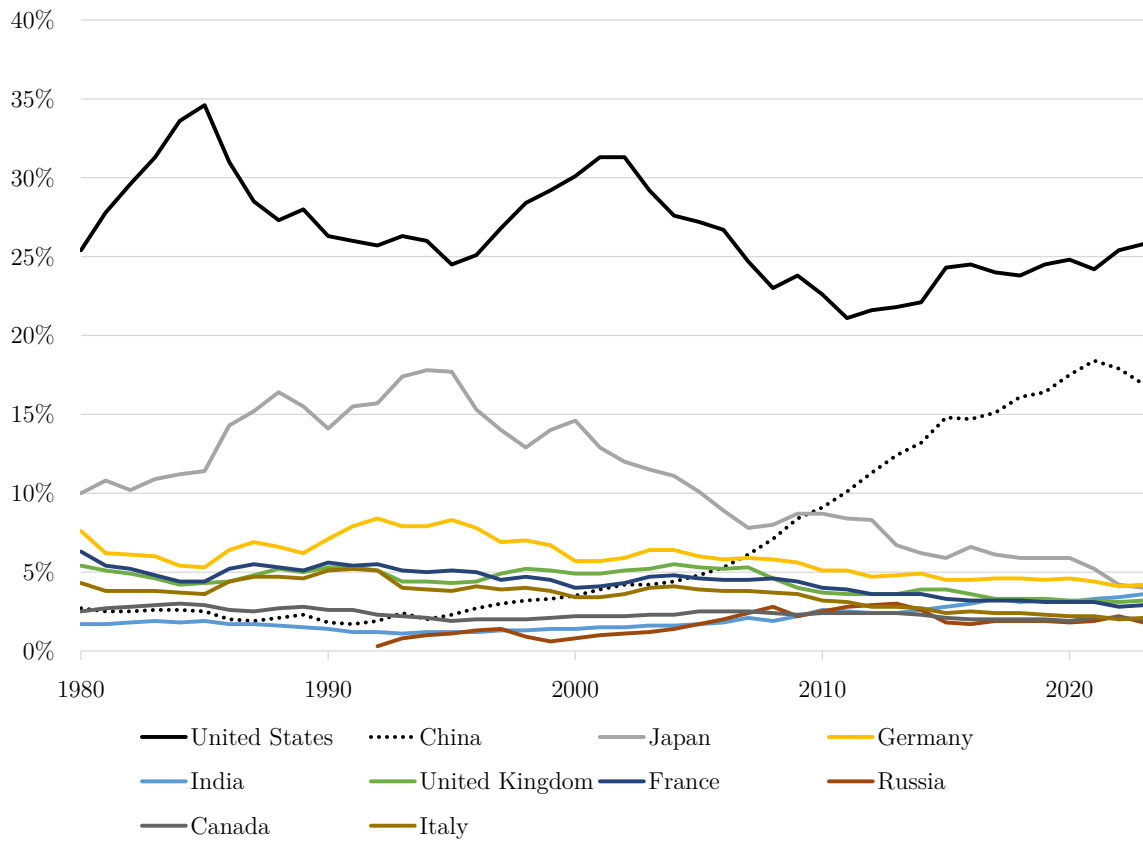


Figure 2.11: Top ten countries by GDP, USD, current prices (IMF, 2023). When the current 27 EU countries are combined, the picture of a third European international bloc of capital emerges.

climate though, anxieties are around what are now politely called “fragile states” immediately surrounding Australia and standing in between itself and states to its north (Dobell, 2007). The role of migration in mitigating these fears are summed up with some doomsday drama in Duncan and Gilling’s report of 2005:

Unless [Pacific Island] governments can create conditions for much improved economic performance, aid and emigration opportunities are probably all that stand in the way of a more serious breakdown of state legitimacy and capacity in the region. However, there can be a serious moral hazard problem with aid in that aid itself can contribute to the incapacity of the state (Duncan and Gilling, 2005, p. 12).

The combination of scepticism about ‘development’, ambivalence about aid, the political and economic significance of emigration, and the fears of dominoes of failed states all capture the “arc of instability” thesis that was pioneered in the late 1990s (Huisken and Thatcher, 2007). They recommended an ‘unskilled’ migration program, partly for the remittances that could hold up otherwise non-“viable” states, though these would not see the light of day for some time.

As a result Australian regional migration schemes play a geo-strategic goal in relation to a rising and increasingly assertive China, by normalising economic and political relations with Australia in contradistinction to China. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme, preempted by the Seasonal Worker Programme (in 2012) and Pacific Labour Scheme (2018) acts as a kind of “worldmaking through enclosure”, by seeking to normalise Australian rather than Chinese presence in the region, and building loyalty among Australia’s buffer states to China (Wallis, 2023, p. 1). A recent review of the migration system situated Pacific migration schemes within the “profound transition” in the Indo-Pacific, as “economic and strategic weight shifts” (Parkinson, Howe, and Azarias, 2023, p. 19), an oblique reference to the dynamics in Figure 2.11. This economic transformation can also be seen by remittance data showing an increasing proportion of GDP in outflows through the 2000s (Figure 2.12).

The more general impact of the increasingly internationalised and inter-connected system in the shifting migration regime, however, operated through a dialectic of the increasingly commodified incorporation of migrants on the one hand, and on the other through their visceral exclusion. The first factor, sees the facilitation and increasingly controlled movement of people within the region, in a migration regime that

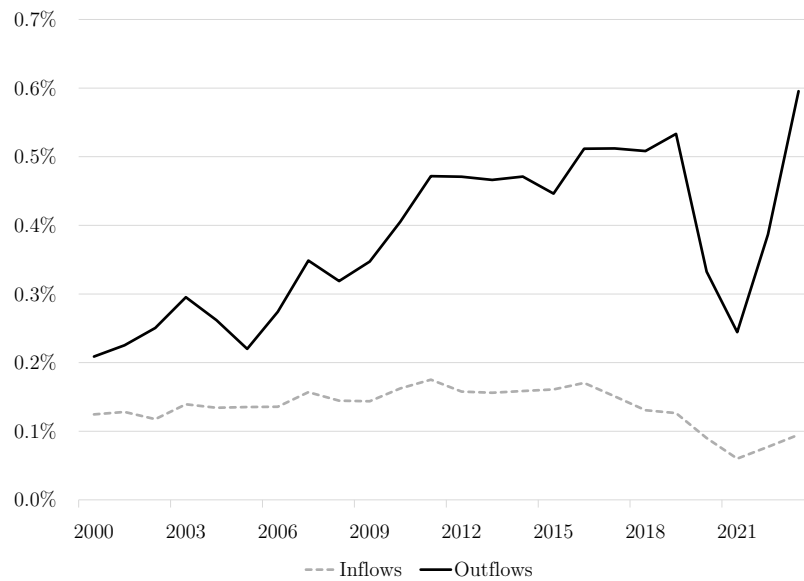


Figure 2.12: Australian Remittances 2000–23, data from Migration Policy Institute (2024)

became increasingly quantified and ‘objective’ over time. Commodification proceeded throughout the period, from the introduction of the Numerical Multi-factor Assessment System (NuMAS) in 1979 under Fraser, Australia’s first points system, to the enormous increase in temporary migration in Australia following the ‘Roach Review’ (1995), released under Keating but implemented under Howard, and the ongoing proliferation of visa categories from family, skilled and humanitarian intakes after 1945, to hundreds of arcane visa classes that must now be navigated by migrants. The following chapters further outline these qualitative shifts that correspond to the neo-liberal order. The purpose of this chapter is simply to focus on the most important ‘hinges’ that saw migration express imperial transformation, or *fabrica mundi*.

As Mares (2016) outlines, temporary migration is perceived by Australia as a part of foreign policy. From inception it was about “increasing globalisation of business, and Government policy to open the economy up to greater international competition”, as well as Australian integration with the region and “achieving closer ties with the APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] region” (Roach, 1995, pp. 4, 84)

Understanding Australia’s contemporary migration landscape also requires seeing the connections between this incorporation and Australia’s increasing refugee detention brutality, which was constructed over the same time period. These were sometimes more explicit geo-political calculations such as in the early 1990s, but in general are related to Australia’s genuine military approach to its borders, and the questions

of racism. This will be discussed in Chapter 6, but for now, this section follows Betts's (2001) breakdown of three "waves" of "boatpeople" to outline the three waves of construction of Australia's refugee cruelty. There is a more-or-less constant stream of 'episodes', where Australian geopolitics and migration policy come into play, including Australia's refusal of citizenship to stateless Burmese children born in Australia, its cooperation with the Sri Lankan regime in turning back boats, the Malaysian Solution, but these three waves are the most central to the construction of Australia's refugee policy. This comes out of a mixture of Australian foreign policy and diplomacy in the Pacific and beyond on the one hand, and a genuine desire to close its borders on the other—"the security and defence of our maritime domain and borders" (Department of Defence, 2016, p. 53).

The first wave of construction occurred under the Liberal Fraser government following the Fall of Saigon. If the wave of Vietnamese boats fleeing 'communism' were to be the first test of the abandonment of White Australia, then Australia's test results have been widely falsified. Fraser's refugee policies have become regarded by some modern commentators as a model for a more humanitarian policy. But this representation fails to understand that Fraser's policies helped set the trajectory for the modern refugee regime. The fact that he now politically opposes some of the policies is in this regard unsurprising, and despite the increasing brutality of Australian refugee politics, Fraser's combination of multi-lateral offshore processing and increasing anti-refugee rhetoric do not bear recommendation.³³ The system of "forward selection" of asylum seekers has been called "the seeds of the contemporary Australian model of asylum" (Stats, 2014b). This was "Australia's first concerted attempt to deter boat arrivals" and the first rhetorical "shift to criminalization" (Smit, 2010, pp. 78–9). Stevens (2012) outlines some of the shifts in the rhetoric in both the Fraser government and the press, arguing that this golden period in Australian migration history has been overstated. While there was certainly a period of "cooled debate" from 1978–1980 where admission of refugees on boats were advocated, this was followed (and preceded by) a period of "resistance to the resettlement of Vietnamese asylum seekers", including calls for border enforcement and a reimposition of "distrust and suspicion" (Stevens, 2012, p. 540).³⁴ Cotton (2017, pp. 35–6) outlines the Fraser Government's connections to

³³Greg Sheridan's 2015 assessment of "astonishing" and "unexplained" shift of Malcolm Fraser from "the most right-wing and ideological prime minister Australia ever had" to its "most left-wing and ideological ex-prime minister Australia" is in part explained by the dynamics of Australia's refugee policy that Fraser instituted.

³⁴Fraser's rhetoric was generally better than Whitlam's, see (Stats, 2014b).

regional and offshore refugee processing camps including Galang camp in Indonesia, and Hei Ling Chau in Hong Kong. Fraser lobbied for the camps to be set up, financed them, and the camps remained under Hawke and Keating. It is now well known that he directed immigration minister to use the phrase ‘economic migrants’, threatened forcible *refoulement*, and that immigration officers in Malaysia even “bored holes in the bottom of the ships” (Smit, 2010, p. 89).

The second wave of construction, that of so-called ‘mandatory detention’ occurred in response to Hawke-Keating Labor government’s response to Cambodian refugees in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The arrival of eighteen boats of Cambodian refugees from November 1989 to January 1994 (Phillips and Spinks, 2013) presented an unwelcome disruption to Australia’s delicate foreign policy moves in the peace negotiations between Cambodia and Vietnam in which foreign minister Gareth Evans played a prominent role. Australia could not afford the affront to Cambodia of accepting their refugees. At the same time, Hawke’s recent decision to offer permanent residency to Chinese students following Tienanmen square created further problems in the fair application of border enforcement (Tazreiter, 2002, p. 4). Australia needed an orderly ‘queue’ and a stable region. The architecture of mandatory detention was build over a few short years starting immediately. From 1989, the administrative and political apparatus shifted to institute a new policy of mandatory detention. The act instituting mandatory detention would not be passed until 1992 and implemented in 1994, but its origins were in the act of 1989 which produced administrative detention, with “officers to arrest and detain anyone suspected of being an ‘illegal entrant’” (Phillips and Spinks, 2013, p. 3). Administrative detention itself was merely a formalisation of the last decades practice, but its application shifted sharply in 1989. While in 1989 the average number of days a refugee spent in detention had been 15 days, immigration department reports reveal that for Cambodian arrivals that year this would suddenly shoot up to 523 days (Phillips and Spinks, 2013, p. 29).³⁵ Port Hedland Detention centre was established in 1991 to deal with the influx.

The third wave of refugee cruelty was Howard’s regime of offshore processing after the diplomatic incident of the MV Tampa, a Norwegian cargo ship who had rescued Hazara refugees fleeing to Australia, just a couple of months before the invasion of Afghanistan. Howard’s decision to send the Special Air Service Regiment onto the

³⁵Administrative technicalities mean that the then limit of 273 days ‘limit’ did not apply to cases involving court proceedings (Mathew, 1994).

ship, militarise Christmas Island and eventually forcibly transfer them to a newly built detention camp in its ex-colony in Nauru marked the beginning of the 'Pacific Solution' to Australia's refugee 'problem'. This picture is developed in chapter 6, but these first three waves—a fourth is considered later—importantly correspond to this neo-liberal era, and express ideologically as well as material the new imperialism developed.

The neo-liberal period was marked by a transformation within Australian geopolitics in which 1973 marked the end of White Australia, the first ripple of economic crisis, and a transformation in regional geo-political-economy that included economic integration, border cruelty and imperial repositioning. Migration expresses this new internal regime in several ways: (1) the shift from 'populate or perish' to a more integrated set of economic and imperial motivations; (2) the increasing commodification of migrants, with points, skilled migration, temporary visas, the growth of employer sponsorship, and the so-called 'export' of education; and (3) an increasing regime of cruelty towards refugees and asylum seekers.

2.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced imperialism as the first determination with which to conceptualise how migration is constituted within process of accumulation, and in particular its relation with the processes of Australian migration. The reconceptualisation of imperialism it delivered built on the 'two logics' approaches of Harvey (2005b) and Callinicos (2009), which despite usefully foregrounding both dynamics of inter-state competition and capital accumulation, face serious setbacks in accounting for the inner relation within accumulation and imperialism. Harvey's account inadequately explains economic accumulation and crisis, by relying on the capacious parallel 'accumulation by dispossession' category. Callinicos' account, conversely, privileges geo-political arrangements over the dynamic evolution of accumulation, which hinders the task of conceptualising the dynamics of capitalist imperialism in the neo-liberal period. These setbacks each originate in explaining how accumulation dominates over imperialism, even as the two categories presuppose, mediate, and create one another. As migration is a moment within the circulation of variable capital, this is an important distinction. The internal relations reconceptualisation of capitalist imperialism developed through this critical comparison provided the first step towards understanding how migration

is constituted within processes of capital accumulation, via the mediating category of capitalist imperialism.

The next section developed a periodisation of Australian migration within the dynamics established in section 2.1. It framed major shifts in Australian migration, with each of the four periods 1830–1888, 1888–1945, 1945–1973, and 1973–2025 corresponding to wider shifts in the world economy. It traced how migration expressed: (1) the transformation in capitalist social relations through the shift from transportation; (2) the subsumption of these dynamics of accumulation within those of global imperialism through the shift towards White Australia; (3) the interwoven nationalisations of capital through the ‘populate or perish’/Colombo Plan nexus; and (4) the neo-liberal restructuring of migration through the long crisis since the 1970s, through the shift to skilled, temporary migration with refugee cruelty. Through the framework of incorporated comparison, it presented these shifts as internal to world restructuring (McMichael, 1990).

Together, this chapter established the first major step in explaining Australian migration, and how it is constituted in processes of capital accumulation. Migration is a moment within the contradictory unity of capitalist imperialism, in which the dynamics of accumulation and empire are internally and asymmetrically related, developing the understanding of how migration is constituted within capital accumulation.

Chapter 3

A Critique of Immigration as Invasion

Settler Colonialism as Process Rather than Structure

We took Australia from the natives because they refused to use it properly. If we were fair and honest in doing that, it would be equally fair and honest for any other nation to do the same thing towards us, should these vast areas in northern Australia be allowed to remain untenanted.

— HAROLD GEORGE NELSON, HANSARD, 1929, P. 1250

British subjects have been induced to emigrate to New South Wales, and to bestow that upon the previously waste land, without which it would have been of no more value than it was before—namely, labour.

— HERALD, 1843

This chapter investigates an inner connection between real military and colonial invasion of the Australian continent and the racial fantasies of Asian invasion that have long plagued White Australia (e.g. Mackay, 1895). Migration, in a complex way, expresses both. This chapter develops the understanding of migration expressing a territorial and geographical moment within accumulation, complicating and extending the framework of capitalist imperialism in chapter 2 by introducing *settler colonialism* as a second determination in the account of migration in capital accumulation.

Settler colonialism is threaded through many recent Marxist accounts of migration (Cross, 2013; Hanieh, 2013; Ritchie, Carpenter, and Mojab, 2022a; Walia, 2021) which

seek to interweave accounts of capitalism, anti-migrant racism and anti-First Nations brutality. Via the method of non-deductive incorporation, this chapter analyses these dynamics within the framework of Marxist political economy, questioning whether accounts of “economy of dispossession” (Walia, 2021, p. 24), “former settler colonies” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. 139), or simply “settler colonialism” (Ritchie, Carpenter, and Mojab, 2022a, p. 10; Hanieh, 2013, p. 77) sufficiently describe this relation.

It does so through an extended critique of the work of Patrick Wolfe (1991, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2016a,b). Although there is rich history of antecedent thinkers, Wolfe’s work has motivated much of the recent flourishing of settler colonial theory, and has come into popular usage. The chapter develops a critique of his general framework, and addresses some developments by Lorenzo Veracini (2015) and Glen Coulthard (2014).

In particular, the chapter criticises the structural interpretation based on the settler/native binary and the settler will, developing a reconceptualisation of settler colonialism as a process rather than a structure, building on but contradicting Wolfe’s analysis of a structure rather than an event (Wolfe, 1994, p. 96). By developing an understanding of the internal relations within settler colonialism and capital accumulation, migration is reframed as a moment within a class and imperialist process—helping to understand the double ‘invasion’ it represents.

3.1 PATRICK WOLFE’S THEORY OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

Patrick Wolfe’s framework can be summarised by two insights. The first is that “invasion is a structure not an event” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 209; Wolfe, 2006, p. 388), stressing against mainstream tendencies to relegate colonial crimes to a long-distant past the “specific social formation” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 401) that continually replicates oppression:

settler colonialism is relatively impervious to regime change. The genocide of American Indians or of Aboriginal people in Australia has not been subject to election results (Wolfe, 2006, p. 402)

The second insight is that this structure is driven by a “logic of elimination” of the native people (Wolfe, 1994, p. 98), linked to a project of “structural genocide” (Wolfe,

2006, pp. 387, 402). Across the various modes of settler colonialism, from frontier warfare to assimilation to Native Title, the underlying logic of elimination is the defining dynamic of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 1994, p. 113).

For Wolfe, this logic that defines settler colonialism consists in two linked processes: attacks on a people and the seizure of land. This distinguishing of land-based from labour-based forms of racialisation is key to his analysis. So for instance, while black people's oppression originated in slavery, for "Aboriginal people . . . their relationship with their colonizers . . . centered on land" (Wolfe, 2001, p. 867). Wolfe allows for exceptions to this rule, where the exploitation of Aboriginal *labour* was centre stage, including the North Australian cattle industry, Tasmanian shelling, and Torres Strait Islander pearl lugging. But nevertheless the "dominant pattern, manifest most clearly in the south and east of the [Australian] continent . . . practically approximated [settler colonialism's] pure or theoretical form, resulting, within a short space of time, in the decimation of the Aboriginal population" (Wolfe, 2001, pp. 871). It is the seizure of the land of a people rather than the exploitation of its labour that distinguishes " 'pure' settler colonialism of the Australian or North American variety . . . from so-called colonial settler societies that depended on indigenous labor (for example, European farm economies in southern Africa or plantation economies in South Asia)" (Wolfe, 2001, p. 868, fn. 7).

The lucidity of this framework is part of its popularity. It has been replicated, appropriated, and applied to a variety of different contexts.¹ It is a clear and unambiguous typology allowing for ruthless critique of racist regimes of oppression against First Nations peoples. Wolfe is also unabashed in taking these premises to their logical conclusion. Native Title is a state strategy of recruiting "a minority of Aboriginal people to the continuing invasion of the rest" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129), and Wolfe scorns the "settler anxiety" behind "ostentatious borrowing" of Aboriginal symbols for nationalist purposes (Wolfe, 2006, p. 389). These "discourses of inclusion" work with those of exclusion as a "twin-track strategy which seeks to protect the territorial basis of the settler-colonial state" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 124).

Wolfe's starting point of specifying a more precise account of what drives Aboriginal

¹Australia is the starting point and so classical case for settler colonialism (it might better be called "a baseline", Wolfe, 2001, p. 874), but Wolfe has also analysed the United States, Israel and Hawai'i (Wolfe, 2001, 2006, 2013). His work inspired Brazilian examples (Veracini, 2016, p. 250), and others still have categorised South Africa and Rhodesia as "[p]aradigmatic examples" for Saito (2020, p. 221, n. 10), despite the fact Wolfe generally drew a distinction with the case in South Africa (Wolfe, 2006, pp. 403–4).

dispossession and oppression should not be dismissed. But the clarity and simplicity of these categories, which help make the theory popular, also lead to problematically rigid and ahistorical categories of analysis, despite the historical strengths of Wolfe's own work.

3.2 MECHANICS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

Wolfe is critical of the “oddly monolithic, and surprisingly unexamined, notion of colonialism” in post-colonial theory (Wolfe, 1999, p. 1).² He suggests that the unexamined assumptions about the nature of colonialism are a kind of Eurocentric historical accident where the theoreticians were addressing a particular type of colonialism—one involving “an oppressed majority on the supply of whose labour a colonizing minority was vulnerably dependent” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 1), clearly not an accurate description of ‘settler colonies’ like Australia. He endeavours therefore to take seriously “the heterogeneity of different colonial formations” and the “specific configuration of elements and relations” that attach to them (Wolfe, 1999, p. 2). Wolfe differentiates the “different modes of colonialism (settler, franchise, internal)” (Wolfe, 1997, p. 399). So settler colonialism, which ultimately relies on displacing Indigenous people in order to secure access to territory, is separated from franchise-colonial societies, such as British colonisation of India, and also so-called ‘internal’ colonisation, the key example being plantation slavery in the U.S. (Wolfe, 2000, p. 131). Franchise and ‘internal’ colonisation are analytically distinct but ultimately united in the reliance on labour rather than land (Wolfe, 2002, p. 59).

For Wolfe, the logic of elimination, which defines the ‘structure rather than an event’ of settler colonialism, is ultimately produced by a competing claim over land. It is “premised on the securing—the obtaining and the maintaining—of territory” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 402). With such a definition, Wolfe is able to argue that a singular logic underlies the very different forms (or ‘modes’) of subjection of Aboriginal people by the state, including confrontation, carceration, and assimilation. The logic of elimination “certainly requires the elimination of the owners of that territory, but not in any particular way” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 402). The extension of settler-colonial relations “introduced a zero-sum contest over land on which conflicting modes of production

²Coulthard (2014, p. 184, n. 28) does the opposite, collapsing imperialism, colonialism and settler colonialism into a single category!

could not ultimately coexist” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 868).³ There are two linked classes of explanation to be found in Wolfe.

3.2.1 COMPETING MODES OF PRODUCTION

The first account is a broadly materialist one about active competition between land claims and their inevitable social consequences:

settler colonialism introduced a zero-sum contest over land on which conflicting modes of production could not ultimately coexist. Thus the primary logic of settler colonialism can be characterized as one of elimination. (Wolfe, 2001, p. 868)

Wolfe identifies a number of other key ideological and structural underpinnings, which includes European imperialism (Wolfe, 1997) and the scientific, technical, hierarchical and bureaucratic aspects of “modernity” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 876). But this, he remarks, is insufficient in itself. More fundamental is “the insatiable dynamic whereby settler colonialism always needs more land” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 295).

This land-grabbing explanation is based on the extension of competing modes of production. The growth of permanent agriculture, along with a host of other primary sectors, drive this dynamic, coming into conflict with Aboriginal people’s own mode of production based on land. While other sectors are not in themselves “sufficient”, permanent agriculture, as well as pastoralism, is “geared to vouchsafing its own reproduction, generating capital that projects into a future where it repeats itself” (p. 395). Agriculture also leads to a larger population, including by “continuing immigration at the expense of native lands and livelihoods” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 395). Thus “through its ceaseless expansion, agriculture . . . progressively eats into Indigenous territory, a primitive accumulation that turns native flora and fauna into a dwindling resource and curtails the reproduction of Indigenous modes of production.”⁴ Wolfe generally

³Wolfe uses “ultimately” deliberately here to note that while co-existence was sometimes possible between two societies for sometimes very long periods (giving the example of the fur trade in North Canada), it inevitably did come to an end, particularly with the “shift from mercantile to industrial forms of capitalism” which inaugurated “settler colonialism proper” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 868, n. 9).

⁴Even when there was developed Indigenous agriculture, such as in the case of Cherokee and the ‘five civilised tribes’, these forms were seen as signifying “*permanence*” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 396), a threat that only spurred on calls for elimination (which includes for Wolfe assimilation) and for their agriculture to be destroyed.

avoids adjoining the two phrases, “capitalist” and “mode of production”, presumably for analytical ease: allowing him to reference pre-capitalist and capitalist colonialism under the banner of settler colonialism. Nonetheless, the shift to “industrial forms of capitalism” is associated with “settler colonialism proper” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 868, n. 9, see above). It is this antagonism that underlies a logic of elimination foundational to oppression

Settler colonialism is not laid at the feet of pastoralists alone. The “settler-colonial state” is a constant feature in Wolfe’s work (Wolfe, 2006, p. 392), including in the 19th century both the colonial administrators and the “murderous activities of the frontier rabble” that provide the “principal means of expansion” for the state (Wolfe, 2006, p. 392). Wolfe is dismissive of the historical emphasis often placed on administrative regret while sidelining the concrete reality of invasion: “officials express regret at the lawlessness of this process while resigning themselves to its inevitability” (Wolfe, 2000, p. 144). He likewise names the growth of the global capitalist economic system as a key precondition for pastoralism. Behind settler colonialism “lay the driving engine of international market forces, which linked Australian wool to Yorkshire mills and, complementarily, to cotton produced under different colonial conditions in India, Egypt, and the slave states of the Deep South” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 394).

Wolfe provides a relatively compelling account of a ‘frontier expansion’ period of colonisation, linking the activities and underlying project of industry, the state, vigilante colonialists, and the context of global imperialism, in the conditions for Indigenous dispossession.⁵ Wolfe is sometime cautious in his use of ‘frontier’ terminology, but argues that “for all the holes and inconsistencies in the concept, its primary referent is stable enough” (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 1). He calls it the “primary paradigm” of Australian settler-colonisation (Wolfe, 1994, p. 95), consisting on the one hand of a “misleading or illusory” representation in the minds of colonisers (such as “civilization vs. savagery”, p. 95), and a connected social reality (invasion) that was “sustained by the currency of that representation” (p. 95).

But Wolfe does not suggest a breakdown of pre- and post- frontier closure explanations, arguing that to focus on explanations that cover only a particular time

⁵The same cannot be extended to the application of the theory to all settler colonial contexts exhibiting expanding frontiers. Even the analogy between Israel’s current occupation of Palestine with the mid-1800s in Australia is far from perfect (see Wolfe, 2013, pp. 263–4). Though similar in exhibiting political contestation about the frontier, which plays a dominant role in politics, they differ not only with regards to the modes of production on either side of the frontier but also the nature of the social antagonisms within the frontier.

period is inherently problematic, as “temporally bounded studies” including for instance Reynolds’ work on the frontier “run the risk of confirming the ideological rupture whereby the Australian state distances itself from its foundations” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 96). To emphasise the particular material roots of Indigenous oppression before the closure of the frontier implicitly bolsters the claim that invasion was an event rather than a structure, the opposite of Wolfe’s whole purpose here. For this reason, Wolfe’s account of competing modes of production is not based purely in the internal dynamic of those competing modes, but rather a requires a second factor.

3.2.2 THE SETTLER-COLONIAL WILL

Wolfe’s concept of *settler-colonial* will transcends time and settler colonialism’s various modes. Though “generally glossed” as capitalism, it derives from the “primal drive to expansion” and “preceded” invasion (Wolfe, 1999, p. 167). He also refers to the “settler-colonial imperative” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129), or “settler subjecthood” (Wolfe, 2013, p. 257), and the “elementary structures of the settler-colonial mentality” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 167).

This derives from an “empirical binarism”, that “the primary social division was encompassed in the relation between natives and invaders” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 168, see also Wolfe, 2013). And his later work constantly references the contest over land: “the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). So the logic of elimination inheres in the post-frontier-closure period to the ongoing settler-colonial possession of (or ongoing access to) the land.

The closest Wolfe comes to providing theoretical grounding for this settler will is a Durkheimian account of two underlying ‘residues’ that predate colonisation. This “settler-colonial residue” exists “independently of Australian historical factors” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 167). Wolfe denies that he is pointing to an “extra-historical teleology, unfolding independently of human practice” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 167), and his analysis seeks to go beyond subjective or psychological factors. Rather, his analysis is grounded in a Durkheimian concept of residues: that while a number of Australian historical factors exist within the social fact of colonisation, these can be theoretically subtracted so

as to reveal the underlying residue, in this case, the logic of elimination.⁶ The same procedure of subtraction can be used to define an Aboriginal residue.

Wolfe does not give a clear theoretical answer for the dynamic of the settler residue.

The flaws in Wolfe's conceptual apparatus, while misleading to later theorists, are avoided by his careful historical work. In Wolfe's hands, the 'settler will' construct often functions to capture the different but intersecting interests of frontier vigilantes, agricultural expansions, state authority, intellectuals, capitalists, or the British crown, with a particular stress on the settler-colonial state settler-colonial state (Wolfe, 1994, p. 123).⁷ Wolfe's (1999) monograph is a brilliant account of the converging interests of state managers and anthropologists behind a unified settler-colonial project. He refuses a mechanically deterministic theory wherein the ideas of a discipline such as anthropology are conceptualised as mere epiphenomena flowing inevitably from conquest and colonisation, providing a "dialectical" relationship between "representations" and "practical activity" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 4). This refuses a reductive analysis that ignores anthropology's own internal discussions and interventions into the colonial project, and points away from a purely idealist account where state actions are ordained by the ideas of anthropologists.

Wolfe takes some steps towards investigating this dialectical relationship between practice and theory. He suggests that "the key question is the conditions under which particular theories became suitable for appropriation to political ends" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 5). He aims then to "reconstruct the weighted play of unintended consequences whereby global determinations unfold through definite relations that are, as Marx put it, indispensable and independent of people's will", which requires us to "decipher the mediations and affinities around and through which prevailing tendencies are socially sustained" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 39). Wolfe proposes investigating the material histories of colonialism and the discursive histories of anthropology in order to see their interaction. Wolfe's Durkheimian intellectual provenance is less of an issue when pointed at the ensembles of ruling class invasion. It becomes more problematic when aimed at other members of "settler society" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 99), where the germ of ahistorical structuralism becomes an issue.

This section addressed the two linked themes of explanation through which Wolfe

⁶Wolfe (2002, p. 60) characterises himself as "in part an unreconstructed Durkheimian".

⁷See also: the "sustained institutional tendency to supplant the indigenous population" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 163, Wolfe, 1994, p. 96), the "technologies of violence" of "governing settler-colonial imperative" (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 15), about regimes of assimilation and Native Title.

conceptualises settler colonialism: the settler will and competing modes of production. The question of this thesis, explaining migration and its constitution within capital accumulation, is at stake in Wolfe's totalising schema. Migration is inherent to both the growth of themes of explanation, and if to speak of capitalism is to gloss over the primal urge to expand, then the dynamics discussed in chapter 2 miss the point. There is merit to both to grounding settler colonialism within the dynamics of expanding modes of production, especially through the frontier period, and to seeking an explanation that unites the array of actors that collaborate to produce the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Yet Wolfe's queasiness about referencing the capitalist mode of production, and reliance on Durkheimian residue two produce critical problems that will be discussed in the following two sections: the settler/native binary, and the question of agency.

3.3 THE SETTLER/NATIVE BINARY

Wolfe's residue approach leads to an untouchable binarism within settler colonial theory, between "settlers" and "Natives" (Wolfe, 2013, pp. 258, 263), which is said to be the primary determining factor in settler colonial society. Rather than identifying the individual pioneer settlers who in immigrating and setting up permanent residence play an active role in frontier colonisation, this usage also designates all non-Indigenous peoples resident in a country as 'settlers'. Frequently, this includes not only descendents of European settlers active in frontier warfare and settlement, but also immigrants and even refugees and slaves. The two key claims of Wolfe's self-professed binarism are: (1) an oppressive dynamic between settlers and Natives; and (2) that this is the primary social determinant in settler colonial countries.

The settler/native distinction precedes class relations, because Wolfe compares the settler/native to the division into ruling and working classes in the Marxist sense, arguing that the former is prior to class, since "in the rigorous sense in which such relations are specified, Indigenous groups are outside the mode (forces plus relations) of production (which is to say, ideally they do not exist)" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 27, n. 31).

The separation of settler and native is *analytically prior* to the class distinctions within either side of the binary. Australia is first and foremost a settler-colonial state, which is to "specify the society's primary structural characteristic rather than to de-

scribe its origins alone” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 93). The “other relationships may coexist” alongside the settler colonial imperative but they are “ultimately subordinate” (Wolfe, 2000, p. 132). Wolfe insists on the “Australian society’s primary determination as a settler-colonial state” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 123).

Leaning on Althusser, Wolfe conceives here of the settler-colonial social formation as something that “conjoined (articulated) a number of modes of production” (Wolfe, 1997, p. 397).⁸ He credits Althusser with having “conclusively invalidated the . . . image of the contained and homogeneous culture” and appropriately replaced it with an “unstable composite” of coexisting modes of production (Wolfe, 1997, p. 399). Though critical of parts of Althusser’s framework, it is this concept of *articulation* that Wolfe salvages.

As an explanation of modern Aboriginal oppression, there are problems to the applicability of such a theory. Firstly, an increasing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in major cities, and obtain subsistence within the capitalist mode of production as members of the working class. Since 2006, numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in major cities and inner regional areas has increased from 54.2 per cent to 66.2 per cent (see figure 3.1). Table 3.1 compares the remoteness status of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in the 2021 census. Although there is a relative concentration of Indigenous people in remote and very remote areas (15.4 per cent versus 1.3 per cent), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are increasingly concentrated in major cities and inner regional areas.

	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
<i>Major Cities</i>	42.0	75.4
<i>Inner Regional</i>	24.3	16.2
<i>Outer Regional</i>	18.3	7.1
<i>Remote</i>	5.6	0.9
<i>Very Remote</i>	9.8	0.4

Table 3.1: Remoteness area of working age population by First Nations status, 2021 Census, based on place of usual residence, excludes migratory, offshore, shipping and no place of residence/no usual address (ABS, 2021c)

Conceptualising the primary dynamic behind the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as inhering in their existence outside of the working class is theoretically awkward in not describing the predominant modes of subsistence

⁸“Althusser provided a starting point” (Wolfe, 1997, p. 418).

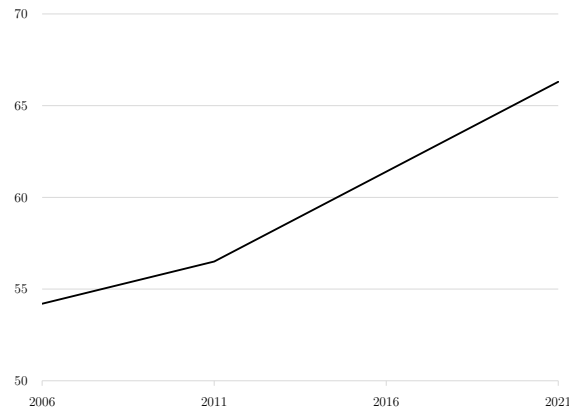


Figure 3.1: Place of usual residence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders based on Census data from 2006 to 2021 (ABS, 2017, 2021a), excludes migratory, offshore, shipping and no place of residence/no usual address.

of First Nations peoples. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 provide indicative data about the main source of income and labour force status of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people across these remoteness areas. In major cities and inner regional, 60.8 to 63.9 per cent of Indigenous people are in the labour force, as compared to 77.5 to 77.9 per cent of non-Indigenous people. Furthermore, Tables 3.2 and 3.3, show that the largest differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people are among the minority who live in remote and very remote areas. Indigenous people are more likely not to be in the labour force, and for their main source of income to be administratively unavailable rather than wages. Reliance on government benefits varies less by region. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in major cities and inner regional areas, fully 79.1 to 81.6 per cent of people have either wages or government benefits as their main source of income (comparing to just 77.4 to 78.1 per cent of non-Indigenous people).

Rejecting Wolfe's residue/articulation framework does not mean dropping an analysis of the ways contemporary Australian society exhibits the ongoing legacy of suppressing traditional modes of production, or distinctive racist methods of statehood that have developed over hundreds of years. There are innumerable ongoing features of the Australian state that enact a particular settler-colonial racism against First Nations people (Anthony, 2018; Grewcock, 2018; Gulson and Parkes, 2010; Vivian and Halloran, 2021), as will be discussed further below.

Within many remote communities, traditional production can play an important role in subsistence as well as culture. While consuming traditional foods can be

<i>Remoteness</i>	<i>Labour Force Status</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
<i>Major Cities</i>	Employed	57.1	73.8
	Unemployed	6.8	4.1
	Not in the labour force	34.5	21.3
	Not stated	1.7	0.8
<i>Inner Regional</i>	Employed	53.8	74.0
	Unemployed	7.0	3.5
	Not in the labour force	37.4	21.7
	Not stated	1.9	0.8
<i>Outer Regional</i>	Employed	49.6	75.6
	Unemployed	7.9	3.4
	Not in the labour force	39.9	20.1
	Not stated	2.7	0.9
<i>Remote</i>	Employed	39.9	81.6
	Unemployed	7.2	2.3
	Not in the labour force	48.6	15.1
	Not stated	4.3	1.0
<i>Very Remote</i>	Employed	29.0	85.1
	Unemployed	8.5	1.8
	Not in the labour force	58.2	11.9
	Not stated	4.3	1.2

Table 3.2: Labour Force Status (per cent) of working age population by remoteness and First Nations status, based on place of usual residence (ABS, 2021c).

<i>Remoteness</i>	<i>Main Source of Income</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
<i>Major Cities</i>	Wages	51.3	65.9
	Government benefits	30.3	12.2
	Nil or negative income	7.3	8.4
	Business/Investment Income	2.8	8.5
	Data not available	8.3	5.0
<i>Inner Regional</i>	Wages	46.0	62.6
	Government benefits	33.1	14.8
	Nil or negative income	7.1	7.6
	Business/Investment Income	2.8	9.3
	Data not available	11.0	5.7
<i>Outer Regional</i>	Wages	42.2	62.3
	Government benefits	35.1	14.0
	Nil or negative income	6.5	7.3
	Business/Investment Income	2.1	9.3
	Data not available	14.0	7.1
<i>Remote</i>	Wages	33.9	64.7
	Government benefits	36.9	9.0
	Nil or negative income	5.3	6.7
	Business/Investment Income	1.1	10.5
	Data not available	22.7	9.1
<i>Very Remote</i>	Wages	18.8	65.5
	Government benefits	35.4	6.9
	Nil or negative income	4.2	5.1
	Business/Investment Income	0.6	8.6
	Data not available	41.1	13.9

Table 3.3: Main Source of Income (per cent) by remoteness and First Nations status, 2021 Census, working age population only. Business/Investment Income includes unincorporated business income, investment income, superannuation income and other income (ABS, 2021d).

common, with 89 per cent of participants reporting eating traditional food at least fortnightly in one study (Ferguson, Brown, et al., 2017), estimates of caloric intake typically vary from 10 to 36 per cent, though protein contributions can be higher (Ferguson, Brown, et al., 2017, p. 297; Altman, McDonnell, and Ward, 2002, p. 17).⁹ Authors note that factors such as food insecurity and the high prices of purchased food are intimately connected to reliance on traditional foods, alongside cultural factors. As far back as the nineteenth century, gardening in the Torres Strait was displaced by fishing and pearling (Leonard, Beilin, and Moran, 1995, p. 590-1).

And across Australia, traditional modes of production play a disproportionate discursive role in debates about racism and Aboriginal people. There is certainly an ongoing racist legacy of disparaging Aboriginal people and Indigenous modes of production, and equally a legacy of contesting these narratives. There has been a renewed and popular interest in Indigenous land and food management and its relevance today (Mariani et al., 2022; Pascoe, 2014; Sutton and Walshe, 2021). More troublingly, these discourses of ongoing connection to land are linked to legislative schemes that deny Native Title claims (Morris, 2012; Watson, 2014). And an assimilationist agenda continues to seek to drive First Nations peoples out of remote regions, to suppress Indigenous languages, and to move people to the cities.

Wolfe's theory however goes beyond this to assert that the contradiction within the social formation of Australia between Indigenous and capitalist modes of production is *the defining feature* of Australian society. There are a number of issues with this formulation. First, in emphasising non-capitalist modes of production, it is perilously close to what Wolfe (1994, p. 110) calls "repressive authenticity", where Aboriginal people in the cities are not seen as 'really' Aboriginal. Second, in making the dynamics of capitalism a secondary feature, critical features by which oppression operates, including struggles for wages, conditions, and welfare conditions, are elided, and the tools for analysing capitalism rejected. Third, it produces a dualist social conception in which racism and class run separately. This runs counter to recent analyses that in the post-Black Lives Matter era have sought to emphasise the interconnections and relationships between the two (Roediger, 2017; Taylor, 2016).

⁹In the far north of Turtle Island, including parts of Alaska and Canada, estimates of the scale of subsistence economy can be quite high, with some studies suggesting that the "subsistence economy accounts for 30%–80% of all production and income in many northern Indigenous communities" (Elena, Soili, and Svetlana, 2021, p. 3).

3.3.1 DISPOSSESSION AS ECONOMICS

Many later theorists have chosen to repeat in increasingly rigid formulas and uncompromising determinacy the phrases used by Patrick Wolfe—settler colonialism is a “structure rather than an event”, ruled by a “logic of elimination”; the “colonizers come to stay”, while “settler colonialism destroys to replace”. This tendency has received forthright criticism. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (2016) argues that “the oft cited phrase” that settler colonialism is a structure rather than an event “seems to stand-in for a serious engagement of his theory”. She cites the reflections of Alyosha Goldstein at a 2015 conference ‘The Settler Colonialism Analytic: A Critical Reappraisal’ about the “problematic aspects of this institutionalization of [Wolfe’s] work as a subfield”, including the reduction of theories to “refrains” and “shallow references” which tend to sideline actual processes of racialisation, slavery, forms of colonisation, as well as producing the “binary of settler and native”. Likewise for Davies, “words like “logics” and “structure” in settler colonial studies have intuitive rather than rigorous meanings” (Davies, 2023, p. 223). For all Wolfe’s flaws, he was extremely critical of the fact that “structural analyses have only too often been ahistorically static, as if structure and event were mutually exclusive analytical options” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 904)

But others have sought alternative grounding from the structuralist account regarding modes of production, including a framework based on Harvey’s (2005b) ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (discussed in section 2.1) in the driving seat of capitalist development, displacing class. The first strategy, most true to Wolfe’s, is to argue that settler-colonial contradiction engulfs the class contradiction in society. For Veracini, the “worker is not embedded in recognisably capitalist class relations” (Veracini, 2015, p. 4). He suggests that there is a very simple reason for the failure of workers to win socialism in settler colonies: “workers are not adopting the ideological outlook of their hegemonic opponents; in a settler colonial context, like in the case of Magritte’s famous pipe, a worker is not a worker” (Veracini, 2015, p. 4).

Veracini links this explicitly to Harvey’s argument that ‘accumulation by dispossession’ has “moved to the fore as the primary contradiction within the imperialist organization of capitalist accumulation” (Veracini, 2015, p. 91; Harvey, 2005b, p. 172). Rather than class as it may once have been, “the experience of dispossession more than proletarianisation characterises the global present” (Veracini, 2015, p. 92). Characteristically choosing to ahistorically follow this logic to its extreme, neo-liberal regimes

are even said to “‘indigenise’ us all” (Veracini, 2015, p. 93). This refers to the way all non-indigenous people “are being treated like indigenous peoples: dispossessed by a regime that is not interested in the reproduction of labour” (Veracini, 2015, p. 93). This bizarre formulation exemplifies Veracini’s questionable rhetorical choices, nowhere more on display than his choice of a ‘good cop, bad cop’ analogy to describe the relationship between settler colonial studies and Indigenous studies, which Somerville (2020, p. 281) points out is “deeply inappropriate in a world in which we observe the literal deaths and dehumanisation of Indigenous people at the hands of ‘cops’ – ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in every settler colony, every day”. The ‘universal indigenisation thesis’ hints at the analytical confusion running out of this Harveyan framework.

Perhaps the biggest problem for such an account is what drives the system. Davies writes a caustic critique of Wolfe’s theory, arguing it is a “bad abstraction from an Australian model, which was itself inadequate to the Australian case” (Davies, 2023, p. 199), arguing against the theory of “perpetual primitive accumulation” (p. 200). Equally caustically, Harman (2008) writes:

“Dispossession” is simply a long word meaning theft. When Pierre-Joseph Proudhon used the phrase “property is theft” in the 19th century, it was an anti-capitalist rallying cry, capable of expressing people’s indignation at the system; so too is Harvey’s phrase “accumulation by dispossession”. But sloganising against theft is not the same as providing a serious analysis, any more than it was when Marx criticised Proudhon in 1847.

As discussed in section 2.1, subsuming class exploitation into ‘dispossession’ as the primary driving dynamic of the system produces large problems for the system, including in particular the account for the rapacious hunger. Within the framework discussed in chapter 2 by contrast, the contradictory dynamics of competitive capital accumulation, reproduces a military competition between the states that represent the different national blocs of capital and territorial needs, including in particular a need for territorial control, discussed in section 3.5. ‘Settlerism’ need not be explained by a kind of madness.

An alternative though related strategy is to advance forms of ‘dual systems’ analysis of settler colonialism and capitalism. For instance, another contributor, otherwise critical of elements of ‘settler colonialism’ theory, argues that “class struggle within

a settler society has a dual character: it is waged over the distribution of wealth extracted from their labour as well as over the colonial booty” (Englert, 2020, p. 12). Also citing Harvey’s “analysis of accumulation by dispossession”, Englert argues that it “lays the theoretical foundations to approaching contemporary settler colonialism as a process within a broader framework of capitalist accumulation” (Englert, 2020, p. 12). Thus there exists a “multiplicity of settler strategies within an overall strategy of accumulation” (p. 9). This means that the “bitter confrontations [that] emerged between settler labour and capital . . . can be resolved, especially while the settler colony continues to expand, by intensifying the dispossession of indigenous populations in order to improve the material conditions of settler workers” (Englert, 2020, p. 12).

Glen Coulthard advances a similar critique of Marx’s treatment of primitive accumulation, laying out an explanation for “colonial-capitalist accumulation” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 14). For Coulthard, rather than a long gone period of capitalist development, primitive accumulation is an ongoing requirement for capitalism (Coulthard, 2014, pp. 7–8). Coulthard is on the whole less eager to demand a rigid separation of class and racism. While arguing that “the theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around the question of land” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13), he also notes the proletarianisation of Indigenous peoples mean that the “disciplining Indigenous life to the cold rationality of market principles will remain on state and industry’s agenda for some time to follow” (p. 13) both due to migration to the cities of Indigenous workers and living near extractive industries. While critically defending revolutionary violence (Coulthard, 2014, p. 45), he criticises Fanon’s exaggerated expectations of revolution for colonised people. Rather he sets out a method to “prefigure . . . radical alternatives to the structural and psychoaffective facets of colonial domination discussed above” (p. 49). Dual systems analysis of settler colonialism struggle to comprehend strategies for challenging the two, with the analysis most suited to a strategy of parallel movements, each challenging their own oppressor in their own unique way. As long as capitalism continues, Indigenous peoples would seem confined to pre-figurative strengthening of their own settler-colonial residues.

Returning to the thesis question and the widespread usage of settler colonialism within critical migration studies, the issue with theorising migrants within such a binary is clear. Migrants, including refugees, are conceptualised as irreducible settlers and their struggles with the state as irrelevant or orthogonal to struggles against anti-

Indigenous racism. Furthermore, it fails to understand the inner connection between the driving dynamics of dispossession and those of anti-migrant racism, which are connected through the class relation. These three strategies of explanation—Althusserian, Harveyan, and dual systems—each reproduce a rigid structuralism that obscure the driving features of dispossession of land, as well as situating struggles of wages and benefits as secondary. Finally, as the next section discusses, the binary makes it difficult to understand and explain the driving features, and as the next section discusses, plot a path through which settler colonialism can be transcended.

3.4 AGENCY

As one who argues that settler colonialism is premised on a zero-sum logic whereby settler societies, for all their internal complexities, uniformly require the elimination of Native alternatives, I have regularly been accused of binarism—though not once by a Native (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 1).

This claim is too strong. A number of Indigenous scholars *have* raised issues with Wolfe's "binary of settler and native" (Kauanui, 2016). One of the most pressing challenges implicit to the structuralism of this binary is the theorisation of agency and change, with no account to be found in any of Wolfe's writings about how the logic of elimination can be overthrown.¹⁰

As a result, settler colonialism is often presented as a structurally inevitable fact. Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch (2013, p. 435) describe this as a "theoretical and political impasse" and "a kind of colonial fatalism" coming from a failure to account for a transformed future. This comes from a tendency to see settler colonialism as "structurally inevitable" (Macoun and Strakosch, 2013, p. 437). As Shino Konishi (2019, pp. 291, 295) writes, the theory "leaves no space for individual agency for both Indigenous people and settler colonists alike".

Wolfe's account contains only a limited discussion of agency. He notes that resistance is a "constant feature" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 130) or "constant companion" (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 272) to settler colonialism, and references a number of important Indige-

¹⁰This is true at least for those books and articles reviewed in this chapter: Wolfe (1991, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2016a,b).

nous struggles.¹¹ But Wolfe’s focus on the all powerful structural features of settler society lead him to provide a faulty account of agency. Ultimately, he argues that “in generating its own resistance, settler-colonial power also contains it” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129).

3.4.1 PROBLEMATISING INTERSTITIAL INDIGENOUS AGENCY

Wolfe positions Indigenous peoples resistance as interstitial, in the margins of the settler-colonial system. The idea of ‘interstitial’ resistance is raised by McKinnon (2010).¹² As Kauanui (2016, p. 1) argues, “enduring indigeneity” must be incorporated into settler colonial studies. She criticises the tendency to “exclusively focus on the settler colonial without any meaningful engagement with the indigenous” which can “(re)produce another form of “elimination of the native”” (Kauanui, 2016, p. 1).

Wolfe claims that “the question of Aboriginal agency . . . has been deliberately kept out of this analysis” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129). This is because he aims to produce a “one-sided analysis of Australian strategies for dealing with Aborigines” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 97). But Aboriginal agency necessarily impinges on Wolfe’s analysis, with the struggles of Aboriginal people breaking through his histories at various points.

Wolfe emphasises how some Indigenous people have been co-opted or recruited into the colonial project. In Native Title legislation, he sees a “state strategy for containing Aboriginal resistance” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 130), which works by recruiting “a minority of Aboriginal people to the continuing invasion of the rest” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129). But the key point for Wolfe is that although some Aboriginal people may “strategically acquiesce . . . to further their particular interests”, the more important factor is not “the calculations of the co-opted but the strategic uses to which the co-opters put them” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129). His conclusion therefore is that “the factor that we need to write in is not Aboriginal agency but the hegemonic channelling of agency that culminates in co-option” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 129).

¹¹He notes for instance that concessions from the state have “in large measure resulted from Aboriginal political mobilisation - the campaign leading up to the 1967 Referendum, the Yirrkala bark petition, the Gurindjis’ land-rights struggle, the establishment of community-controlled health and legal aid centres, the Tent Embassy, the campaigns against the Brisbane games and the Bicentenary, the solitary resistances of those who have died in custody, to mention just some of the more conspicuous activities of the last third of a century or so or so” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 124).

¹²Her purposes are not to take Wolfe to task *per se* but rather to argue for the theorisation and acknowledgement of the strength of “resistive modes”, in which context she raises “the interstitial spaces of an oppressive settler colonial world” (McKinnon, 2010, p. 259).

Deciding to theorise hegemonic channelling of agency, but not authentic resistance, gives Wolfe's analysis a one-sided tilt. This is evident in the forms of agency that he does conceive of as resistance. He closes *Traces of History* referencing the Coranderrk struggle, and noting "incompleteness of racial domination is the trace and the achievement of resistance, a space of hope" (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 272). Wolfe's framework leads him to emphasise the refusal of assimilationist racialisation,¹³ and therefore resistance at the margin of the settlement, spatially and ideologically: that found within the 'traces'. Relegating agency to the margins of the settler mode leaves out agency within the core. Aboriginal resistance goes far further than the spaces left behind from colonial invasion, whether frontier warfare or the racialisation of Aboriginal people. Indeed, though written in the US context, some of the most profound recent work on this topic in a post-BLM world has suggested that the challenging of racism and the raising of class demands are inherently linked (Taylor, 2016).

It takes some intellectual effort to fail to mention the tens of thousands of people, led by Aboriginal activists, that assemble once a year to mark the anniversary of invasion and issue demands for structural change. Demands cluster around policing, against child removals, for land rights and against a swathe of destructive projects. These rallies and struggles occur not only at the frontiers of colonial expansion but respond to the core of capitalism, questioning fundamental rights of the government and the police, the functions of government, and capitalist rights to take any land they deem profitable. And far beyond these January 26 events, there is a long history and ongoing tradition of Aboriginal-led strikes, riots, protests and more in resistance to a racist system.

3.4.2 THE MIGRANT QUESTION

Wolfe takes his argument about a settler/Native binary to its logical conclusion, that migrants fall into the oppressive settler category. He suggests that "whether the arrival of particular intruders is voluntary or coerced does not affect these intruders' standing as rivals for their space and vital resources" (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 199-200). Though different forms of migration "from bondage to subsidized passage" may "evinced a high degree of internal heterogeneity", the existence of differentiations "does not alter the binary nature of the Native/settler divide" (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 2). Likewise, enslaved

¹³On Coranderrk see Massola (1975), and Attwood (1989, pp. 89–96) on perceived internal racial divisions and over-emphasis in 1870s.

peoples, First Nations peoples and indentured labourers, are structurally opposed to the First Nations on the lands on whose they live. “The fact that enslaved people, for example, were forcibly transported against their will does not alter the structural fact that their presence, however involuntary, was part of the process of Native dispossession” (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 2). Likewise, “there is nothing to prevent colonized Natives from one region becoming settlers in a different region” (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 3). And “coerced subordinates imported from other sites of exploitation” can be used to augment the settler population (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 20).¹⁴

This produces a tendency to see struggles against anti-migrant racism and anti-Indigenous racism as separate and even counterposed. For Wolfe, “from the primary social reality of invasion, colour or non-European race are extraneous factors”, meaning that “racism which was not predicated upon the invasion . . . was secondary” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 114). This relegation of anti-migrant racism as secondary is an application of the binary theory. Thus for Wolfe, even the term ‘people of colour’ risks being an attempt to “promote unworkable solidarities through obfuscating or homogenising away the different historical experiences that underlie ethno-racial specificity” and thereby “recapitulate assimilationism” (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 28). He concludes, “when inattentive to history, undifferentiated categories [such as ‘people of colour’] risk encouraging discord rather than solidarity. Paradoxical as it may seem, to homogenise is to divide—which leaves White people doing the ruling” (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 28).

This element of Wolfe’s writing has found many critics. Konishi (2019, p. 295) points out that “binary view of natives and settlers is contested by Indigenous scholars who acknowledge long histories of entanglement between Indigenous people and non-Anglo migrants”. The practical entanglement of solidarity is outlined by McKinnon (2020), discussing the Black Lives Matter, refugee and Indigenous solidarity, and the “connectedness of communities of people who are subject to the violence of the settler state” (McKinnon, 2020, p. 700). For Day (2016, p. 19) too, “slavery and the abject condition of blackness complicate a straightforward approach to settler colonialism organized around a central opposition between settlers and Indigenous peoples”.

Though never revising his theory, Wolfe at points even makes concessions in debates with Indigenous scholars, for instance conceding in the example of “the importation of indentured Pacific labourers onto US-owned plantations in Hawai’i” that “anti-

¹⁴Walia suggests more cautiously that racialised diasporic peoples are “not necessarily innocent” in the processes of settler colonialism (Walia, 2021, p. 26).

imperial solidarities must also conjoin the two (inter alia)” (Wolfe, 2013, pp. 264–5). Nonetheless, his assertion of strict binarism never faltered. His response to the many criticisms that come is that the “logic of elimination is not reducible to voluntarism” (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 200). Migrants cannot will their structural position away, no matter how oppressed they may be.

Veracini (2010, pp. 18, 99) has attempted to redouble this binary analysis, theorising three discrete categories forming the ‘settler colony’, in “triangular relationships involving settlers on the one hand, and indigenous and exogenous Others on the other.” He merely repeats the insistence that there are now two overlapping binaries (Veracini, 2010, p. 123). Wolfe disavows this “triadic scheme”, arguing that the “distinction seems questionable” (Wolfe, 2013, p. 258) and voluntarist (p. 276, n. 11).

The relegation of anti-immigrant racism to secondary status strains credulity in the analysis of Australian history, where the victory of the racist anti-China ‘White Australia’ over the equally racist plans for indentured ‘kanaka’ labour was so foundational to the Australian state in the late 19th century, and foundational to the nationalism that bound the working class so tightly to the nascent Australian rulers. Wolfe claims that “the primary object of White-Australian hostility should not be defined in terms of race or colour but in terms of prior entitlement, of being there from the beginning (ab origine)” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 114). The ‘primary object’ of White-Australian hostility has changed over time, but at points in history has included Chinese and Japanese people. At others it has been other white ‘Australians’. More importantly though, Wolfe struggles to grasp the internality of settler colonialism and capitalism, that imperial fears of imagined invasion helped spur on the dynamics of internal colonisation. To transhistorically relegate some forms of racism to secondary status would seem to make not only analysis but solidarity difficult to produce.

3.4.3 SETTLER SOLIDARITY

The issues with the framework go beyond the exclusion of immigrants, extending within the category of ‘settler’. Glen Coulthard (2014) is less doctrinaire about the possibilities of solidarity, suggesting the “hegemony of settler-colonial capitalism” can be challenged by addressing all “colonial, racist, and patriarchal legal and political obstacles” and by acknowledging this “will not be generated through our direct actions and resurgent economies alone” requiring “relations of solidarity and networks of trade

and mutual aid” with labor, womens, GBLTQ2S (gay, bisexual, Lesbian, trans, queer and two spirit), environmental, and other racialised groups” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 172). This vision, framed through Indigenous economies and livelihoods, recognises the need for solidarity across the settler/Native binary.

Similarly, Métis scholar Howard Adams distinguishes the politics of “revolutionary nationalism” required in Vietnam, “radical nationalism” required in Canada. Unlike the Vietnamese, the Indigenous/Métis minority, are “simply not numerous enough to be able to overthrow the government of the country and recapture the entire land according to their justified aboriginal claims, nor are they powerful enough to form a separate state within the dominion” (Adams, 1989, p. 167). Alongside the necessity of furthering specific native demands for “independence and self-determination”, he suggests that “a native liberation struggle is essentially the same struggle as that of the working class and all oppressed people against a capitalist ruling class”, meaning that “Indians and Métis can build alliances with workers and other oppressed and colonized groups of white society” (Adams, 1989, pp. 168–9), though true unity will “most likely” only ever be possible under socialism (p. 167).

But others have concluded that Indigenous peoples are sole point of resistance against settler colonialism and sometimes capitalism as a whole. Foster, Clark, and Holleman (2020) calls the “chief goal” in settler colonies according to Marx the “extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 913). And Kulchyski (2016) summarises the political conclusion of this analysis well when he states “Indigenous peoples are, in the current historical conjuncture, leading the opposition to the capitalist state in Canada”. For Lannon and McLaren (2018, p. 118), labour and land are presented symmetrically: “If capitalism depends on land dispossession and proletarianization, then it is vulnerable to Indigenous communities who defend their land and workers who withdraw their labour”.

The foregoing discussion sets the tasks for an internal relations account of settler colonialism, as well as justifying the project of forging a renewed framework of analysis. It also sets out some suggestive premises, including in particular inconsistent modes of production and a wider political and ideological projects that accompany it. These debates and conceptual frameworks hide an inner question as to the nature of the capitalist system, what drives it, as well as how it can be transformed. The internality of capital accumulation and imperialism discussed in chapter 2 advances this framework with a historically and logically specific account of its driving features,

which accept and build on some of Wolfe's premises, while avoiding these two related major problems: an assertion of an indissoluble settler/native binary and the theorisation of agency. Building on the discussion in chapter 1, there is an internal thread between the account of structure and that of agency. Wolfe's commendable rush to admonish the brutality of settler colonialism, its defenders and hand-wringing apologists, has produced a structural theory that fails to grasp how settler colonialism can be transformed. The provocation of this section is that of the need to develop a more systematic and precise account of how settler colonialism operates, and how it can be transcended, or, an account that includes within the operation of settler colonialism that, to paraphrase Lenin (1977a, p. 222), outlines the urgent question of smashing the colonial state.

3.5 HISTORICISING SETTLER COLONIALISM AS A PROCESS

This section identifies the internality of migration and settler colonialism by historicising settler colonialism as a process. There are several useful components of Wolfe's analysis, including his historicisation of racialisation, where the categories of race are socially and historically determined, though within particular structural parameters, and the attention to shifts within settler-colonial governance of Indigenous peoples (Wolfe, 2016b). And moreover, the development of different settler-colonial "modes" of control of First Nations populations helps to situate these changing dynamics within the operation of class, capitalism, and migration, and to do so avoiding the binary thinking in settler colonialism as a structure.

Wolfe periodises the changes in the 'mode' of the settler-colonial regime into "three basic modes: confrontation, carceration and assimilation" which moved Aboriginal people "from being external to being internal to settler society" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 99). There is a fourth additional period "introduced in the 1970s", what Wolfe calls the "era of self-determination and land rights" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 102). Wolfe resists periodising these shifts for good reason. Choosing any date for processes that were operated separately under different colonies and in different regions is bound to produce contradictions and inadequacies. For example, the Coniston massacre occurs at the end of the process of consolidation of assimilation. The following periods are taken from

a sympathetic reading of Wolfe that seeks to generalise across the continent these underlying shifts identified by Wolfe; a broad framework for interrogating shifts.

3.5.1 CONFRONTATION: 1788–1830

Confrontation is first era of military colonial expansion and war (Gapps, 2018): the “phase in which territory is first seized” and “is principally characterised by indigenous mortality ... homicide, sexual abuse, disease and starvation” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 99). Wolfe toys with 1770 rather than 1788 (Wolfe, 1999, p. 169, n. 175) for the start of this process. Migration appears in the “Malthusian fear of industrial cities teeming with a vicious and uncontrollable lumpenproletariat” that led the British state “to argue that it was legitimate to dispossess savages in the colonies in order to provide an outlet for Europe’s surplus poor” (Wolfe, 2000, p. 138).¹⁵

This period occupies little of Wolfe’s time. Wolfe describes the ‘confrontation’ mode of settler colonialism as “homicide, sexual abuse, disease and starvation” that took place over a “very short” time frame (Wolfe, 1994, p. 99), citing settler Edward Curr’s estimate of six months to a decade of frontier warfare, depending on terrain. The “the standard pattern” following this phase “was one of decimated but largely pacified survivors improvising a variety of livelihoods in the pores of the now-established settler society, which generally regarded them with distaste” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 99). Despite widespread hostility, the possibility of united struggle against the Australian state is sprinkled in the historical record: the brutality of the penal colony bred internal dissent. Even early on, histories frustrate an analysis that puts all settlers in one category, with escaped convicts occasionally siding with Aboriginal people who were fighting the colonial rulers. In 1797, Governor of NSW John Hunter for instance observes that “white men having been seen frequently at such times amongst” the “natives” who were “depriving [settlers] of their live stock, burning their houses, and destroying in a few minutes the whole fruits of their former industry, as well as wounding and sometimes murdering them” (Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1914, p. 79).

¹⁵For Steven (2000, p. 44-5), there are three ongoing differences between “what were once settler colonies (like Australia and New Zealand) and what were extractive colonies (like Malaya and the Dutch East Indies)”: (1) “they were established to find outlets for surplus populations, not to provide sources of natural wealth”; (2) “they gained high levels of autonomy from their former colonisers without having to engage in protracted struggles for independence”; (3) “their working classes enjoyed high living standards because the settlers could control that natural wealth rather than have it appropriated by the coloniser.”

3.5.2 CARCERATION: 1830–1886

1830 is an indicative date between experimentation with merino wool in the 1820s and the “belated” remarks of British officials in 1836 about the potential for this industry (Wolfe, 2016b, pp. 42–42). From the 1830s, the pastoral industry was growing, and capitalist social relations, were becoming consolidated in Australia. As discussed in chapter 2, this was expressed by, and realised through, a transformation within Australian migration. For Wolfe, the growth of agriculture and pastoralism produces the “insatiable dynamic” outlined above (Wolfe, 2006, p. 295). This was connected to the international market, the industrial revolution and processes of primitive accumulation on the global scale (Wolfe, 2006, p. 395).

Ideologically, Australian colonisation occurred more in the penumbra of the French revolution, enlightenment philosophy and the industrial revolution, than in the later romantic reactions (nationalism and racisms) of the nineteenth century (Desai, 2004; Malik, 1996; Rees, 1998). The context of invasion and colonialism reproduced enormous inequalities that remained to be explained, and ideologies of the day including a gradually developing racist ideology served such a purpose. Lockean enlightenment justification was critical to the colonist’s conception of their claims over the land. Locke’s famous theory of property is that when a man whatsoever from “the State that Nature hath provided” and has “mixed his *Labour*”, he thereby claims it as his own (Locke, 1988, p. 288, §27). For E. M. Wood, this philosophy of *improvement* of the land, linked etymologically to the contemporary concept of profitability, was linked to English property relations (Wood, 1999/2002, pp. 106–10). In Australia, this same enlightenment philosophy proved central to Australian land claims, and continued into the twentieth century to be a stated concern, whether Australia’s development of the North was sufficient to secure ‘her’ claim. The Sydney Morning Herald in 1843 editorial explained of Aboriginal people:

This vast land was to them a common—they bestowed no labour upon the land—their ownership, their right, was nothing more than that of the Emu or the Kangaroo. They bestowed no labour upon the land and that—and that only—it is which gives a right of property to it . . . The British people found a portion of the globe in a state of waste—they took possession of it; and they had a perfect right to do so, under the Divine authority, by which

man was commanded to go forth and people, and till the land. (Herald, 1843, in McMichael, 1984, p. 43)

This is a typically Lockean argument expressing enlightenment claims, down to the religious notes, which provided a justification for invasion and also to contest Britain's claims to land revenues via the argument that settlers' labour adds value to both any tilled land, and even to the so-called uncultivated waste lands. Labour, procured through migration, was internal not only to the seizure of land but the wider imagined claims over what were called 'waste lands'. This standpoint produced the peculiar and paternalistic representation of Aboriginal people represented in the later Sydney council coat of arms Figure 3.2.



Figure 3.2: Sydney Municipal Council Coat of Arms, bearing inscription 'I take but I surrender' (Sydney, 1926)

COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY LIBRARY

The paternalism was despite another extension of military warfare (Gapps, 2025). Even where it was British soldiers leading massacres, they were typically called up in the first place by settlers, calling for 'revenge' against Aboriginal people adopting new tactics of frontier warfare to resist colonisation, such as attacking crops or raiding farmhouses. Colonisation in the period operating through a dynamic of both settler and British agency. Further, colonial massacres got worse, not better, after colonial police took over after 1838. Colonisation and warfare was a "dynamic, contested and ongoing process" (Ryan, 2013, p. 223) accompanied by constant Aboriginal resistance. The key though is to locate the brutal process of colonisation within the structures of

Australian capitalism, even though capitalist social relations were still contested and in the process of formation.¹⁶

This ongoing confrontation was combined with an accompanying shift in the way that Aboriginal populations were managed by the British colonies. This is the second mode of settler colonialism, “carceration” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 100). This can be broken down further as moving through ‘segregation’ and ‘reservation’ phases, distinguished “on the basis of the presence or absence of formal compulsion”. So where segregation was characterised by the “lure”, the reservation sub-phase was attached to open coercion (Wolfe, 1994, pp. 131–2, n. 12). In either case, Aboriginal people were moved into fixed locations, “a procedure which, whilst no longer directly homicidal, continued the effect, consistent with the logic of elimination, of vacating Aboriginal country and rendering it available for pastoral settlement” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 100). Here, “the intended outcome was the detachment of Indigenous people from Indigenous territory-geographical confinement on reservations or missions would vacate traditional lands and render them available for settlement” (Wolfe, 2000, p. 133). Although Wolfe’s identification of this shift with the claim that settler colonialism was “no longer directly homicidal” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 100) is confused, his historical work is not reducible to the slogans repeated by later settler colonial theorists

Australian working class involvement in this is a topic for further study, so it suffices to leave a few notes. Firstly, the Australian working class was still developing, as outlined in chapter 5, unevenly through this period, and there was little in terms of independent working class voice notwithstanding the growth in labour organisation (Connell and Irving, 1980). Secondly, the particularly pastoral dynamic changes the working class relation with the dynamics of colonialism. The squatter leadership in what has been called calls Australia’s “big man’s frontier” can be contrasted with the “small man’s frontier” of the US (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1949, p. 133; Alexander, 1947/1969, p. 36). And as far as the “squatter was concerned, the pursuit of profit was dependent on the annihilation, or at least decimation, of the Aboriginal tribes, whose land was desired as being at this time the principal means of production” (Burgmann, 1980, p. 11). Third, the class relations in the mid-nineteenth century were complex and dynamic, and resist simple classification (Roe, 1982).

This periodisation suggests an inner link between the mode of carceration and

¹⁶For a sophisticated discussion of the Australian state, see Griffiths’s (1989) review of McQueen (1986).

the shift from transportation to assisted passage, especially from the 1830s to the 1850s, based on the development and contest within capitalist relations of production in conversation with the imperial dynamics discussed in chapter 2.

3.5.3 ASSIMILATION: 1886–1972

Chapter 2 identified the 1880s as a remarkable shift towards imperialism ‘outside’ of the Australian state, expressed through the White Australia policy that was consolidated in 1888. But this ‘external’ transformation presupposed and reproduced an ‘internal’ transformation (in the sense of the inner connection between internal and external borders, discussed further in chapter 6) dynamism within Australia towards peculiarly colonial development.

These shifts corresponded to the development of the assimilation policy. Much of Wolfe’s analysis centres the transformations from 1886, the year that “inaugurated the official strategy of assimilation” due to the Victorian legislation passed that year (Wolfe, 1994, p. 101), though assimilation would not be fully cohered until the 1930s. This corresponded to the ambiguous closing of the frontier at this time,¹⁷ which was despite the ongoing existence of “nomadic groups” into the 1950s and massacres into at least the 1930s (Wolfe, 1994, p. 101; Wolfe, 2016a). The change was in Indigenous people becoming “surrounded by, and contained within, settler society” (Wolfe, 2016a, p. 4).

This coincided with the “full radicalization of assimilation policies (Wolfe, 2006, p. 400). The 1886 Victorian so-called ‘Half-Caste Act’ shifted from an inclusive legal definition of ‘aboriginal’ in 1869 to include everyone of “mixed aboriginal blood” [sic] (Victorian Government, 1886, p. 1), and gave the protection board the right to determine residence of so-called ‘halfe-castes’ in the reserves. In doing so, it was “the first occasion anywhere in the Australian colonies on which race constituted the operative criterion for legislation” (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 50). From then on, in place of the construct of Aboriginal people as the ‘dying race’ (Wolfe, 1994, p. 101), a new ideological threat was born: “the so-called ‘half-caste menace’ was threatening to explode uncontrollably” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 181).¹⁸ This can be linked to what Foley calls the “first

¹⁷The “last quarter of the nineteenth century” was the time by which Australia was “almost completely invaded” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 95)

¹⁸As Spencer (1913, p. 21) reflects, “though the half-castes belong neither to the aboriginal nor to the whites, yet, on the whole, they have more leaning towards the former”. This is linked to

Australian ‘concentration camps’ to provide a place for the doomed race to die off” inaugurated by the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 in New South Wales (Foley, 2000, p. 77), though the Aborigines Protection Board had existed since 1883. By 1915, they had won the right to take all Aboriginal children from their families. By 1937, the federation had coordinated the “Australia-wide policy of Aboriginal child abduction” state by state (Wolfe, 2016b, p. 53), with a conference of chief protectors and boards declaring “that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937, p. 3; see Wolfe, 2016b, p. 54).

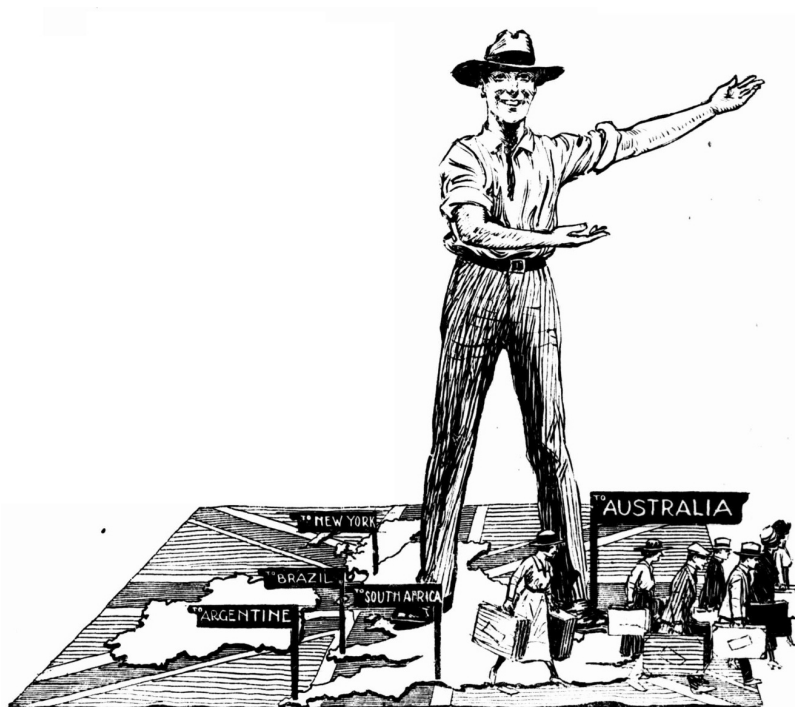


Figure 3.3: Excerpt of article illustration, “The Achilles heel of empire” (Mail, 1921, pp. 8–9).

The temporal coincidence of the deeming of Chinese people as unassimilable and the beginnings of the assimilation policy is clear, representing more than mere the consolidation of racism in the 1880s discussed in chapter 6, but the dynamics of capitalist imperialism discussed in chapter 2. The following three images represent a snapshot of the coimbrication of migration, development, capitalism and imperialism through this period.

justification of child removals: “even though it may seem cruel to separate the mother and child, it is better to do so” (Spencer, 1913, p. 21). Spencer is a key figure in Wolfe’s analysis, as both anthropologist and colonial administrator.



Figure 3.4: Map in 'Environment, Race and Migration' (Taylor, 1937/1945, p. 390).

Figure 3.3 presents the theme of White Australia as a development and colonial strategy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Immigration on a large scale is vital to Australia". The full image shows an enormous stream of British immigrants entering into the south west of the empty white Australian continent. The text reads "An empty continent which is portion of a great Empire is a menace to the peace of the world" (Mail, 1921, p. 8). The trope of the empty north involved an ongoing anxiety and fear about the incompleteness of invasion, or what Griffiths (2012, p. 16) calls a "relatively unsettled colonial settler state". The internal development moment within this strategy is represented by Figure 3.4, showing a map by controversial environmental determinist Griffith Taylor, who argued for the need for nonwhite labour to more completely take hold of the continent of Australia. In it, the geography of economic development is linked with the racialisation of settlement. This was internal further to anxieties about how that north would be settled, as developed in future chapters outline, with industrial strategy, tariff policy, and state wages policy united in application. In 1925, the Australian Made Preference League sent a "Great White Train" on a propaganda tour about buying Australian made. The Sunday Times wrote in defence of the campaign, "the secret of high quality output at low price is

mass production. But mass production, however, presupposes mass demand” Sunday Times, 1925; see Foskett, 2014). This neatly sets out the conscious development agenda of a ruling class (financed by NSW Premier Jack Lang).

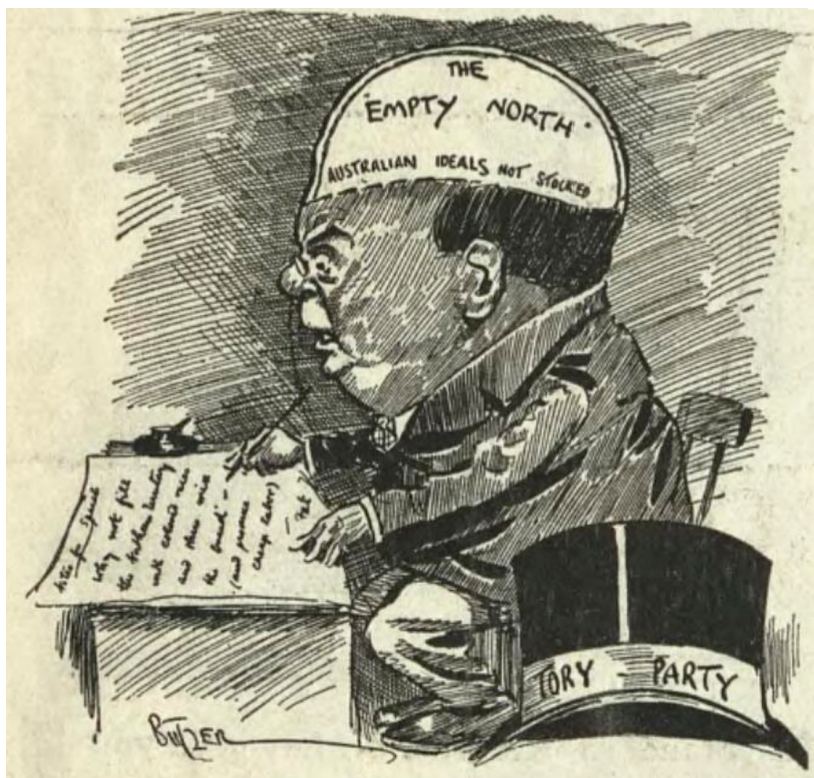


Figure 3.5: ‘A Tory Colorist’ (The Bulletin, 1910).
COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

The trope of the ‘empty north’ demanding further migration was the topic of ridicule. When one such lecturer, Mr Elles, explained that the employment of Indian labour could help with developing the ‘Empty North’ in 1910, *The Bulletin* (1910) wrote “When alleged Australians encourage anti-Australian proposals, the location of the “Empty North” is not a difficult matter”, as shown in Figure 3.5. The class contradictions within White Australia as a policy and social formation—rather than unanimity—are clear, and are developed extensively in Chapter 5 and 6.

White Australia expressed a pillar of the regime of internal development of Australia, along with the overlapping motivations of imperialism, capital accumulation, settler colonialism, and the nationalism that came along with this strategy of assimilation.

3.5.4 ERA OF SELF-DETERMINATION: 1972–TODAY

The final shift towards the ‘era of self-determination’ that Beckett (1988, p. 12) dates to 1972 is not “of the same order” as the previous changes. The year merely obtains the blessing of “more plausible” than 1968 (Wolfe, 1999, p. 169, n. 176). Rather than a truly separate ‘mode’ of settler colonialism, this final era exhibits deep continuities with the assimilationist mode. It is instructive that Wolfe chooses the the legal battles from 1971 Gove land rights case to Mabo in 1992, to accompanying legislation from 1976 to 1993 legislation, and the Woodward commission, as the key shift.

The 1972 upsurge in black power politics was what Gary Foley calls a “cultural renaissance” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1993), with the “simultaneous emergence in Fitzroy, Redfern and Brisbane of the ‘Black Power’ political movement, which became the dominant force in Koori politics from 1972 till 1979” (Foley, 2000, p. 78). It is at the end of a long line of working class and Indigenous struggle, from the Pilbara strike of 1946 (Scrimgeour, 2020), through the Yirrkala bark petition, Gurindji Wave Hill walk off, the campaigning leading up to the 1967 referendum—stories that must be more central to a conception of settler colonialism as a process than they are typically treated.

Wolfe is rightly critical of the idea that the Native Title regime that emerges from the 1980s and 1990s “effected a historical rupture that was sufficient to reconstitute the relationship between Indigenous and settler societies” (Wolfe, 1999, p. 163). The 1987 Northern Territory (Land Rights) Act is for Wolfe “the formal moment at which the Radcliffe-Brownian paradigm became appropriated by the Australian state” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 121), Radcliffe-Brown referring here to linking of valid Native Title claims to the anthropological idea of homeostatic equilibrium (Wolfe, 1999, p. 57). For Wolfe then, rather than “a change of heart, therefore, this formula entails a ratification—even a redoubling—of the history of oppression since it provides that *the more you have lost, the less you stand to gain*” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 125, emphasis his). As well as a raft of loopholes mostly anathema to First Nations understandings of land, if you could not prove the continuing connection to the area, you would have little hope of a successful claim (Commonwealth of Australia, 1993).

These shifts in land rights legislation have come alongside “inclusive welfare discourse”, the development of “pluralist or multiculturalist strategies for assimilating the (in Anglo-Celtic terms) heterogeneous waves of migrants who have succeeded each

other since World War Two" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 125). But in "constructing new Aboriginalities, White Australia has reconstructed itself" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 125). This period, an extension of assimilation for Wolfe, exhibits some of the sharpest possibilities for working class unity cutting across racialised capitalism on the one hand, as well on the other as the ongoing potential for brutal assimilationism with the Northern Territory Intervention (Stringer, 2007), as discussed in chapter 6.

This extended discussion of Wolfe's historical analysis of settler colonialism in Australia, alongside a comparison with shifts within migration regimes through the periodisation developed in chapter 2, provides a critical reading of Patrick Wolfe. The modes of settler colonialism are driven not merely by the quantitative import of migrants, though this is a part of the extension of capitalist relations of production, but rather by an inner dynamic between class as a social relation in Australia and imperialism as a global dynamic. Emphasising the processual character of settler colonialism has the advantages of: (1) empirically accounting for dynamics of incorporation of Aboriginal people into capitalism without relegating them to a 'residue'; (2) providing an explanatory account for these shifting dynamics that is based on capital accumulation and imperialism, which are not specified through ahistorical or teleological well but real processes; (3) providing an account of the internality of structure and agency which holds that settler colonialism is capable of being transcended; and (4) by insisting on class relations, providing a way of encompassing the oppression of migrants and oppression of Aboriginal people within the same compass.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In 1904, a Mr Wong, named only as a 'Chinese representative' attended an anti-Chinese meeting in Newtown, and arose in protest, arguing:

Australia has been given by the Almighty to the Aborigines, and the white man came and wrested it from the black, and then dared to boast of their 'White Australia'. What sort of Christianity could that be styled? (cited New South Wales Aborigines Advocate, 1904, p. 3)

Mr Wong was inverting the Western 'residue' of Christian thought and using it against White Australia. Mr Wong saw one side of the connection between White Australia

and Aboriginal oppression, in the seizure of control. In 1911, Viscount Kitchener identified the other side of this connection, writing a memorandum on the defence of Australia that summarised the internality of migration to the military, geo-strategic, and developmental consequences of what Griffiths (2012, p. 16) calls “relatively unsettled colonial settler state”:

the present forces are inadequate in numbers, training, organisation and munitions of war to defend Australia from the dangers that are due to the present conditions that prevail in the country, as well as to its isolated position . . . The danger of want of population and consequent ineffective occupation in many parts of the country is, in my opinion, a most serious existing condition in Australia (Kitchener, 1911, p. 38)

Kitchener expresses the constellation of settlement of Australia’s ‘empty north’, the dynamics of imperialist competition, and the White Australia policy. In this way, migration expressed an inner connection within class, imperialism and settler colonialism.

This chapter investigated these inner connections through a study of Patrick Wolfe’s theory of settler colonialism—including the settler/native binary and the settler will. Investigating a number of Indigenous sympathetic critiques of Wolfe’s theory, this chapter stressed problems within Wolfe’s structuralism, reconceptualising settler colonialism as a *process rather than a structure*.

The introduction of the mediating category of capitalist imperialism helps to develop a framework of migrant and First Nations oppression as not only mutually constituted, but also capable of being transcended. Conceptually and empirically, it supplied an account for how migration is constituted in capital accumulation in such a settler colonial context, outlining how ‘internal’ colonisation and ‘external’ imperialist competition are two poles of the same dynamic, compelled internally through capital accumulation.

Chapter 4

More than ‘Cheap Labour’

Theorising Immigration in Labour Markets

The machinery of the national life has for some time been out of order, and the timepiece of emigration, which keeps the balance between the supply of and demand for labour, has been gradually losing ground.

— BRABAZON, 1886, P. 8

The demand for labour is not identical with increase of capital, nor is supply of labour identical with increase of the working class. It is not a case of two independent forces working on each other. *Les dés sont pipés*. Capital acts on both sides at once.

— MARX, 1867/1976A, P. 793

After establishing the framework for understanding migration as a social relation, and then investigating its internal relations with imperialism and settler colonialism through the frame of Australian migration in the *longue durée*, the thesis is now ready for the incorporation of the determination of migration as labour-power, which is investigated in this and the following chapter.

This chapter develops a critique of ‘cheap labour’ theories of migration. These are theories that explain migration as the result of a capitalist or elite class hungry for labour-power on the cheap. Through the first two major sections of this chapter, it develops a critique of three theoretical formulations for ‘cheap labour’—supply/demand,

segmentation, and reserve army—including the more sophisticated account by Castles and Kosack (1972, 1973), and provides a comparison of these ideas with Marx's categories of analysis. This provides the first step in intellectually reconstructing migration in labour markets in a way commensurate with Marx's categories of political economy, with the remainder of this account delivered in chapter 5. The first and second chapters introduce progressive categories of analysis, through the determination of the value of labour-power, then wages, and then to the dynamic forces of labour markets, through a discussion of Ben Fine (1998) and Howard Botwinick (2018). This view of national labour markets is then integrated within the world economy. The third section of this chapter is a linked vignette into the critique of cheap labour, through a jarringly opposed method to Marx's historical and organic categories: a regression analysis of Australian wages structure using the 2021 census.

Together, this chapter develops an internal relations critique of the 'cheap labour' explanation for migration as rigid structuralism that fails to capture the dynamism not only of immigration, but labour markets and capitalist accumulation in general. In its place, it intellectually reconstructs the category of labour markets in order to situate migration within processes of capital accumulation, laying the groundwork for the historical account of Australian migration provided in chapter 5.

4.1 'CHEAP LABOUR' IN IMMIGRATION THEORY

This section introduces 'cheap labour theories, before offering a comparison with the categories of Marxist political economy. 'Cheap labour' is a persistent theme in histories of South-North migration, as an explanation of employers' support for migration and/or as an explanation for workers' opposition to migration. 'Cheap labour' is also a key explanation within Marxist migration theory that threads together immigration and labour markets (Castles and Kosack, 1973; Cross, 2020; Feldman, 2022; Foster and McChesney, 2017).

In Australian history, Non-English Speaking (Collins, 1988, pp. 120–1), non-British (Jupp, 1966), Chinese (Collins, 1988, p. 139), and temporary (Coates, Wiltshire, and Reysenbach, 2023, p. 10) workers have been said to be cheap labour, and most importantly, cheap labour has appeared in negative form as the explanation for White Australia as labour protectionism. From the first academic account, anti-Chinese

restrictions have been presented as existing to prevent the “cheapening of labour” (Willard, 1923/1967, p. 29). This theme has continued with representations of white Australia serving to uphold living standards (Richards, 2008, p. 35; McQueen, 1986, pp. ix–x, 42–3; Betts, 1996, p. 19; Blainey, 1984).

‘Cheap labour’ can be said to operate in three ways.

Firstly, ‘cheap labour’ is said to be the operation of the dynamics of *supply and demand*, with an increase in supply leading to the lowering of equilibrium price. Comparative statics can be used to argue that an outwards shift in the supply schedule in the labour market via the addition of immigrants, results in a lower equilibrium price, sketched in Figure 4.1. See Borjas (2013) for a discussion of the relevance of Marshallian elasticity/inelasticity of demand to this figure. Bansak, Simpson, and Zavodny (2021, ch. 7) provides diagrammatic meditations on this theme, including adjustments to the labour demand schedule in the long run.

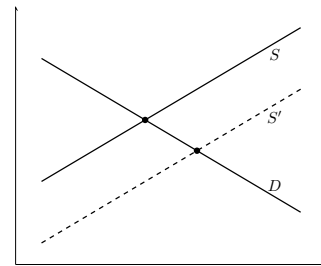


Figure 4.1: Marshallian cross. Supply shifting outwards reduces equilibrium price.

In the second interpretation, ‘cheap labour’ is described as a lower *labour segment*, receiving less than the average wage obtained by other (domestic) workers. Here, a lack of economic integration between sections of the labour market result in ongoing structural differentiation, including in terms of wages and conditions. This chapter also explores a few ideas connected with this segmentation thesis, including that it is the cause of ideological prejudice in the ‘upper’ domestic stratum.

Thirdly, ‘cheap labour’ may be described as a *reserve army* of labour, disciplining the working class as a whole and thereby bringing down wages. This can again be interpreted in a number of ways, and this chapter considers Marx’s and Luxemburg’s interpretation of its status as a question internal to capitalism (via unemployment) or external to it (as a latent surplus population).

The following sections are dedicated to successively unpacking and reconstructing these categories.

4.1.1 THEORISING 'CHEAP LABOUR'

Although there are similarities and crossovers in these three usages, they propose different mechanisms for the 'cheap labour' effect, and even different outcomes. The supply and demand explanation, when used in the short or long run, suggests a price movement due to pure competition. The labour market can be cleared only when a lower price obtains. The reserve army hypothesis suggests that migration contributes not to the employed fraction but more importantly to a structural level of unemployment which acts as a permanent threat to the working class: accept your conditions or else. Finally, segmentation suggests the existence of two separate prevailing sets of wages and conditions.

In practice, 'cheap labour' acts as a banner under which march this range of different explanations for migration. Hannah Cross (2020) combines all three in her account. Although Cross is critical of the left's tendency to rely on neoclassical explanations of immigration and wages (generally to argue in favour of immigration), she also criticises their failure to recognise the "downward pressure on wages" due to undocumented workers. Although the "laws of supply and demand" are not the only influence on employment and wage rates, "this general availability does have an influence, moving power towards capital over labour, while migrant workers are concentrated in labour-intensive sectors" (Cross, 2020). The arguments by the left and progressives that defend migrants because their "economic dynamism will benefit all" form a kind of "trickle-down economics of the Left" (citing Lee, 2019).¹ These explanations are combined with segmentation. She argues that the "undercutting of [domestic] wages" by migrants does play a role in the class structure, arguing that it is "neither a universal problem in all sectors nor an unsubstantiated myth" (Cross, 2020). It is at the "lower end of the labour market" that "wages and working conditions have been driven down" through a combination of immigration, and employer and state strategy. Finally, she suggests neo-liberalism has produced a reserve army, "weakening labour around the world", citing Foster and McChesney (2017). Imperialism produces a reserve army in the South and serves it to the North.

Cross' theory develops on the basis of three premises, the first of which is the centrality of "cheap labour" to the "accumulation of capital" (Cross, 2020, p. 1). The

¹Lee's argument is that "immigration is without question a material issue, but not because of its impact on labor markets" (Lee, 2019).

second premise, national chauvinism, provides an ideological foundation for “cheap labour and its engine, imperialism abroad” (Cross, 2020, p. 1). That is, ‘cheap labour’ is central to the accumulation of capital, the dynamism at the heart of capitalism, but that in turn requires an imperialist dynamic to produce underdevelopment of the sort that produces mass migration. Her third and final premise turns to the role of migration within the class structure. She suggests migrant labour “tends to benefit the middle and upper classes” while it is used competitively against a lower stratum, described as “sections of the labour market that are undervalued within the capitalist economic system . . . whatever their citizenship status” (Cross, 2020, p. 1).² This account blends Marx’s interpretation of the unemployed reserve army of labour with Luxemburg’s (1913/2003) alternative account, wherein labour-power is systematically recruited from “outside the dominion of capital”, along with segmentation and supply/demand arguments. These tangled explanations need to be unpicked.

Patel and Moore (2018) also exemplify a similar account of a global reserve army, or latent surplus population thesis. In their extended treatment of the role of ‘cheapness’ in capitalism, they discuss the way US capitalism secured “flows of cheap immigrant labor” to the meat-packing industry through a two-fold “class restructuring” (Patel and Moore, 2018, p. 163). This consisted in an employer attack seeking to replace “unionized workers with low-wage immigrant labor” on the one hand, and on the other the North American Free Trade Agreement, which resulted in widespread Mexican unemployment, hence providing factory fodder for the first plank of strategy (Patel and Moore, 2018, p. 163). This kind of process is placed in a long history of ‘cheap labour’, including transatlantic slavery (pp. 111–2) and the conquest of Celts (Patel and Moore, 2018, p. 197) playing the same role. An imperial context combines the second account domestically with the third internationally. The production of immigration is a partly conscious, partly structural, process of restructuring the working class, where produced desperation overseas is translated into a *labour-segment with lower pay*.

In Australia, Jock Collins has made similar arguments, hinged in his early writings on the reserve army of labour (Collins, 1984b, Collins, 1988, pp. 42–3). He invokes Marx’s distinction of three forms of reserve army: as ordinary unemployment, the primitive accumulation of workers set free by industry, and the permanently unemployed

²This is built on the presupposition of unfree labour across the globe and the “bonded, cheap labour created by means of imperialism” (Cross, 2020). Chapter 6 discusses her related argument that progressives in the west have a tendency to “[reify] patterns of displacement and cheap labour in predatory capitalist economies” when they stand for open borders (Cross, 2020).

(Collins, 1984b). He argues that “people overseas form a great latent reserve army for Australian capitalism”, able to be called on at points capitalist growth (Collins, 1984a, p. 24). But this movement can be transformed, for Collins into either the phenomenon of unemployment or the lower, stagnant permanently unemployed (Collins, 1984a, p. 8). He also connects unemployment to the “clear segmentation” along lines of sex and country of birth (Collins, 1984a, p. 11). There are differences in labour market outcomes, as well as pay. Collins combines segmentation distinctively with the reserve army thesis’ *unemployment function*. He argues that segmentation operates too in the unemployed reserve army, with migrants playing unemployed reserve armies, industry by industry (Collins, 1984a, p. 24).

Perhaps the most sophisticated and influential account of ‘cheap labour’ comes from the classic work by Castles and Kosack (1973) *Immigrant workers and class structure in Western Europe*, expressed succinctly in *New Left Review* (Castles and Kosack, 1972). Analysing Western Europe after the second world war, they position migrant workers as a “supply of cheap labour” for capitalist classes in Western Europe, a “lower stratum which carries out the menial and badly-paid jobs” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 114). They reject the idea that immigrant workers constitute a distinct class, or that they have fundamentally different “basic long-term interests” to domestic workers (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 476). Rather, immigration has produced a stratified or “divided class” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 476). This objective split is produced through legal and/or social discrimination (p. 114), and produces ongoing differences in “incomes . . . housing and social conditions” between immigrant and domestic workers (p. 477).

They break the impact of immigration into two categories: a key economic effect in producing *a new reserve army of labour*, and a key political effect in producing *a new labour aristocracy* (Castles and Kosack, 1972). The key *economic effect* is that immigration delivers to the national economy a global “industrial reserve army . . . [which] tends to hold back increases in the wages for unskilled work” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 478). Moreover, this impact “may be great enough to hold down the general wage rate for the whole economy” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 478). This industrial reserve was necessitated because after the second world war, “the capitalist system had to aim for continuous expansion and full employment at any price” (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 5) as it was in competition with the non-capitalist bloc. In such conditions, a new industrial reserve army was needed “to keep wages down and profits

up” and to “[cushion] the effects of crises” of cyclical development (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 5).

The key *political effect* is the production of a labour aristocracy, alongside a marginalised (immigrant) section of the proletariat. Immigrants are pooled into unskilled areas, and socially, politically and industrially marginalised. They follow Gorz’s concept of “denationalization” (Gorz, 1970, p. 28). There follows the “promotion” of many domestic workers to higher paid portions of the economy (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 478). This results in a dynamic of perceived superiority on behalf of not only the promoted domestic workers but also unskilled workers. Likewise, a dynamic of perceived competition arises within both promoted and unskilled workers against immigrant workers (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 478).

Castles and Kosack (1973) build this theory on Lenin’s theory of the aristocracy of labour, in which “a section of the British working class had ‘become bourgeois’ and was willing to ‘be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie’” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 480). In the same way immigration “helps to give large sections of the indigenous working class the consciousness of a ‘labour aristocracy’ which supports or acquiesces in the exploitation of another section of the working class” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 481). The ‘labour aristocracy’ strategy means that the “ruling class gains both through the possibility of utilizing cheap labour, and through giving privileges to indigenous workers in order to encourage the development of false consciousness” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 481). The consciousness is false because only a “section” of workers benefit from “improvements in wages, conditions, and status” (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 481).

There exists a common immediacy between all of these concepts. Distilled in this form, the complex and dynamic formation of wages and labour markets, quite apart from whether the workers be migrant or not, occurs behind the curtain.

For neoclassical theory, the starting point for describing migration has tended to be the interaction between macroeconomic labour markets on the national (or regional) scale, connected with an individualised conceptualisation of decision making based on links between push-pull factors (or “out-migration” and “in-migrants”) (Massey, 2001). The interaction of vast numbers of utility-maximising decisions by employers and households produces “[c]onventional labour supply and demand curves” which “provide basic building blocks of a microeconomic model of the labour market”,

combined with a wage offer curve capturing sticky-wages and other phenomena from macroeconomics or difficult to capture within Marshallian analysis (Freebairn, 1998).

These are then joined through a framework consistent with methodological individualism: push and pull factors. This kind of thinking is common to many thinkers. Castles and Kosack's exposition is ultimately grounded in "the 'pull' factors which have attracted migrants to certain Western European countries and the 'push' factors which have caused them to leave their home countries" (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 26).

This section outlined the tangle of explanations for 'cheap labour'. The next section begins reconstructing these dynamics of labour migration within the framework of internal relations outlined in chapter 1. Rather than starting with the mutual interaction of discrete individuals within constrained market conditions, this thinking perceives capitalism as a process defined through dynamics of competitive capital accumulation. It advances Marx's famous question: "if price is determined by the relation between supply and demand, what determines the relation between supply and demand" (Marx, 1891/1976b, pp. 23–4).

4.1.2 MARX AND 'CHEAP LABOUR'

'Cheap labour' has generally been used in an intuitive and sometimes uncared way to refer to a wide variety of phenomena, but in a Marxist framework, the very phrase 'cheap labour' is troublesome. For Marx, "there exists no such thing as the Value of Labour in the common acceptance of the word" (Marx, 1898/1935, p. 37). At the end of Part Two of *Capital*, Marx establishes a distinction between *labour-power*—as in "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being, capabilities which he sets in motion whenever he produces a use-value of any kind"—from *labour*—"a definite quantity of human muscle, nerve, brain, etc" (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 270, 4). This is a particular form of the central contradiction between values and use-values, since the value of labour-power (the labour-time socially necessary for its production and reproduction) is quite different from its use-value, which is labour provided to the capitalist for the purposes of the valorisation of capital (pp. 292, 300). In reference to Engels' complaints about some of Marx's "dreadfully tiring, and confusing" exposition of this fact, Marx defends the "two-fold character of labour" as the most important point

of the book, followed by the treatment of surplus-value (MECW:43, pp. 506–8). The second matter is contained in the first, because the difference between the value and use-value of labour-power is nothing less than the “secret of profit-making” (p. 280).³

‘Cheap labour’ can only be interpreted to mean ‘cheap labour-power’ in a Marxist terminology, though the latter term is more precise. Marx’s analysis certainly allows for the “cheapening of labour capacity” (that is, the cheapening of labour-power), particularly through the reduction in value of articles of consumption (MECW:34, pp. 110–1). However, it proceeds in general on the assumption of commodities (including labour-power) being exchanged at their value, determined by socially necessary labour-time, rather than at prices below or above it.

The dynamic forces through which labour-power is cheapened are important to Marx’s theory. Bosses have always wanted their labour-power cheap, and workers’ outputs high. The struggle over the wage, alongside the working day and machinery, is one of the central contradictions of capitalism, fundamentally mediating the labour-capital contradiction. The rate of wages is:

settled by the continuous struggle between capital and labour, the capitalist constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum, and to extend the working day to its physical maximum, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction. The question resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants (Marx, 1898/1935, p. 58).

Such battles play out within firms, within industries, within countries or across borders. A workers strike may simply test, concretely, any shifts in supply or demand in the market for labour-power. But they also play a role in the historical determination of the value of labour-power. The “historical and moral element” of the value of labour-power, including the habits and expectations of the working class and the costs of education, are produced alongside an active struggle (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 275).

This historical and social element varies over time and place. Marx references William Thomas Thornton’s work ‘Over-population and its Remedy’ (both in Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 275, and Marx, 1898/1935), concluding that “average wages in different

³In an “astonishing” (Althusser, 1967/2015, p. 19) passage of *Capital*, Marx explains that the fall of classical political economists into “inextricable confusions and contradictions” is a result of failing to grasp this fact (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 677–9).

agricultural districts of England still nowadays differ more or less according to the more or less favourable circumstances under which the districts have emerged from the state of serfdom” (Marx, 1898/1935, p. 57). It is in this context that he derives the role of “historical tradition and social habitude” in the determination of the value of labour-power (Marx, 1898/1935, p. 57), noting that it is fundamentally variable, between different countries, between regions of the same country, and also between epochs (p. 58). The English “traditional standard of life” can be reduced to the Irish, or the German to the Livonian. The value of labour-power is fundamentally variable, both between different countries and different epochs (p. 58). Both the historical and the “very elastic” physical minima are a matter of historical “continuous struggle” (pp. 57–8). There are two critical processes by which labour-power can be cheapened: (1) where the labour-time socially necessary for the reproduction of the working class is decreased; and (2) social struggle over the conditions of work and life.

Between the value of labour-power and wages, a third process intervenes. In the early 1840s, Engels had theorised an “unemployed reserve army of workers”, which he also calls a “surplus population”, that grows larger and smaller with cycles of business, required such that manufacturers could “produce the masses of goods required by the market in the liveliest months” (Engels, 1845/2009, p. 96). In periods of agricultural booms, Ireland and other areas unimpacted by the boom may “temporarily supply to manufacture a number of workers” who also form a part of this reserve army (p. 96).

Such migrations are cyclical: workers ultimately return, though now finding themselves “superfluous” with their old positions filled by women and young workers. The cause of the surplus is the booms of capitalism, though Engels’ usage slips into more general analysis of pauperism of this ‘surplus population’, which is from Malthus, who “was also right, in his way, in asserting that there is always a surplus population” (p. 92, alongside Smith). Malthus wrongly interprets this as a natural check, whereas in fact it is produced from “the nature of industrial competition and the commercial crises” (p. 93)⁴ which throws society into “prosperity, crisis, prosperity, crisis” every five years (Engels, 1845/2009, p. 93). Marx too portrays technological advance as the driving force towards human concentration and unemployment (MECW:34, p. 31).

Most importantly though, in Chapter 25 of Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx theorises the “surplus population or industrial reserve army” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 781). It is worth repeating his argument in full since it builds on and revises the dynamic deter-

⁴And in particular the “improvements of the machinery” (MECW:23, p. 340).

mination of wages discussed above. Accumulation and the rising organic composition of capital result in proportional decline in variable capital, and along with the periodic rises in capital's "own energy and extent", come a "law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production" (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 782–4). The reserve army, here, is not produced consciously, nor is it tapped from a limited supply 'outside', but rather it inheres to the capitalist mode itself. An unemployed "mass of human material always ready for exploitation" is produced by the capitalist cycles (pp. 784–5). Even when capital was in its infancy, this peculiar cyclical path was "also impossible" due to the "natural barrier in the shape of the exploitable working population" (p. 785).⁵ Immigration is by no means the only way of producing a reserve army: it may come from changes in the price of labour-power or through over-work (pp. 788–9). The reserve army in this way "exclusively" regulates the general movements of wages according as the "working class is divided into an active army and a reserve army" (p. 790).⁶

The core of Marx's theory is plainly that the dynamics of capitalist accumulation produce of necessity a mass of unemployed that come to act as the presupposition for the fits and starts of accumulation. The periodical appearance of over-supply or under-supply in the labour market is nothing but the result of the dynamic of capital accumulation (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 790). The reserve army is "the background against which the law of the demand and supply of labour does its work" (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 792). It modifies fundamentally the account of the value of labour-power discussed above.

On this basis, Marx postulates three forms of existence of the reserve army: floating, latent and stagnant. For most of the explication, he switches to "relative surplus population" to allow him to speak freely, since a member of the reserve army is strictly an unemployed person, rather than a potentially employed person captured by surplus population, but he does not explain a fundamental difference (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 794–6). The *floating* segment consists of the reserve—unemployed workers—a section that every worker belongs to at some point. The *latent* relative surplus population comes from the capture of agriculture by capitalist production, which produces a "constant movement towards the towns", thrown open at times of slump. Finally, the *stagnant* segment represents a segment of the labour market with lower wages, and

⁵This is the section preceding primitive accumulation.

⁶"Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, and this in turn corresponds to the periodic alternations of the industrial cycle" (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 790).

“extremely irregular employment” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 796). The dynamism of this framework is clear.

The cheapening of labour-power is of itself by necessity a dynamic process. It is on the one hand an objective and measurable restructuring of the commodities used in the reproduction of human labour-power, and therefore a measurable shift in the quality of life. Simultaneously, it is on the other the concrete, historical restructuring of cultural norms. Though Marx's investigation of the determination of wages is scientific, it is neither mechanical nor structural. Indeed, to understand changes after WWII, the dynamics wherein “the time comes round again” that supply increases and “wages rise, and so on” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 79) are equally as critical as understanding how they might be cheapened. For Grossman (2021, p. 71), the improvement in the condition of the working class “necessarily flows from” Marx's theory of wages.

Cheapening is built into the structure of accumulation, with competition between the producers of means of consumption leading to investment, driving down the value of the commodities in those industries, and thereby cheapening the value of labour-power itself (Marx, 1867/1976a, pp. 432–7). This is not a static process, but a dynamic and historical one. The movement of wages and the reserve army constitute a further complication, themselves tied into to the periodic cycles of capitalism that throw people in and out of employment in the anarchic quest for profit. These dynamics are all prior to, and interacting with, the forces of supply and demand.

This section has introduced the fundamentals of Marxist political economy of migration in labour markets. The relational account of labour emphasises both the contradiction over the value of labour-power, and the contradictory movement of wages via the trade cycle and reserve army. The phrase “cheap labour” risks hiding these processes, both expressing ‘cheapening’ as the final quality ‘cheap’ and labour-power/labour contradiction as the static category ‘labour’. As long as ‘cheap labour’ is used in a *static* sense, whether as supply and demand, reserve army, or labour segment, it is improper to the task of a Marxist political economy of labour markets, which stresses the flux of economic forces of capitalism even ‘before’ considering immigration or the world market.⁷ These basic categories from Marx are expanded on in the next sections.

⁷The discussion in the next section within Marx's frame considers the world market rather than world economy discussed in chapter 2 (Ashman, 2006).

4.2 A MARXIST POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MIGRATION

This dynamic political economy of labour establishes a foundation stone on which to theorise migration in labour markets, which is the purpose of the next three sections. Having discussed general and static usage, the next three sections consider: (1) Marxist segmentation approaches; (2) the world market; and (3) the reserve army and labour aristocracy as Engels' categories within the world market.

4.2.1 DIFFERENTIATION, STRUCTURING & THE LABOUR MARKET RELATION

Ben Fine (1998) and Howard Botwinick (2018) problematise push-pull, equilibrium, and market-based accounts of labour markets, suggesting they must be more firmly grounded within a Marxist framework of capitalism and suggesting the need to demonstrate “how labour market structures are socially reproduced, or transformed, and how they have arisen historically” (Fine, 1998, p. 252).

For Fine (1998), supply-demand accounts understate the historically specific and processually constituted nature of labour-markets (p. 5). He argues that “there is no such thing as *the* labour market” (Fine, 2007, p. 128, emphasis his). This goes beyond the claim that the description of labour markets requires a large number of divisions and redivisions—into different regions, industries, or segments of workers on age, gender, racialised terms. Rather, Fine's argument is that there is no “the” labour market outside of a particular context—a context defined by the economic laws of capitalism as well as by concrete historical developments that are *constitutive* of and not additional to labour markets.

Howard Botwinick's (2018) analysis for instance seeks to provide a way to integrate “worker resistance and capitalist competition” in wages determination. Against orthodox economics, and the abstract story of perfect labour mobility and wage equalisation within the domestic economy, he emphasises the importance of worker resistance in constituting deeply unequal wages structure found in reality, highlighting the *subjective* element to wages. Meanwhile, against some radical economics, he maintains certain *objective* limits on the upper end obtain for workers. He goes further than Marx, who argued for a unique lower limit to wages, in arguing that there exists too an upper limit: the conditions of capitalist accumulation “can only allow wages to rise

within strict limits” (Botwinick, 2018, p. 76). Botwinick theorises these limitations as baked into “technical conditions of production” (p. 32), the competitive constraints between firms in a given industry, and the “costs of obstruction” able to be produced by workers.

But while workers’ collective action is “fundamentally constrained” by the dynamics of competition and accumulation, it is still able to (and in fact does) exert a significant influence in the determination of rates of wages within an economy (Botwinick, 2018, p. 15), or, perhaps, beyond it. Particular union leaderships or strategies play an important role then in his analysis. At the most general level, the inequitable effects of “capitalist competition” on the one hand and “uneven worker organisation” on the other are fundamental in the production of wage differentials (Botwinick, 2018, p. 10).

For Botwinick, however, such “general” effects, both subjective and objective, are separated from “the more concrete dynamics of race and gender discrimination” (Botwinick, 2018, p. 10). He argues that “many of these persistent patterns” actually inhere to the fundamental dynamics of capitalism, competition and the reserve army, as well as to organisation (Botwinick, 2018, p. 8). Although motivated by neoclassical economics’ failure to account for racial and gender differences, his explanations are mainly in the economic realm, even if certain “certain unique dynamics” may be accounted for (Botwinick, 2018, pp. 232–3).

Botwinick’s account of the determination of wages within capitalist competition makes several important strides. In highlighting the central structuring impact of union organisation, he goes some way to putting the ‘moral and historical’ questions at the centre of the determination of the value of labour-power. However, his splitting of unionisation (general) away from racial and gender discrimination (concrete) suggests this creditable move is only partial. There exist certain labour market structures that operate at the most basic level as racial structure before they are economic ones. For instance, South African apartheid system was premised on “[r]acially based class exploitation” (Magubane, 1996, p. 11). The production of a white state under conditions of colonialism with a black-majority working class cannot be grasped as ‘discrimination’ under conditions of capitalist accumulation. Apartheid is not soluble by mere unionisation. Fine takes up exactly this point, where the more established and active black trade unions existed in the apartheid mining industry (Fine, 1998, p. 110). Racialisation was actively reproduced, through the denial of land, government supports for white farming, and the intentional geographic ‘apartheid’, which

reproduces two separate labour market fractions (Fine, 1998, pp. 110–5).

Likewise, the utilisation of Palestinian labour by the Israeli state is not ‘discriminatory’, but part of the class relations in that state. Palestinian construction workers were pushed in and out of the boundaries of the settler colonial frontier according to the needs of the state—including the sap on the labour force that is the compulsory military service needed for that state, in response to Palestinian resistance, or displacement by foreign labour (Farsakh, 2005; Hanieh, 2013, p. 27). Racism, imperialism, and the state cannot be pushed to a secondary stage of analysis, no matter how welcome the introduction of union struggle is at the base of the analysis.

This question is critical to our purposes in this chapter. The status of a racialised group of immigrants is precisely at issue. Botwinick’s analysis is not disproven per se by the above examples, which are extreme examples of labour market structuration. Certain forms of racialisation are more built into structural dynamics. Others, less so. It can no more be assumed that racialised discrimination is secondary than to essentialise racialised discrimination into permanent forces of capitalism. It cannot be ascertained from theory whether ‘cheap labour’ exists: “the causes cannot be assumed” but “are to be looked for” (Bloch, 1954, p. 197). This requires a theoretical apparatus to ascertain how migrant labour-power interacts with Australian capitalism.

Ben Fine’s theory provides such a framework. For Fine, the very “nature and scope” of labour market structures are “socially and empirically contingent” and not “predetermined” (Fine, 1998, p. 198). Analysis must “uncover how they are structurally differentiated from one another and reproduced or transformed in practice” (Fine, 1998, p. 198). Fine maintains there is “no single generally applicable labour market theory” (Fine, 1998, p. 5), but he does propose the following three foundational conceptual tools.

Firstly, labour markets are structured through the “general economic laws of capitalism, and their negation by way of exception” (p. 10). In the first instance, labour markets should be understood as structured by the “key exchange” between “capital as a whole and labour as a whole” (Fine, 1998, p. 176). This entails all sorts of divisions of labour within the labour process, as well as ‘supervisory labour’ (p. 177): divisions into the employed and reserve fractions, divisions between firms situated within the “competitive struggle between accumulating capitals” (p. 177) and in particular inter-firm divisions over the “systematic sources of productivity increase that can be realised

through the accumulation of capital” (p. 178). However, it is at this most foundational level that the organisation of capital and labour (at national, sectoral and employer levels) plays a constitutive role.

Secondly, Fine introduces the social reproduction of the work-force (p. 10). Social reproduction entails dynamics that are typically “separate, if not detached, from the accumulation and circulation of capital”, such as the state, civil society and the household (p. 187).⁸ Education, domestic labour, and its management by the state all play a role. Fine argues that social reproduction “is not counterposed” to economic reproduction (p. 192). Rather, they interact in historically specific ways which “cannot be simplistically captured by an abstract or, more exactly, formalistic quantification of the labour-time required to produce skills and differences in rates of exploitation and/or remuneration” (p. 193).

In the third instance, Fine argues that labour markets are differentiated according to consumption and consumption goods in particular (p. 10). Before incorporating the buffers of supply and demand, Fine argues to incorporate the determination of the value of labour-power, which is to be construed first in its “norm[s] of consumption” and second “as a mode of social reproduction of the class of labour” (Fine, 1998, p. 175).

Social reproduction and the struggle between capital and labour provide the groundwork for the complex and indirect relationship between “the socioeconomic construction of consumption norms and labour market structuring” (Fine, 1998, p. 182). Moreover, the value of labour-power cannot be simplified to its quantitative aspect $\frac{w}{p}$ but must also include working conditions which are not necessarily easy or meaningful to enumerate. This requires a move “beyond the simple treatment of the value of labour-power as a quantum of labour-time corresponding to the value of a fixed, or even shifting, bundle of consumption goods” (Fine, 1998, p. 186).

In this way, labour markets need to be understood through their role in *reproducing the value of labour-power*. Fine starts with a conception of the “normal consumption bundle” as dynamic, responding to systemic shifts within the capitalist economy including particularly productivity increases from increases in relative surplus value (p. 180). Fine argues that taking an “average level of consumption” across the working

⁸Fine eschews Sraffian account of skill formation, neoclassical human capital, and Bowles and Gintis’ account of heterogeneous labour, as well, briefly, as Himmelweit’s account of value corresponding to labour-power.

class as a whole is “exceptionally simplistic” (p. 181), and that theory must provide for “*systematic* patterns of consumption” across variables such as age, region, household composition (Fine, 1998, p. 181).⁹

Patterns of consumption are “established and evolve differently from one commodity to the [sic] another” (Fine, 1998, p. 181), according to patterns of differential productivity increase and the “system of provisions for these commodities”, including the “material culture or ideology” (p. 181),¹⁰ as well as being differentiated across “different sections of the work-force, closely associated with race, gender and other socioeconomic characteristics” (p. 182). In foregrounding consumption norms, Fine brings Marxist theory of labour markets closer to the original works of Marx and in particular Engels in their analysis of the Irish worker in England. Historical and moral elements are determined across lines of industry, gender, and racialisation, but for Fine, this is ontologically *anterior* to the dynamics of class struggle and social reproduction.

Fine’s most important conclusion for the foregoing analysis is that “differentiation” within the working class must be “distinguished from labour market structuring” (Fine, 1998, p. 195). One cannot simply “take labour market structures as given”, by presuming the existence of categories (“Categoricism”, Fine, 1998, pp. 160–5 or “categorical theory”, Connell, 1987, pp. 54–60) or the inference of the existence of discrete categories from the detection of differences in outcomes. Put another way, *statistical* and *structural* differentiation are different things. Now, “structures can be created out of differentiation” but only through active reproduction, or intervention by “other or the same renewed socioeconomic processes” (p. 195).

The argument is best understood through a number of examples of differentiated, rather than structured, differences, contra the structural differences of Palestine and apartheid South Africa discussed above. A unionised workforce is differentiated from a non-unionised one, earning a higher rate of pay all things being equal (discussed below). But this does not meet the benchmark for fundamental structuration of the workforce. The non-unionised workforce can, with more or less ease, join the union. The fact that people can be grouped and counted as ‘union/non-union’ and statistical differences ascribed to the categories does not suffice for showing the existence of actual labour market segments.

⁹Marx makes a similar argument in the cases of Irish workers in Britain.

¹⁰See Fine and Leopold (1990) and (Fine, Heasman, and Wright, 1996).

Differences in wages outcomes between firms within an industry do not in general indicate the existence of any discrete labour market structures, but rather exist in the normal functioning of capitalist labour markets, with varying competitive pressures. “A productivity increase in one sector or firm might be induced through higher wages, but these can also be eroded by a subsequent influx of labour” (p. 195). Fine concludes, “[l]abour market segmentation as a theory of socioeconomic structures requires the latter to be more deeply rooted within an understanding of the accumulation of capital and social reproduction more generally” (Fine, 1998, p. 195). The disaggregation from discrimination and differentiation from segmentation and structuration is in some ways inexact. Fine points to the analysis of women, arguing there are elements of both: some differential factors and other more significant ones inherent to women’s subordinate position in capitalism. Fine’s formulation suggests that part-time work and child-care responsibilities are less fundamental, while women’s “sectoral or occupational segregation” are structural (pp. 195–6). While all of these were central to the women’s liberation movements of the 1970s, Fine’s account that occupational discrimination is more structural, while dynamics of domestic labour are attributable to differences, appears to invert the accounts of social reproduction theory (Bhattacharya, 2017b).

This distinction is important for the analysis of migration in three ways. Firstly, a Marxist theorisation of migration must be consistent with an account of the economic world of capital, consistent with Marx’s concepts of accumulation, competition, social and economic reproduction of the totality of economic relations, rate of profit, increasing organic composition of capital and the inevitability of crisis.

Secondly, wages determination does not operate via equilibrium. Dynamic forces of accumulation, competition, and class struggle result in *changing and differentiated* wages outcomes, between firms, between industries, within industries, between countries, and so on. This lack of equilibrium has profound consequences for migrant workers. The cutting of supports for migrant workers by the Australian state has inevitable consequences amplifying the impacts of language and cultural connections to connect migrants to appropriate jobs, especially in the first instance. It is a concrete and historical question whether these dynamics result only in statistical differentiation (that is, probable disadvantage) or whether on the other hand it is compounded by further state or union intervention and turns into a reproducible labour market structure. After all, there are class and cultural questions impacting labour market outcomes for all workers. The nature and status of racial questions is concrete.

Thirdly and finally, the framework of structure versus segment allows one to investigate labour markets without a problematic analytical binary. This requires a concrete analytical framework, as developed in chapter 5.

4.2.2 STATES AND THE WORLD MARKET

Before returning in the next section to theories of 'cheap migrant labour', one further concrete level of analysis is required in order to reconstruct labour markets theory for the purposes of understanding migration. International immigration is not prior to but constituted as part of the international economy, as discussed in chapter 2. Differences in wage rates cannot be understood without a theory of the international. Even if the national economy were introduced first, the introduction of immigration as a concrete determination pre-supposes the world economy. What intermediating determinations are required to allow for this?

In Marx's (1939/1993) words, in grasping with the mind the higher economic systems, "labour, division of labour, need, exchange value, to the level of the state, exchange between nations and the world market," must ascend from the "simple relations" (Marx, 1939/1993, pp. 100–1). The introduction of concrete determinations must build upon the most basic abstractions. At a high level of generality, the mass phenomenon of migration cannot be separated from the uneven dynamics of capital accumulation which produce not only a shifting and uneven demand for labour, but also a shifting process of the division and re-division of labour. Much of Marx and Engels' discussion of immigration happens at this abstract level. For Marx, processes of centralisation and concentration must find their correlate in the centralisation of labour-power.

Population becomes centralised just as capital does; and, very naturally, since the human being, the worker, is regarded in manufacture simply as a piece of capital for the use of which the manufacturer pays interest under the name of wages. (MECW:4, p. 325)

Marx likewise remarks in an article on forced immigration how "the industrial proletariat, by the very working of modern production, finds itself gathered in mighty centers, around the great productive forces, whose history of creation has hitherto been the martyrlogy of the laborers" (MECW:11, p. 533). An international economic

and political system designed with the presupposition that fixed capital chases profits across the globe must presume some uneven circulation of variable capital—of the kind that international migration delivers. Marx adds to this picture a shifting process of the division and redivision of labour. Marx suggests three separate levels on which this division operates: general, division, and detail (MECW:35, p. 435; see Smith, 2008, p. 143).

If migration derives from uneven and combined development, then situating those dynamics within the dynamics of capitalism is critical. Uneven development for instance can be portrayed as a universal law running deeper than any particular mode of production, as in Trotsky's (1932/2008, p. 5) original formulation (Mandel 1979), where combined development is derived from “the most general law of the historic process”—unevenness. But this interpretation is contested. For Smith (2008), uneven development's character must be seen as *particular* to capitalism. It is a mistake to conceive it as a random or statistical deviation from a hypothetical uniform development. Rather he argues it should be seen as a structural process of geographical patterning of development “unique to capitalism” (Smith, 2008, p. 4). For Ashman too, arguing against Rosenberg (1994), the “laws of motion and tendencies of development of particular modes of production are of different historical types; they are not the same laws simply different historically” (Ashman, 2009, p. 31).¹¹

The purposes of this thesis require a further step, in understanding the uneven and combined economic development between states. To argue that immigration's dynamics are fundamentally imbued with inter-state dynamics is on the surface obvious. But the full conceptualisation of imperialism discussed in chapter 2 suggests that capitalist imperialism is a changing, and historically specific dynamic force, whose impact on migration has generally been downplayed. Here, Ashman (2006) argues that the category of world economy should displace Marx's focus on the world market, to recognise the increased internationalisation of production, and not simply trade.

While Marx paid great attention to many of the particular factors producing emigration and the movement of labour-power under capitalism, including starvation, overproduction, slavery, and primitive accumulation, he only touched upon the significance of state and imperialist dynamics to migration briefly, particularly in letters and

¹¹Callinicos argues for a weaker form of this idea, that the logics of uneven and combined development must be conceptualised “relative to the structures of some mode of production” to avoid essentialism Callinicos and Rosenberg (2008, p. 82).

motions in the first half of 1870 (discussed further in Chapter 6). The contradictions of today's capitalist totality are even more multifarious, containing a deeper set of irrationalities and contradiction, with environmental degradation, the barbarities of capitalist war, and state propaganda far stronger than Marx or Engels likely could have imagined, alongside overlapping economic crises.

Adam Hanieh (2013, 2022) provides a Marxist analysis of Middle Eastern migration situated firmly within international capitalist dynamics as a whole. He argues that "migration is both generated *by* processes of global accumulation and simultaneously constitutive *of* the concrete forms of class and capital that exist throughout a highly internationalized world market" (Hanieh, 2019, p. 57, emphasis his). He argues that migration must be put "at the centre of capitalism's wider logics and its crisis tendencies" (Hanieh, 2019, p. 71). Hanieh uses the category of 'cheap labour' to explain capitalism in the Middle East and North Africa, including Arab labour from the West Bank, derived from the specific imperialist dynamics of the Middle East. The same imperial dynamics that place such an importance on understanding the role of 'cheap labour' lead to the opposite conclusion in Australia, where imperialist dynamics mitigated against this move.

Hanieh's analysis argues that immigration is a critical vantage point for understanding the very production of the state, and of classes: "state formation is very much intertwined with class formation and plays an active role in the latter process" (Hanieh, 2011, p. 15). Moreover, the state itself is a "particular expression of class formation—with the latter understood as a set of social relations that is continually in the process of coming-into-being" (Hanieh, 2011, p. 12). The processes by which classes come into being are "continually being made and remade in an ongoing process of accumulation and contestation" (Hanieh, 2013, p. 6). The question of the formation of classes, the dynamics of contestation between classes, and the expression of formation of classes in the state, are centred in chapter 5.

The key developments in immigration are a product of, and help produce, deep shifts in the global political economy—from the periods of capitalist growth and the colonies' contributions to core demand from Britain that first grew an appetite for an expanded Australian labour force, to the dynamics of intensified imperialism of the late nineteenth century that demanded political consolidation of the colonial powers, the moving ideological dynamics of racism and citizenship that developed constantly over the period of Australian capitalism, the centralisation and consolidation of state

power that saw bureaucratisation and Lukácsian reification of immigration law, to the erosion of the acceptability of open white supremacy in immigration law by Cold War competition (and decolonisation), to the shifts in anti-Chinese, anti-Japanese, anti-Muslim racism that have come to predominate in different periods as much according to the demands of imperialism as to the particular racist ideologues gaining dominance in Australia.

Hanieh and Ziadah (2023) suggest the need to incorporate a value transfer analysis from immigration, from the country of origin to the country of arrival. It is out of the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed account of this, but Fred Moseley (2016)'s interpretation of Volume I of *Capital* as a *macroeconomic* interpretation of the production of value and surplus value, is an important start in this discussion. Labour-power is a part of the whole values produced each year, and prices of production are the final resting place, developed in Volume III. The question of the shift towards average profit rates in this analysis is a concrete one, meaning any question of value transfers between countries is related to the actual movements of capital investment.

Marx's transformation is not from micro values to micro prices of production, but is instead from macro variables—total price and total surplus value in the economy as a whole—to micro variables—prices of production and average profit in each industry. As stated above, the “transformation problem” in Marx's theory is really a disaggregation problem. (Moseley, 2019, p. 110)

For the present purposes, the key is in the need to locate the dynamics of internally complex and processual labour markets within the dynamics of uneven and combined development within the world economy. These dynamics are internal to the discussion of labour market regimes in chapter 5.

4.2.3 ENGELS AND EMPIRE

This section turns to the third ‘cheap labour’ theory of migration: the reserve army, and the related idea of the labour aristocracy. Both the reserve army and the labour aristocracy have their root in Engels's (1845/2009) *Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*. The reserve army quickly made its way into the works of Marx,

while the labour aristocracy was made famous by Lenin years later.¹² Yet the critical shifts in thinking that occurred between Engels in the 1840s and their adoption by Marx in the 1860s have been papered over.

These two concepts are considered in turn, seeking to position them conceptually in the above framework.

The Industrial Reserve Army: Relative Surplus Population

For Marx, the industrial reserve army as a process is not a secondary or supplementary add-on to the process of wages determination, but is rather inherent to the structure of capitalism. Historically, Ricardo added a chapter 'On Machinery' to his 1821 manuscript that Engels was unlikely to have read by 1845, while Marx relied on an edition that included it (Hollander, 2011, p. 74).

It is all too common for the ideas of Chapter 25 Part 4 (the different forms of the reserve army) to be separated from Part 3 (its progressive production). That is, rather than a key to understanding wages determination, surplus population has become a phrase to mean the latent flow of workers from 'the outside' to 'the inside', presupposed as a natural (demographic) concept. But Marx does not consider this latent population flow the centre of the reserve army. Marx's assessment of the historical movement of the latent portion, resulting from the extension of capitalist agriculture, suggests also a movement back to the agricultural districts during the downturns when hands are not needed.

Rather he reaffirms in Volume II of *Capital* the general cyclical nature, with the "latent relative surplus population" or reserve army "absorbed" and then "released" with the speculative expansions (Marx, 1885/1978, p. 391). Marx does not appear troubled by the idea that the "entire reserve army of labour [can] . . . been enrolled" into the active portion (Marx, 1885/1978, p. 486).

The key critic to Marx's focus on the reserve army as an internal wages dynamic is Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg reproaches Marx for what she sees as a failure of abstraction, arguing he "ignores" the process of "incessant transition from non-capitalist to capitalist conditions of a labour-power that is cast off by pre-capitalist, not capitalist,

¹²Hobsbawm (2012) has suggested Lenin's usage of the labour aristocracy has the same origin, and Lenin's citation in his usage of the term of the same prefaces in which Engels developed the idea indicate the same thing (Lenin, 1974c, p. 285).

modes of production in their progressive breakdown and disintegration” (Luxemburg, 1913/2003, p. 342) in his discussions of a reserve army. And therefore leave aside the recruitment of labour for the reserve army from “social reservoirs outside the dominion of capital” (p. 342).

She goes so far as to argue that if “natural propagation [i.e. birth] were the only foundation for the development of capital, accumulation, in its periodical swings from overstrain to exhaustion, could not continue, nor could the productive sphere expand by leaps and bounds, and accumulation itself would become impossible” (Luxemburg, 1913/2003, p. 341). Although Luxemburg’s argument that capitalism requires non-capitalist markets and resources is the more famous, her argument about its requirement for an externally-funded reserve army of labour is its mirror image and plays a key role in her theory of imperialism.

Cross (2020) follows Luxemburg’s argument: “The national propagation of the wage proletariat could not provide this industrial reserve army: labour would need to be recruited from social reservoirs outside the capitalist sphere”. Castles and Kosack (1973) are interested in the “latent” component, while Collins seeks to combine the two in his explanation of immigration. Above, subsection 2.1.1 provided a critique of the proportionality theory of crisis inherent in Luxemburg’s economics (and her contemporaries). A methodological and economic critique of Luxemburg’s argument is developed by Henryk Grossman (2021; see Kuhn, 2006). Grossman argued that Luxemburg’s reproduction of Marx’s reproduction schemas in Marx (1885/1978) reconstructed the theory of crisis tendency in terms of a disproportionality crisis in the circulation, rather than immanent to accumulation (Kuhn, 2006, p. 126). The “transcendental fact of an absence of non-capitalist markets” became central (Grossman, 2021, p. 66).

Grossman’s argument about the reproduction schemas can be applied Luxemburg’s assessment of the reserve army. Contra Luxemburg, Grossman argues that “reserve army of labour is a condition of existence, not in order to reproduce the capital relation but rather to make sudden extensions of production possible” (Grossman, 2021)—without “Marx’s law of value”, the theory of the production of a mass of workers in the reserve army “cannot be understood at all” (Grossman, 2021, p. 70). Grossman argues “he did not derive the inevitable impoverishment of the working class under capitalism from the empirical conditions of England in the 1840s, but deductively, from the ‘nature of capital’, from the nature of the law of accumulation peculiar to it”

(Grossman, 2021, p. 97).

The production of the reserve army is *immanent, not external* to capitalist accumulation. The “plethora of capital arises from the same causes that produce a relative surplus population” (Marx, 1894/1981, p. 359, see pp. 359–68, Grossman, 2021, p. 143). For instance, see Engels’s (1845/2009) remarks in his ‘Condition of the Working-Class in England In 1844’ that “the proletariat was called into existence by the introduction of machinery. The rapid extension of manufacture demanded hands, wages rose, and troops of workmen migrated from the agricultural districts to the towns” (MECW:4, p. 321). Here, a more historical analysis of immigration prevails—one related to primitive accumulation, rather than a fixed capitalist process.

For Grossman the conception of a “*chronic* surplus population is fundamentally false”; rather the “*law of the alternate attraction and repulsion of workers*” entails a cyclical form of the reserve army (Grossman, 2021, p. 165, emphasis his).¹³ The same historical ‘setting free’ of workers that Luxemburg (1913/2003, p. 343) references, operates at a different conceptual level. Capitalist imperialism does play a role for Grossman, in Chapter 3, as “the necessary effort to overcome the breakdown tendency, the failure of valorisation” (Grossman, 2021, p. 272)—one of the counter-tendencies to the LTFRP.¹⁴

Chapter 25(4) cannot be separated from the general dynamic described in *Capital*, and it especially cannot be separated from the previous section of Ch. 25. Marx’s tripartite schema of the makeup of the reserve army is not a schematic result, left to hand and then able to be applied blindly wherever intuition suggests it. It is in this way that Marx’s analysis of capitalist labour markets has been separated from the dynamics of capitalism: from the tendency to “cling to the *results* of the theory” while ignoring the method from which it arose (Grossman, 2021, p. 48).

It stretches Luxemburg’s theory to suggest that the movement of workers from one capitalist country to another can be glossed as the absorption of a non-capitalist latent reserve. This would require in the first instance some effort to construct an account of global inter-country arbitrage in response to non-capitalist absorption, and in the second instance some explanation of how this affects the dynamics between capitalist countries.

¹³Grossman acknowledges the existence absolute unemployment, due to workers changing jobs and so on (pp. 164–55).

¹⁴The “growing breakdown tendency and the strengthening of imperialism, are simply two sides of the same complex of facts” (Grossman, 2021, p. 270).

Rooting international migration, rather, ultimately, in the dynamics of the world market and uneven development, positions the movement of workers between areas as no less remarkable than the existence of trade or finance. This requires no special theory of the non-capitalist outside. The introduction of the capitalist-imperialist inter-state system adds additional political determinations, which alongside the economic, political, and environmental crisis tendencies of the system provide a fuller account of international migration.

None of this is to categorically rule out interaction between immigration and capitalist dynamics producing unemployment. The difference is the economic and geopolitical intermediations that must first be incorporated into the analysis. That is, the reserve army hypothesis cannot function as a structural or categorical imperative to the production of 'cheap labour' (as either market competition, labour segment, or unemployment), but rather requires a concrete analysis.

The introduction of the concrete determination of immigration on the labour market requires first the incorporation of the world market and imperialism in a manner consistent with the categories of Marx's *Capital*.

Labour Aristocracy

The final corollary to reserve army and segmentation theories of migration to be assessed is the concept of the labour aristocracy. The labour aristocracy would be more tenuously linked to 'cheap labour' hypothesis were it not for Castles and Kosack's (1973) combined usage. Its analysis requires the furthest stretching of the static structural economic roots this chapter began by discussing, and therefore brings the analysis closer to chapter 5, which investigates real connections between immigration and Australian labour markets.

Castles and Kosack (1972) develop their political and subjective side of the function of immigration based on the theories of Engels and Lenin. They argue that the domestic worker is offered better "conditions and status" compared to the migrant worker (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 6) enabling the development of a "consciousness of a labour aristocracy". They suggest "it is possible that [the domestic fraction of] labour may also benefit from the dynamic expansion allowed by immigration" (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 478).

Castles and Kosack's description of a section of workers benefiting from the lower labour segment in terms of wages, conditions, and privileges, and therefore developing a false consciousness (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 481) is not dissimilar from Engels' description of American working class which "adopts an aristocratic attitude and whenever possible leaves the ordinary, ill-paid occupations to immigrants of whom only a small proportion enter the aristocratic TRADES"—noting "your bourgeoisie is far more adept than the Austrian government at playing off one nationality against another" (MECW:49, p. 393).¹⁵

Engels writes in 1885, in a passage repeated in the preface to the English edition of the *Conditions of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, that the "great Trade Unions . . . engineers, the carpenters and joiners, the bricklayers" secured for themselves a "permanent improvement" in their conditions during the decades of prosperity following 1844 (without being undercut by the roughly decadal crises (MECW:26, pp. 295–301)). They have "resist[ed] the introduction of machinery" and not received competition from women and children, and so form "an aristocracy among the working class; they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position, and they accept it as final" (MECW:26, p. 299). The so-called New Unions of the unskilled workers were "looked down upon by the working-class aristocracy" (Engels, 1845/2009, p. 325).

Lenin found this explanation a candidate for explaining the opportunism of the working class representatives and socialist parties of the second international following WWI. He argued that the top layers of the working class—"a petty-bourgeois "upper stratum" or aristocracy (and bureaucracy) of the working class"—became interested in winning spoils for themselves and became the "economic foundation" for 'social-imperialism', or opportunist support for imperialism (Lenin, 1974b, p. 243). A small, skilled and privileged section of workers had become "bourgeoisified" (Lenin, 1974b, p. 243). This stratum itself is built on the concrete foundation of imperialism and colonial monopolies and the "exploitation of the whole world" by England (Lenin, 1974c, p. 284). From the imperialist monopoly profits, the capitalist class can "bribe" workers (Lenin, 1974c, p. 301).

There is some ambiguity in Lenin's definition of the scope of this ideological split.

¹⁵Though representing these national squabbles as bourgeois, he remarks, "standing in the background, you have JOHN CHINAMAN who far outdoes them all in his ability to live on next to nothing" (MECW:49, p. 393).

The bureaucrats are conceived as a section of the proletariat, it is implied, but “become [properly] bourgeois” (Lenin, 1974c, p. 284). Meanwhile that section of workers that “allows itself to be led by men bought” by capital (Lenin, 1974c, p. 284). The argument ties Lenin’s polemical attacks on the second international into a real material foundation—of imperialism. In doing so, Lenin ossifies an ideological schism into a material fact.

Rosa Luxemburg’s assessment, conversely, was that the trade unions and cooperatives themselves, as a whole, become “the economic supports for the theory of revisionism” (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 85). Unions are the “organized *defense* of labour-power against the attacks of profit”, but are in themselves “totally incapable of transforming the *capitalist mode of production*” (Luxemburg, 2008, pp. 82–3). Hence her famous quote that union work remains a “labor of Sisyphus, which is, nevertheless, indispensable” (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 83). Luxemburg’s theory goes both further and not as far as Lenin’s. It goes further since it implicates the whole project of the struggle for reforms within an ideological and economic framework. It is not skilled and privileged workers that may succumb to ‘social imperialism’, revisionism, or reformism, but rather all workers. Furthermore, it is not imperialism itself that is the cause for reformist consciousness. She goes less far than Lenin though in refusing to ascribe an objective economic division in the interests of the working class.

Cliff criticises Lenin’s theory ideologically and economically. Ideologically, the representation of reformism as founded on a “small thin crust of conservatism” suggests the existence of a “surging revolutionary lava” underneath it, unleashed at any break in the crust (Cliff, 1958, p. 42). The experience of western capitalism had not been that splits within reformist leaderships or the union bureaucracy tend towards immediate revolutionary revolt. Secondly, there is no economic pathway, he argues, by which a particular fraction (aristocracy) of the working class benefits from imperialism, leaving out the rest. There are pathways, on the contrary, by which imperialism temporarily increases living standards in the ‘industrial’ countries: in general, an expansion of markets, the profitable employment of capital overseas creates a check on the over-production of capital and also the reserve army, thereby tending towards a general increase in wages in England (p. 44). This argument presumes the existence of a barrier to movement from the colonies to the industrial countries. There is a limit though. Once the laws of capitalism grasp the new expansion into the ‘agrarian colonial countries’, demanding profits, the expanded system will be set by the same

tendency towards over-production, increases in the reserve army, and of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (Cliff, 1958, p. 45).

Cliff clings, though, to the argument that it was the “expansion of capitalism through imperialism” that made reformism possible (Cliff, 1958, p. 46). If not imperialist colonisation then the permanent arms economy plays this role as the “economic roots” of reformism (Cliff, 1958, p. 47). He predicted that once the permanent arms economy turned to the deterioration of workers conditions, the “withering away of the roots of Reformism” would ensue (Cliff, 1958, p. 47). Cliff’s connection of reformism to particular checks on the LTFRP is not compelling. The grip of reformism has not been checked by the end of the post-war boom and the long recession. The radicalisation of the 1960s, and revolts in Czechoslovakia and Paris, showed that breaches with reformist consciousness were possible in conditions of absolute growth. Likewise today, although some material ‘roots’ of reformism may be said to be withering, in the sense of strong unions and mass parties, there is little evidence that the ideology of reformism has disappeared. Lenin notes that opportunism needs to be fought in all countries, not just the wealthy industrial countries (Lenin, 1974a, p. 90).

There are reasons then to seek reformism’s roots elsewhere. Luxemburg’s assessment highlights the ideological component of the “historically necessary evil” of the trade union bureaucracy (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 177). Trade union leaders adopt a “naturally restricted horizon” and tend towards bureaucratism (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 177). They are “constantly absorbed in the economic guerrilla war whose plausible task it is to make the workers place the highest value on the smallest economic achievement”, and who therefore take umbrage at criticisms of the necessary limits of trade union work (Luxemburg, 2008, pp. 177–8). Increasingly a revolution occurs in the relations between the “businesslike direction of the trade-union officials” and an increasingly passive rank and file, bound up in the increasing political neutrality of both (pp. 178–9). Therefore socialists must struggle ideologically against “uncritical trade-union optimism” (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 178).

Such an analysis is commensurate with Cliff’s comment that reformism reflects the “immediate, day-to-day, narrow national interests of the whole of the working class in Western capitalist countries under conditions of general economic prosperity” (Cliff, 1958, p. 46), and Lenin’s that the “force of habit in millions and tens of millions is a most formidable force” (Lenin, 1974a, p. 44). Though it breaks with some of the economic structures they propose. Luxemburg’s political assessment suggests that the

development of reformism, while built into the structure of everyday capitalism, needs a primarily *political and historical analysis*, with very little that can be done about its economic roots.

Attempts by Engels, Lenin, and Cliff to ground political backwardness in economic roots are vexed. They face the challenge of explaining: (1) the nature of the economic process; (2) its longevity within processes of capitalist accumulation, and (3) the connection between the economic root and its particular ideological expression. In chapters 5 and 6, this thesis provides an alternative understanding of reformism arising as a contradictory process in and through migration.

This affects 'cheap labour' theorists like Castles and Kosack (1972), who suggest a section of workers is paid off on the basis of profits of imperialism. They speak about "privileges" to craftsmen in the form of "symbols of higher status (different clothing, salary instead of wages, etc)" for manual workers (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 4). These are meagre spoils. Despite the Lenin bravado, the substance of their argument is less that domestic workers receive spoils and more that they do not experience the same discrimination as migrants. More generally, they look at the *longue durée* of post-war Western Europe, arguing that the boom has increased wages of manual workers (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 470), but produced a "class structure", with immigrants facing discrimination in housing, employment, and general social and legal treatment. It is the lack of discrimination experienced by domestic workers that contributes to the "lack of class consciousness" (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 17). Despite the fact that domestic and immigrant workers have the same interests in solidarity and collective action, the individualistic mentality encouraged in the domestic worker is what "leads to opportunism" (Castles and Kosack, 1972, p. 17). Following from the arguments above though, there is an economic question as to whether the kinds of discrimination they outline are less grounded in objective economic fact, and more grounded in subjective questions of organisation and anti-discrimination.

Castles and Kosack's theoretical contribution is revealed to be somewhat thin. But their rich empirical engagement with the period after the war prevents them from abusing it. They reject a number of flimsy theses that do not seem to fit the evidence and conclude there is an ultimately "dichotomic" class structure (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 473).

This assessment of the political and economic dynamics of reformism will have

important consequences for chapter 5, where the question of the economic status of immigration and the nature of reformism are central to the theorisation of the relationship between the Labor party, the working class and the state, when it comes to immigration.

4.3 MODELLING LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

The last section of this chapter provides an alternative assessment of 'cheap labour' theories, providing the most static conceivable method of analysis: a regression of questionnaires filled out on the 10th of August 2021 in the Australian Census. This provides an image of still life, a snapshot of the processes of the determination of wages, and a state vantage point from which to look at structural migration inequality conceptualised as 'cheap labour'.

Assessing the post-war boom, Jock Collins noted "clear segmentation of the Australian labour market when occupational, industrial and ascriptive (sex, ethnic origin) characteristics are considered" through segments described by "country of origin and gender" (Collins, 1984a, p. 11). This constructs the thesis of this chapter in the negative.

This regression utilises an inexact proxy for labour market outcomes by using census personal income data, and comparing the quantitative relationship of *country of birth* with income compared to *gender* and *industry*. This section provides a description of the method used, general descriptive statistics and then a multiple non-linear regression approach to model the relationship between the variables.

First, a dataset was constructed from the Australian 2021 census, using Table-Builder. Managers (using the 1-digit OCCP Occupation) and those not currently employed on a part/time or full-time basis (using LFSP, Labour Force Status) were excluded. The data was also broken down by Sex (SEXP), labelled x_S and by the reported Industry of Employment (using 1-digit INDP), labelled x_i . The one-digit industries are as follows: *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Mining, Manufacturing, Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Transport, Postal and Warehousing, Information Media and Telecommunications, Financial and Insurance Services, Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Ad-*

ministrative and Support Services, Public Administration and Safety, Education and Training, Health Care and Social Assistance, Arts and Recreation Services, Other Services. To make country of birth data more easily readable, a variable was constructed reflecting regions as well as prominent countries in Australia's intake, using the census' 2-digit level Country of Birth of Person (BPLP). This broke down country of birth into the following categories (x_c): *Australia, East Asia, Europe, Middle East, New Zealand, North America, Other Americas, Pacific, South and Central Asia, South-East Asia, UK, and Other.* Finally, the total personal income (INCP) is reported to the census in weekly income brackets 1 – 149, 150 – 299, and so on, up to the highest income bracket, 3500 or more.

These data allow for a straightforward visual representation of the proportion of individuals earning below the poverty line. Given the median income was \$805 per week in 2021, an individual 60 per cent poverty line of \$483 is used for this process (rounding to nearest dollar per ABS practice). The large 'bucket' size of the histogram data poses an inevitable problem in interpretation of a continuous variable such as income, so a basic linear interpolation is used to estimate the proportion of people earning under the poverty line.¹⁶

Figure 4.2 (on p. 147) shows the proportion of currently employed non-managers earning below the poverty line, by industry and gender. Larger bars represent more people living below the poverty line. Two results are immediate. Interestingly, Australia-born individuals have some of the highest proportions of employed non-managers below the poverty line. This indicates that many categories of employed non-manager migrants may earn more, rather than less, than Australian born individuals. Secondly, the impact of gender is in the same order as the relative 'advantage' (measured in this way) of being born overseas, making a difference in the order of 5% more of the female population living below the poverty line, considered on an individual basis, than men. This highlights some of the limitations of considering individual rather than family income. While it does highlight some important features, such as a serious relative disadvantage in women's ability to leave the family unit if they so wish, there are limitations in comparing the actual living standards of groups when disaggregated by gender, in that it may tend to underestimate the relative advantage of heterosexual women who live with a man on a higher income vis-à-vis other racial or family groups.

¹⁶For the percentage below a value ϵ in a bucket with lower bound l_B and upper bound u_B , the proportion is calculated $\frac{\epsilon - l_B}{u_B - l_B} N_B$. where N_B represents the number of people in that bucket.

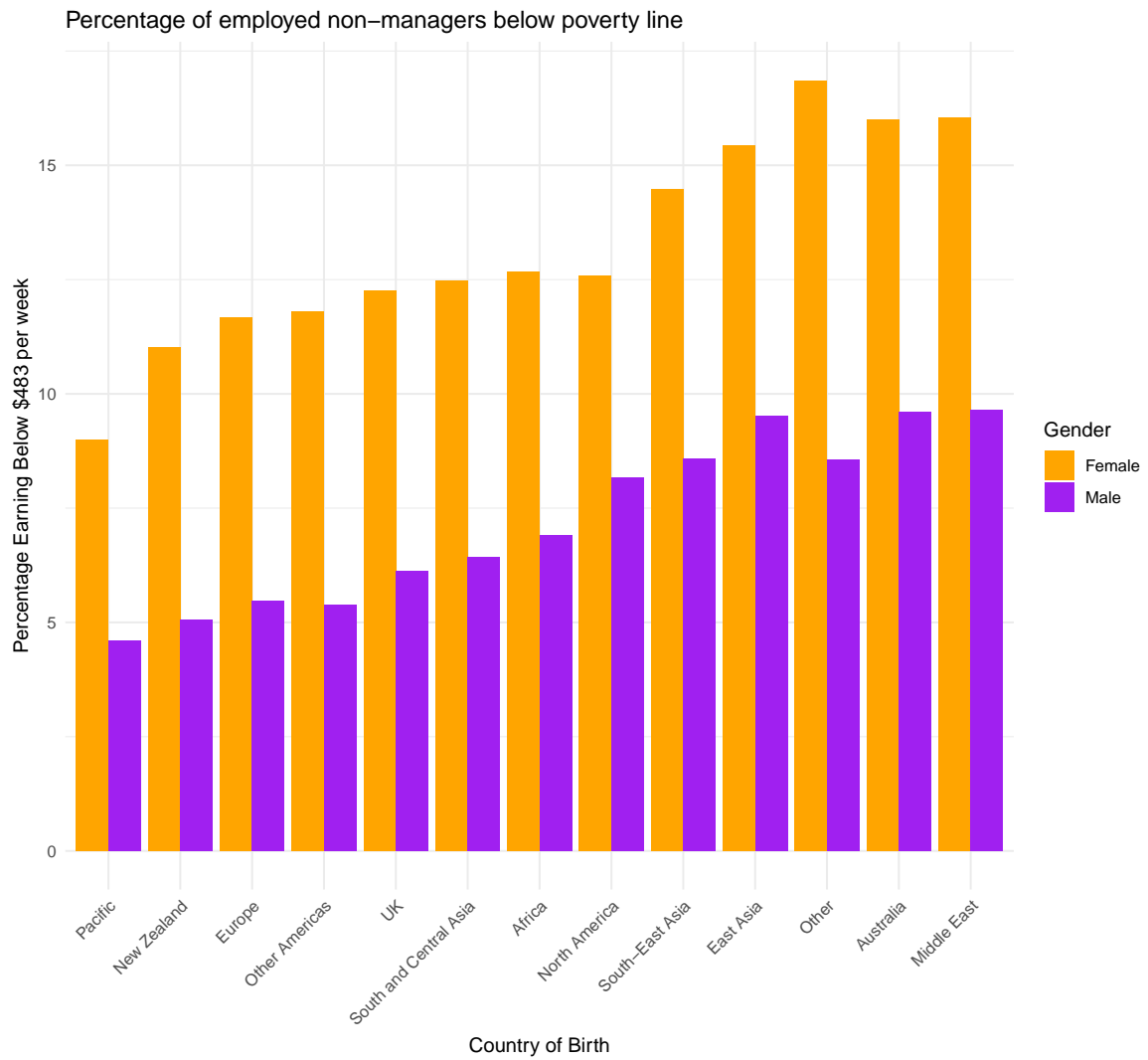


Figure 4.2: Estimate of the percentage of currently employed non-managers living below the Henderson poverty line (60% of median wage, \$483) currently employed on a part-time or full-time basis whose personal income is below \$800 per week, grouped by country of birth and gender, based on 2021 Census data. Estimation uses linear interpolation method for continuous variables with histogram data.

The second Figure 4.3 (p. 149) replicates this methodology now estimating the impact of industry and country of birth on the percentage of people below the poverty line. Again, across most categories, Australian-born currently employed non-managers are more likely than most groups to have an individual income below the poverty line. The most visually striking thing about this figure however is the strong impact that industry appears to have compared to country of birth.

Together, these data are visually suggestive that the impacts of gender and industry on likelihood of being a low-wage earner may be comparable or even higher than those of the person's country of birth.

To provide a more intuitive and workable category than percentage living below the poverty line, a final quantitative estimate of the mean income variable for each category is produced. Average income was constructed $y = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^B MP_i N_i}{\sum_{i=1}^B N_i}$, where N_i is the number of people in bin i and MP_i is the midpoint of bin i . A midpoint was constructed for each bin in the histogram, $MP_i = \left(\frac{l_i + l_{i+1}}{2}\right)$ for $i \in [1, B - 1]$, where l_i is the lower bound for bracket i , and B is the number of bins. Because the topmost bin B has no upper bound (\$3500 or more per week), a pseudo-midpoint is constructed using the harmonic mean method described by Hippel, Hunter, and Drown (2017), yielding $MP_B = 3500 \left(1 + \frac{1}{\alpha}\right)$, where $\alpha = \frac{\log((N_{B-1} + N_B)/N_B)}{\log(l_B/l_{B-1})}$. This is an iterative definition across the dataset, and where this is undefined ($n = 8$ categories of sex \times industry \times country of birth), setting $MP_B = 3500 \times 1.5$. Negative and nil incomes are excluded from the analysis, since it considers only currently employed workers, as well as incomes not stated.

This allows a construction of Table 4.1, which orders industries of employment by the number of overseas-born workers (currently employed non-managers), and comparing the estimated average wages of Australia-born and overseas-born workers. As shown in the right hand column, the 'domestic privilege' averages to $-\$72$. This 'domestic privilege' measure varies widely across industries, and shows no obvious absolute or relative correlation with the percentages of overseas-born workers in that industry. This indicates that people born overseas are not more likely to earn less than domestic workers, and also suggests that the approach of disaggregating incomes by country of birth may be a better way to model incomes.

Further descriptive statistics and the reproducible R code for this method of calculating a mean using histogram data are reproduced in the appendix (§A.2).

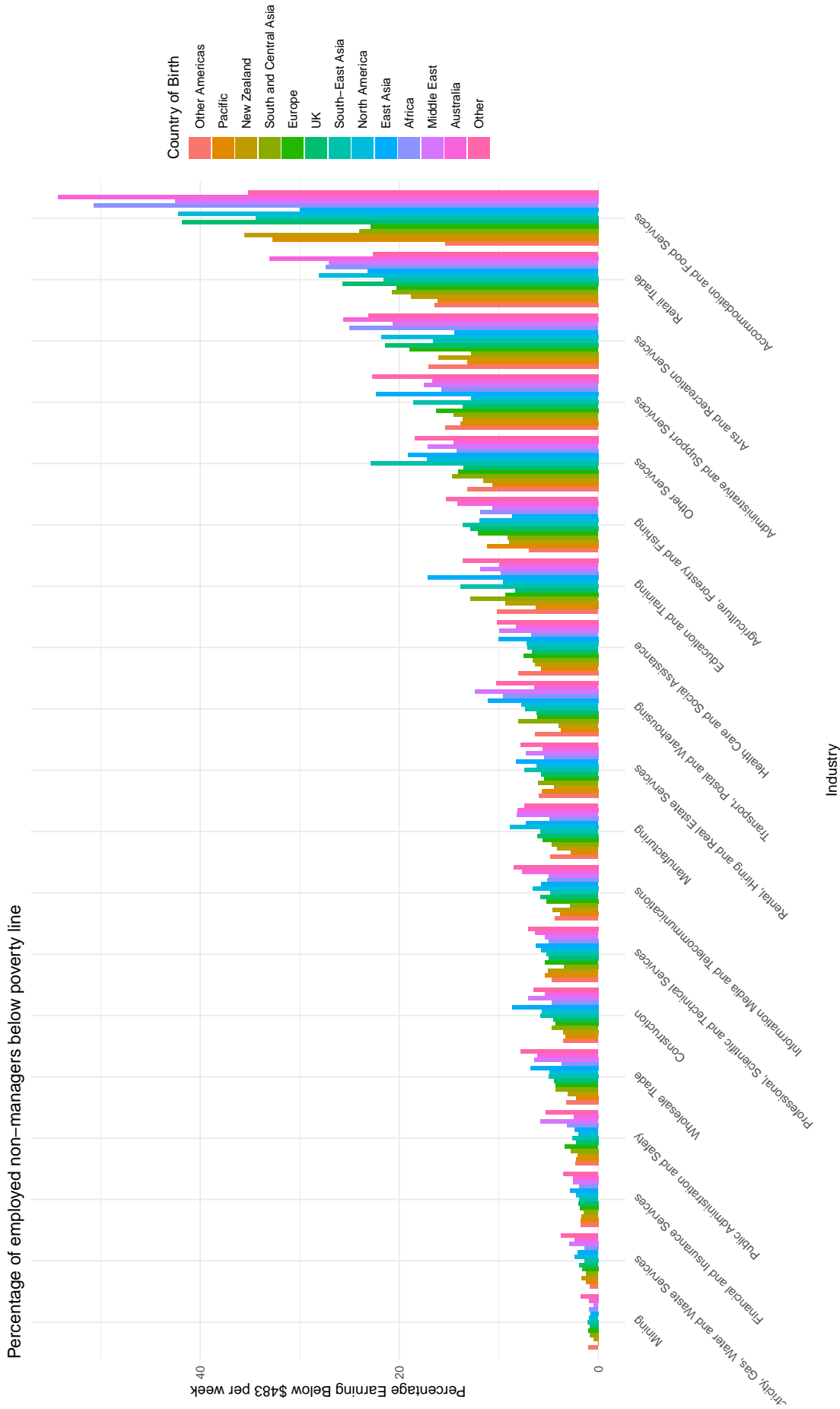


Figure 4.3: Percentage of currently employed non-managers earning less than the 60% median wage poverty line, grouped by country of birth and industry of employment, based on 2021 Census data. Linear interpolation used for continuous histogram data.

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Overseas Born (%)</i>	<i>Average Income (dollars)</i>		
		<i>Overseas</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Privilege</i>
Construction	24.4	1493	1434	-59
Arts & Recreation Services	24.7	1163	1055	-108
Public Administration & Safety	25.1	1710	1689	-21
Mining	25.5	2528	2414	-114
Education & Training	26.6	1411	1395	-16
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	27.2	1000	1109	109
Retail Trade	27.7	961	795	-166
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	28.0	1965	1879	-86
Other Services	29.4	1063	1091	28
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	30.5	1567	1731	164
Wholesale Trade	34.5	1487	1425	-62
Information Media & Telecommunications	36.6	1902	1681	-221
Accommodation & Food Services	37.6	751	539	-212
Manufacturing	38.4	1287	1335	48
Health Care & Social Assistance	38.6	1530	1360	-170
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	38.7	1964	1895	-69
Financial & Insurance Services	40.6	2146	2083	-63
Administrative & Support Services	40.6	1065	1087	22
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	40.7	1276	1441	165
Total	33.0	1449	1377	-72

Table 4.1: Domestic privilege by industry: estimate of incomes of Australia-born workers minus overseas-born workers, compared to percentage of overseas-born migrants. The first numerical column is the percentage of overseas-born migrants as a percentage of all employed non-managers with stated income above zero. The middle columns provide estimated average (mean) wages for both overseas-born and Australian-born employees respectively. The final column (representing 'domestic privilege') is the difference between Australian-born and migrant-born wages, with positive figures representing higher domestic wages.

MODELS

The average income approach described above provides a more intuitive multiple non-linear model for the impacts of these categorical variables. Because Industry is the most significantly associated with income variable y ($r^2 = 0.715$, $p < 0.001$) compared to gender ($r^2 = 0.1384$, $p < 0.001$) and country of birth ($r^2 = 0.046$, $p < 0.05$), the following generalised linear models, nested around the Industry variable, are produced.

Model⁰ included industry only as a predictor of average weekly personal income, y , model¹ included sex as well as industry, while model² added to the latter country of birth as an additional predictor. Because the variables are categorical, a generalised

linear model is introduced, where x values act as characteristic functions, equal to one only if the relevant industry, sex or country matches and zero otherwise (x_s measuring sex, x_i measuring industry of employment, and x_c measuring the country of birth). Finally, because the residuals showed nonlinearity and heteroscedasticity, the following nonlinear models were produced: model⁰ (y_0), model¹ (y_1) and model² (y_2) using natural logarithms:

$$\begin{aligned} \log(y_0) &= C^0 + \sum_i \beta_i^1 x_i, \text{ and} \\ \log(y_1) &= C^1 + \alpha_M^1 x_s + \sum_i \beta_i^1 x_i, \text{ and} \\ \log(y_2) &= C^2 + \alpha_M^2 x_s + \sum_i \beta_i^2 x_i + \sum_c \gamma_c^2 x_c \end{aligned}$$

where C^0 , C^1 and C^2 are constants, β_i^0 are coefficients for model⁰, α_M^1 and β_i^1 represent coefficients for sex and industry in model¹, and α_M^2 , β_i^2 and γ_c^2 representing coefficients for sex, industry and country of birth in model². The functions map $y_0 : \{0, 1\}^{18} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, $y_1 : \{0, 1\}^{18 \times 1} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, $y_2 : \{0, 1\}^{18 \times 1 \times 12} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, for some vector $\mathbf{x} \in \{0, 1\}^n$ representing industry, gender and country of birth.

The non-linear models’ residuals continue to show some nonlinearity and heteroscedasticity at extreme values, but they roughly resemble a flat, normal distribution, justifying estimation of linearity of $\log(y)$ with \mathbf{x} .

Goodness of fit tests were computed using the linear model function and ANOVA (analysis of variance) function in R 4.2.2. The results, reported in Table 4.2, suggest that model¹ is significantly better than model⁰, reducing the sum squares error and explaining 90% of variance, compared to an adjusted- $R^2 = 0.76$ for model⁰. Including sex alongside industry significantly improves model prediction of weekly income of employed non-managers.

However, model² also appears to be a significant improvement to model¹, with $F(12, 462) = 24.783, p < 0.001$, and an improvement of $R^2 = 0.94$. This result indicates that one can *reject* the hypothesis that country of birth has *no significant impact* on weekly income in conjunction with sex and industry. Although there is a statistically significant contribution of country of birth to weekly income when modelled alongside industry and sex, the size of this effect is relatively small.

	df	F statistic	Sum Squares Error	p-value	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Model ⁰	18, 475	88.5	12.764	< 0.001	0.77	0.76
Model ¹	19, 474	227.9	5.483	< 0.001	0.90	0.90
Model ²	31, 462	233.4	3.336	< 0.001	0.94	0.94

Table 4.2: Goodness of fit tests for three nested generalised non-linear models predicting weekly income: model⁰ including industry as its independent variable, model¹ including industry and sex, and model² including industry, sex, and country of birth. F-statistics are compared to constant model.

The coefficients of model² are reported in Table 4.3, with coefficients contributing geometrically to weekly income y . This allows a quantitative estimate of the size of impact of industry, sex, and country of birth on weekly income, by rearranging the model equation for constants \mathcal{C} , \mathcal{A}_M , \mathcal{B}_i , \mathcal{G}_c , reported in the Effects column of Table 4.3:

$$\begin{aligned}
 y_2 &= \exp \left(C^2 + \alpha_M^1 x_S + \sum_i \beta_i^2 x_i + \sum_c \gamma_c^2 x_c \right) \\
 &= \mathcal{C} (1 + \mathcal{A}_M x_S) \prod_i (1 + \mathcal{B}_i x_i) \prod_c (1 + \mathcal{G}_c x_c).
 \end{aligned}$$

The intercept coefficient $\mathcal{C} = \exp(C^2) = \667 represents a ‘base wage’ of a female, African-born employee in accommodation and food services. The remaining entries in the ‘effect’ column represent the percentage contributions of the independent categorical variables. So for instance, a man in mining would have a predicted wage ‘bonus’ of 226% and then 27% on top of that, for a total of 314% or an income of \$2,761 (as the effects are geometrically cumulative).

After adjusting for the effects of sex and industry on weekly personal income then, the impact of country of birth is on average an absolute percentage of 7%,¹⁷ compared to 109% for industry, 27% for gender. Moreover, although little can be taken from the ranking of the coefficients, it does not constitute evidence that Australian-born employed non-managers earn systematically more than most migrants. Only the ‘Other’ category (consisting of people born in Antarctica, Oceania with no further description, born at sea, and other), diverges strongly below Australian-born employee incomes.

This quantitative exercise provides an indicative measure of the income effect of country of birth, vis-à-vis sex and industry. The improved R^2 when accounting for

¹⁷The results for the UK, Europe and New Zealand were not significant. Excluding these results in an average of 9%.

	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Effect</i>
	Intercept (C^2)	6.503***	\$667.10
Sex	Male (α_M^2)	0.243***	27%
Industry	Mining (β_M^2)	1.182***	226%
	Financial and Insurance Services (β_{FIS}^2)	1.076***	193%
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (β_{PSTS}^2)	0.964***	162%
	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (β_{EGWWS}^2)	0.959***	161%
	Information Media and Telecommunications (β_{IMT}^2)	0.915***	150%
	Public Administration and Safety (β_{PAS}^2)	0.849***	134%
	Health Care and Social Assistance (β_{HCSA}^2)	0.826***	128%
	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (β_{RHRES}^2)	0.795***	121%
	Education and Training (β_{ET}^2)	0.717***	105%
	Wholesale Trade (β_{WT}^2)	0.707***	103%
	Construction (β_C^2)	0.654***	92%
	Transport, Postal and Warehousing (β_{TPW}^2)	0.567***	76%
	Manufacturing (β_M^2)	0.563***	76%
	Arts and Recreation Services (β_{ARS}^2)	0.451***	57%
	Administrative and Support Services (β_{ASS}^2)	0.404***	50%
	Other Services (β_{OS}^2)	0.381***	46%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (β_{AFF}^2)	0.363***	44%	
Retail Trade (β_{RT}^2)	0.286***	33%	
Country of Birth	North America (γ_{NA}^2)	0.098***	10%
	UK (γ_{UK}^2)	0.036	4%
	Europe (γ_E^2)	0.012	1%
	New Zealand (γ_{NZ}^2)	-0.028	-3%
	Middle East (γ_{ME}^2)	-0.062**	-6%
	East Asia (γ_{EA}^2)	-0.086***	-8%
	Pacific (γ_P^2)	-0.088***	-8%
	Australia (γ_A^2)	-0.088***	-8%
	South and Central Asia (γ_{SCA}^2)	-0.089***	-9%
	Other Americas (γ_{OA}^2)	-0.090***	-9%
	South-East Asia (γ_{SEA}^2)	-0.097***	-9%
Other (γ_O^2)	-0.154***	-14%	

Table 4.3: Coefficients of generalised non-linear model² of the impact of country of birth, industry and gender on weekly personal income. Significance is reported with *** representing $p < 0.001$, ** representing $p < 0.01$, * representing $p < 0.05$ and no symbol indicating $p \geq 0.05$. Data are from the 2021 census as described in text. Effect column reports the impact of the given variable, with the intercept signifying a base wage (Accommodation and Food Services, female, African-born), and the percentages representing positive or negative percentage impact on the weekly income ($\mathcal{A}_M, \mathcal{B}_i, \mathcal{G}_c$ as shown).

Country of Birth of 0.94 over 0.90 provides only a marginal improvement of explanation of variance, while its quantitative effect is relatively small, about one fifteenth the contribution of industry and less than a third of the contribution of sex.

There is scant evidence of a discrete stratum of migrant workers, let alone as a stratum lower than Australian-born workers.

Statistical evidence of differences in outcome exists, but returning to the argument above, the existence of statistical variation is not sufficient to conclude that there exists labour market structuration. As Fine argues, union members earn more than non-union members. ABS data suggest the median income of union members is 18.7 per cent higher than that of non-union members (ABS, 2024d).¹⁸ But there is no fundamental structuration that allocates certain workers to union and others to non-union workplaces. Concrete subjective factors dominate. Income differences do not suffice for judgements about labour market structuration.

Likewise, emphatically, the claim here is not that there exists no racism in Australian workplaces and households. It is not that racism is not central to the process of class. Indeed, racism may be similarly or more central to subjective questions of class organisation than union membership. But just as division by union or non-union, or sectionalism between different industries or sections of workers, are each determined by concrete statistical factors, these do not in themselves constitute the structuration of labour markets.

Even the large differences in industry need not suggest labour market structures (though historical analysis may find that some exist). The processes of working class reproduction necessitate different industrial segments, which may have different rates of profit, different levels of class organisation, and so on. The process of working class reproduction relies too on the nuclear family reproduction of labour-power (Bhattacharya, 2017a). Women and men in the heterosexual nuclear family are central to the reproduction of labour-power; one is not reproduced against the other.

The determination of wages (the largest part of workers' incomes) is based on capitalist processes of competition, and is a dynamic process. It allows for large-scale and ongoing deviations from averages, and there is clearly no universal labour reproduction cost.

Snapshots of statistical differences certainly cannot suffice for proving structura-

¹⁸This average median income figure is not comparable to the figures reported in Table 4.3.

tion. These data do however, on the surface at least, make the 'cheap labour' hypothesis a poor fit for explaining divergences in Australian incomes. This negative result only suggests a look further for the dynamics of immigration in Australian labour markets.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Through what was perhaps a "fatiguing climb" (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 104), chapter 4 developed an internal relations conceptualisation of migration in labour markets that starts on the basis not of an external intruder to an internally coherent national economy, but rather by centring the capital–labour relation within understandings of labour markets. Against the rigid structural formulation of cheap labour, this approach develops an account of dynamic processes of capital accumulation that reproduce not 'the' labour market, but a complex array of connected labour markets that are themselves in motion according to the dynamic forces of competition between capitals, rhythms of boom and bust, and uneven and combined development in the world economy.

In doing so, it established the conceptual framework for understanding the internality of migration with capital accumulation, class struggle and uneven and combined development within the imperialist world economy. It provided a critique of Castles and Kosack (1972, 1973), an investigation of Fine's (1998) account of labour markets as complex and multifaceted processes within the framework of Marxist political economy, and a snapshot of still life in 2021: a linear regression analysis of wages structure in the Australian 2021 census showing that gender and industry outweighed country of birth in capacity for 'explanation' of group average wages.

Together, this chapter advanced the thesis' goal of understanding migration within capital accumulation by situating migration within wider labour market processes, in which the moral, historical, and dynamic character of this process is foregrounded, as well as revealing the centrality of the capital–labour relation. Migration is not the result of a tug-of-war between two externally constituted camps, 'capital' and 'labour'. Understood as a processual social relation, capital–labour relation entails a tendency towards crisis not from its ontological exterior (Morton, 2013) in the intruding migrant, but within the internal tendency for capital to dominate over labour, for accumulation to dominate over circulation, for production to dominate exchange, in the asymmet-

rical and internally related process of accumulation. In the internal relations account, migration forms a moment within this process, in particular in the circulation of variable capital, and it is through these relations that migration is constituted within processes of capital accumulation.

For the progression of the argument of this thesis, the question of migration's constitution within capitalism is linked to that of Australian migration in the *longue durée*. This chapter is critical in laying the conceptual groundwork for the historical correlate to this analysis in the next chapter, which assesses the role of state management of labour-power, and develops the account through which the domination of labour by capital precedes a division into national labour-markets.

Chapter 5

Labour Market Regimes in Motion

Immigration in Class Formation

Reason is to displace force; the might of the State is to enforce peace between industrial combatants as well as between other combatants; and all in the interest of the public.

— HIGGINS, 1915, P. 14

Wherever else the law of supply and demand may reign unchecked it will not be here.

— DEAKIN, 1901/2019, P. 267

This chapter provides an alternative internal relations account of migration and labour markets to the ‘cheap labour’ explanations developed in the previous chapter, situating it with both the relations of class and imperialism. Rather than mechanistic separation between internally coherent national labour markets, it stresses the internality of Australia’s labour market within dynamic processes of class formation. After a brief clarification of the framework of analysis, this chapter unfolds over the four part periodisation provided in chapter 2. Across these periods, this chapter develops the explanation of shifts in Australian migration in the *longue durée* through two conceptual moves.

Firstly, it provides an account of the shifting political economy of immigration over each period, situating it within a wider labour market regime. The role of immigration is conceptualised not as an exceptional, structural, external check on ‘the’ national

labour market but rather as a moment within a *labour market regime* that runs across the division of the working class into domestic and immigrant workers. Immigration is not the exception to these processes, but one moment within a regime reproducing labour as a social relation. An internal relations account presents a labour market regime central to securing capital accumulation, supported internally by industrial relations policy, employer strategy, as well as immigration policy. Labour markets are regulated across the migrant-domestic divide.

Secondly though, it positions these labour market regimes as contradictory and processual. It seeks to separate the appearance from the essence of class formation, the state policy of labour market regimes from the underlying class processes underpinned by accumulation and social reproduction. This reconceptualisation of Australian immigration policy as internal to broader ruling class strategies of economic management necessitates an understanding of the working class not only as the victim of ruling class strategies, but as an agent that creates the world, and whose organisation and activity hold the capacity to overthrow the institutions that suppress it.

Against both structural and institutional analysis of migration and labour markets, this chapter provides an account of immigration that interweaves with evolving labour market regimes and the class formation it supports, in a manner every bit as contested, contradictory and uneven, as capitalist development as a whole.

5.1 LABOUR MARKET REGIMES

The framing device of 'labour market regimes in motion' extends the framework in chapter 4 to include a conception of labour market *regimes*, informed by the research agenda of labour regimes. These emphasise the internal relations within labour markets and the dynamic of international accumulation, exploitation, and processes of racialisation and social reproduction (Baglioni, Campling, Coe, et al., 2022; Baglioni, Campling, Mezzadri, et al., 2022). Against economistic accounts, this highlights the historically constructed nature of labour markets and the role of states in these processes.

These regimes are 'in motion' in the sense that they are reproduced and transformed through the *longue durée*, in and through capitalist imperialism. Highlighting motion and class formation distinguishes this approach centres the dynamic of trans-

formation within these frameworks, emphasising a class relational account (Selwyn, 2014b). By properly situating labour market management within global capitalism and imperialism, labour regimes are revealed as contradictory, of a provisional nature, susceptible to rifts in the economic base and reliant on a contradictory relation with civil society in general.

Class formation evokes Hanieh's (2013) conceptualisation of class as an unfolding social relation that evolves through accumulation, which, as this thesis has argued, is internal to capitalist imperialism. This class process, though operating at the heart of the economy in providing for the relations of wage labour and the production of a labour force and labour market, is mediated by the state. For Hanieh too, the state is the critical vehicle in which these contradictions are negotiated, situating the state as a "historically determined social form—or form of appearance—of the class structure that has arisen around capitalist accumulation" (Hanieh, 2013, p. 8). State regulation of class is, for Hanieh, a form of appearance of an underlying class structure, which is in turn "reinforce[d] and co-constituted" by the state (Hanieh, 2013, p. 8).

This dynamic assessment of appearance and essence of class, between state and class formation, is key in Australia, where institutional analyses are so prevalent due to the deep influence of state institutions on labour markets. This chapter situates immigration within a processual account of class, evolving through and alongside accumulation and imperialism. The state structures that frame the development and reproduction of the social relation of class, including immigration and industrial relations policy, must be set within the surging waters of accumulation and empire.

The remainder of this chapter develops this framework for processes of class formation within accumulation across the four periods outlined in section 2.2: (1) showing that migration played an internal though secondary role in the construction and subjective formation of free labour in the nineteenth century; (2) providing an internal class critique of the 'Australian Settlement' state development strategy that followed the 1890s; (3) the extension of immigration architecture from the 1940s; and (4) the flexibilisation of the labour regime as a whole, with migration in it, situating the 'immigration revolution'. This periodisation develops an internal relations account for the shifts in the management of migration within broader underlying dynamics of accumulation that reproduce labour regimes as a whole.

5.2 IMMIGRATION AND THE ORIGINS OF FREE LABOUR: 1821–1888

The migration of workers did not suffice for the reproduction of labour-power. The idea that social relations of free labour could not merely be imported is one Marx (1867/1976a) mocks in chapter 33 of *Capital*. Rather, the production of free labour entails the full gamut of capitalist social relations, including the capital relation, the production of relative surplus value, and the market economy (see subsection 2.2.1). Within labour markets, the same processes that revolutionised the dynamics governing convict assigned labour also transformed the regime of immigration.

The wages system grew from within the colonial convict economy, with the extension of tickets of leave, the growth of the officer class, combined with land grants and the gradual growth of a colonial economy (Connell and Irving, 1980; Hillier and O'Lincoln, 2013).¹ This transformation was facilitated at first by a rise in convict transportation, with annual transportations 340 per cent higher between 1815 and 1825 than previously, and almost doubling again between 1825 and 1840 (shown in Figure 5.1).

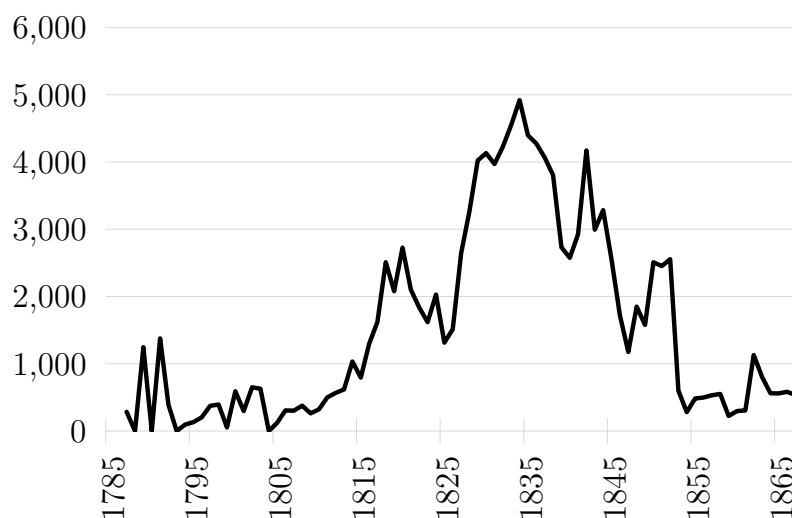


Figure 5.1: Available records of convict transportation to Australia between 1787 and 1867, by date of departure (from State Library of Queensland, 2019, prepared by author).

Though immigration could not contain these shifting social relations, it was an internal process to it, with the shift from transportation to assisted immigration a key

¹The “end of assignment was the end of the supply of cheap labor” (McMichael, 1984, p. 184).

support in the shift towards the production of capitalist social relations in the colonies of Australia. The transformation of labour importation was a necessary complement to the process of the commodification of labour-power.

The shifts away from the system of assigned convict labour also required a shift away from their mass importation. So despite the fact that labour demand was several times larger than that available through convict labour and free immigration, there was a sharp dip in the transportation of convicts from the 1830s onward. Figure 5.1 uses dates of departure on the convict register to represent the shipment dates of approximately 76 per cent of convicts transported in the nineteenth century, showing its rise after 1815 and its subsequent decline from the mid-1830s. The declining spikes from 1840 represent convicts transported to Van Diemen's land, Norfolk Island, and later Western Australia.

This decline was overtaken very quickly by a qualitative shift toward the immigration of free labour, but not via 'free' migration. Rather the relative costs of travel, compared to North America, meant that for the colonies, delivering white British immigrants to Australia required government intervention in the form of *assisted passage*.² The predominance of assisted over unassisted to migration in 1830s and 1840s NSW is shown in Figure 5.2.

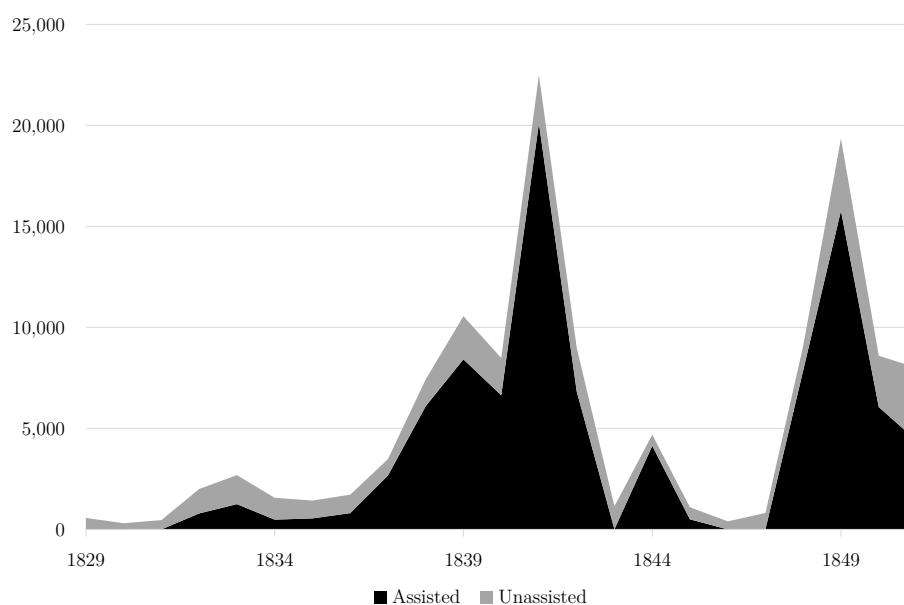


Figure 5.2: Assisted and Unassisted Immigration to New South Wales before the gold rush, 1829–1851 (figures collated from Madgwick, 1937/1969, p. 223).

²The travel cost question is a cliché (Blainey, 1966/1968, ch. 7).

The first assisted passages were in 1831, initially single Irish women, and by 1837 the emphasis had changed to male labourers and their families (Jupp, 1998, p. 11). What emerged by 1840 resembled Wakefield's (1829) famous scheme:³ colonial lands were sold off, and Britain would arrange the assisted passage of agricultural labourers as well as the processes of selection (Jupp, 1998, p. 19). The selection of women helped to transform the internal dynamics of social reproduction from the 1830s, as shown in the rising numbers of births in Figure 5.3. Migration did not substitute for, but facilitated, the dynamics of social reproduction, an impact that developed strongly from the 1850s.

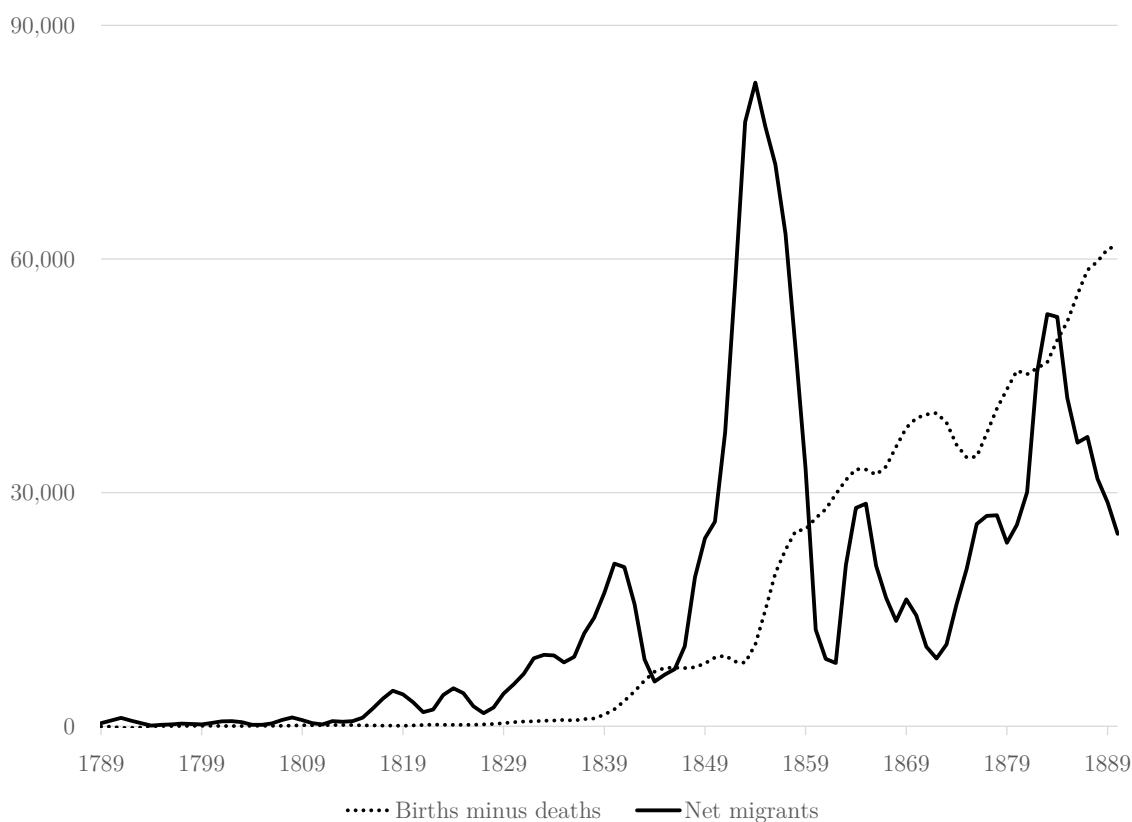


Figure 5.3: Contributions to population growth, 1789–1890, from Vamplew (1987, pp. 47–57), comparing “natural” growth (births minus deaths) and net migration. Data have been smoothed with a 3-moving average.

The colonies vied for British immigrants with aggressive government propaganda:

³The similarity was in the linking of land sales to the funding of assisted immigration. Some of his other dreams, that “that Capitalists shall never suffer from an urgent want of Labourers, and that Labourers shall never want well-paid employment” (Wakefield, 1829, p. iv), did not come to pass. This is not to vouch for its theoretical accuracy. “Its pretended character of mathematical precision, of scientific accuracy, must be denied, and its claim to be self-regulating dismissed. What is left then of the Wakefield theory is a series of important practical rules for colonization, capable of modified application according to circumstances, and useful even if adopted independently of one another.” (Mills, 1915/1974, p. 337).

through newspaper articles, advertisements and notices for free or assisted passages in the growing newspaper industry, touring lecturers such as Henry Parkes,⁴ and hired emigration agents. Immigration committees were established to give some colonial control, independently between the separate colonies/states until after WWII. Paid migrationists painted a rosy image of Australian settlement that drew the ire of workers in Australia and Britain alike (Roe, 1995a, p. 181). Workers and unions in Australia campaigned against what they called “gulling”, the placing of misinformation in the British and colonial press designed to heighten the flow of British migrants to Australia (Quinlan, 2018, p. 99). When the 1854 ‘Operative’ newspaper was set up, the “dissemination of true reports as to the wages actually paid in the colony” was the first plank of its policy.⁵ A depiction of post-federation competition of migration agents between states is shown in Figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4: ‘Immigration Problems’, Ben Strange (1908), in *Western Mail*, 1908. Caption reads: “The unanimity of immigration agents leaves ‘no possible probable shadow of a doubt, no possible doubt whatever’ to the British mind on Australian potentialities” (p. 28).

Assisted migration started from the 1830s but continued in some form up to the

⁴Parkes addressed 41 public meetings in Britain over 1861 and 1862 (Parkes, 1892/2001, Appendix 1).

⁵The planks that followed were: “the direct representation of labour in the legislature, an altered immigration system, and the protection of the working class from the depreciation of the labour market by the introduction of inferior races” (Coghlan, 1969, p. 708).

1980s, with some fluctuation. From 1830 to 1900, around half of all UK immigrants were assisted. Assistance dominated immigration throughout the nineteenth century, comprising approximately half of all immigration to the colonies from 1821 to 1900 (Haines, 1997, p. 267).⁶ Assisted immigration peaked in the mid-1870s at over 80 percent of gross immigration to Australia and New Zealand, falling to less than 10 per cent in the mid-1890s, and then rising to 60 percent before WWII (Hatton, 2019).

The shift from transportation to assisted migration, from convict to free labour, was not even. Contemporary estimates put the cost of free labour at up to five times more than unfree (Burkett, 2021, p. 108).⁷ The shift against transportation was resisted by those fearful of losing the control granted to employers (Burkett, 2021, pp. 101–3). In 1840, employers proposed to make the Masters and Servants Act *more* restrictive (Burkett, 2021, pp. 106–7), imposing up to “three calendar months . . . [of] hard labor” in punishment for refusing work, seeking to impose on all workers the conditions faced by convicts.⁸ After transportation was defeated in NSW, there were various attempts in the 1840s to revive it (Quinlan, 2021, p. 17), culminating in a 7000-strong protest in Sydney in 1849 against transportation, after the attempted landing of the Hashemy (Wilkie, 2014).

But although workers resisted transportation (as well as assisted migration), the political leadership often fell to liberals. Emancipists and free immigrants certainly opposed transportation, and the deliberate usage of convict labour against to undercut their jobs and conditions (see Irving, 2006). They petitioned and protested against transportation. Burgmann surmises: “Workingmen were involved in the anti-transportation movement, but this campaign was successful only when its leadership fell to business and professional men, and the movement began to articulate bourgeois reasons for desiring the abolition of convictism” (Burgmann, 1980, p. 20).

This reflected a growing financial, moral, and debatably economic case against convict labour. Priestley (1967) identifies the source of the backlash to transportation in an 1834 despatch suggesting that New South Wales, not Britain, should pay the costs of the gaols and police force for Britain’s criminal refuse, which uproariously hit the Sydney press in 1834 and the Legislative Council in 1835. But more important than

⁶See Haines and Shlomowitz (1992) and Haines (1995) who build on Crowley (1954); see also Hatton (2019, 2024).

⁷Others were smaller: Wentworth put it estimate was for £22 (convict) and £36 (free) (McMichael, 1984, p. 184).

⁸Masters and Servants Act 1840 No 28a, p. 1106

the financial element was a moral one, to encourage British migration of the right sort. Jupp calls it a “growing ‘respectability’ about Australia” (Jupp, 1998, p. 27). Convict labourers were considered undesirable, with assignment considered to have created lazy, unreliable, dangerous labourers. Conversely though, these transformations were equally the result of an increasing campaign of resistance led by convicts themselves, running especially from 1822 to 1833 (Maxwell-Stewart and Quinlan, 2022). Various forms of resistance, from go-slows to absconding, added to the crisis by degrading the profitability of the assignment system. It was also related to other unrulier forms of resistance, including riots. Turnbull (1999) highlights for instance the murder of Wardell (a friend of Wentworth) by escaped convicts. The ideology of emigration gave way to that of colonisation.⁹

A growing urban grouping was perceiving an alternative interest to pastoral interests, and even a resentment at being minor British colonies. Turnbull (1999) argues that the “main opponents to [transportation] were the urban-dwelling, immigrant middle and working classes. Those who most strongly favoured transportation were wealthy squatters and landowners who were heavily dependent on cheap convict labour” (para. 5). The dynamics of the anti-transportation movement make this relation clear. The movement against transportation was politically dominated by liberals and emerging middle class, though workers certainly participated, taking off in the 1830s (Turnbull, 1999).

A colonial free labour force was under construction that displaced the criminal class of convicts. This process was underpinned by the adoption of the regime of *assisted passage* and more broadly in the transformation in the social relation of class in the colony.

5.2.1 THE UNEVEN AND COMBINED DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS

This labour market shift engendered a subjective revolution in Australia’s labouring classes, exhibiting *uneven and combined development*. Uneven development is a critical moment in the origins of capitalism (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015) and has clear relationship with the subjective development of classes (Davidson, 2018a,b). In

⁹“Colonisation was the transplantation of emigrants ‘aided by a small portion of capital’. Emigration consisted of ‘an indefinite quantity of labourers without capital’” (Arnold, 2019, p. 38).

Australia, new techniques from the British industrial revolution would eventually be imported, though due to the heavy weight of agriculture and pastoralism in the colonial economies, and the relatively slow development of agricultural compared to industrial productive techniques in Britain and Ireland (Clark, 2018; Hensell, 2007), Australian colonial development remained mostly manual until late in the nineteenth century.¹⁰

The combined nature of development imbued Australia's working class with the organisation of Britain's working class. Britain was home to certainly the most developed working class up until the defeat of Chartism (Hobsbawm, 1975; Thompson, 1984). The early years of colonisation coincided with the formation of the English working class from 1790 to 1830 (Thompson, 1984, p. 194-5). From 1830, Britain's working classes developed a "more clearly defined class consciousness" (Thompson, 1964/2013, p. 712), before maturing with a stronger class feeling through the great Chartist movement in the later 1830s and 1840s. At the middle of the nineteenth century, as Engels (1895/2003) would later remark, the "the struggle of these two great classes", the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, was only developed in a tiny fraction of the world: "apart from England, [it] existed in 1848 only in Paris and, at the most, a few big industrial centers" (p. 22).¹¹

For that reason, the disproportionate reliance on English, British and Irish workers imbued Australia's nascent working class with the particular dynamics of British and Irish class development. The embryos of workers' organisation in Australia, including within the democratic movement, can be found relatively early, in the first half of the nineteenth century,¹² and in craft unions from the 1830s and 1840s (Markey, 1997a). Techniques of organisation were not just copied, with workers in colonial Australia drawing "heavily on British organisational forms and ideas" but also "implement[ing] some more rapidly" (Quinlan, 2021, p. 11).¹³ Workers' mobilisation appeared partic-

¹⁰See for instance the sugar industry in the 1890s and 1900s (Griggs, 2004).

¹¹The combined and uneven ideological development of the system gave a kick start for the first unions with the rapid growth of craft unions in the colonies (Childe, 1923/1964, pp. 82-7), thanks to the export of working class militants from Britain. Childe's book was the first document of parliamentary socialism (Irving, 2020, p. 230). For Alexander (1947/1969, p. 26) the "Australian trade unions" are sufficiently different to the British so as to require a separate analysis, particularly with regards to "the frontier type which makes at times a decisive if not always a continuing contribution to Australian development, economic, political and social."

¹²Terry Irving (2006) has shown that before 1850 in NSW, the working classes were becoming more active in the political life of the colony. A similar result has been shown by Tom O'Lincoln (2005). See also Quinlan (2018).

¹³Marx remarks about a quite separate situation, that factory workers' strikes began in the "lower ranks of unskilled labor (not factory labor), actually trained by the direct influence of emigration" (MECW:12, p. 168).

ularly in a relative numerical sense to be world leading, with the rapid rise of mass unionism and the sharp turn towards unskilled worker organising in the second half of the 1870s.

Recent studies have suggested that rather than a counter-position between the new unskilled unions and older craft ones, craft unions were a central force in mid-nineteenth century workers' militarism. Their ranks were swelled not by apprentices, which they sought to limit, but generally by skilled migrants (Buckley and Wheelwright, 1988). Far from these migrants depressing wages, serving as scabs, or holding back militarism, these skilled areas were most often the bastions of militancy. It was skilled labour that had the most successful organisation in the years up to 1890. Early colonial unions, mainly craft ones, emerged throughout the nineteenth century taking action in self defence and achieving a number of significant victories, though the gold rush stole many members of the smaller associations (Buckley and Wheelwright, 1988, p. 165). Migrant workers were neither cheap nor unskilled nor passive.

One representation of this subjective shift towards free labour is in the changing nature of collective action. Figure 5.5 shows instances of collective action compiled by Quinlan's (2018; 2021) remarkable big data investigation into newspaper clippings.¹⁴ Quinlan notes that these data reflect shifting political climates and over-representation of certain forms of action by colonial elites. The figure also counts all instances equally regardless of the depth of action or the number of participants. Nonetheless, a relative, qualitative transformation in the mode of expression of working class dissent is clearly discernible from the figure. As early as 1841, the strike overtook escape from colonial bonds and non-strike collective action (Quinlan, 2021, p. 50), with another sharp rise in the 1850s. These features accompany a period of the formalisation of working class organisation and a geographical shift towards the colonial capitals after the 1850s. Likewise, there is a rise in inter-union solidarity, and the mounting of demands, with the eight-hour struggle alongside and as a "part of a wider mobilisation on hours encompassing almost all workers." (Quinlan, 2021, p. 63), such as the half holiday movement, early closing movement. These were increasingly coordinated from the 1850s onward (Quinlan, 2021, pp. 66–8).

But these qualitative strengths developed *unevenly*. Britain's working class was in-

¹⁴These are indicative shifts across the periods. Quinlan's dataset is far more powerful than this simple graphic suggests. See for instance his figure showing annualised strikes and non-strike collective action across the nineteenth century (Quinlan, 2021, p. 50).

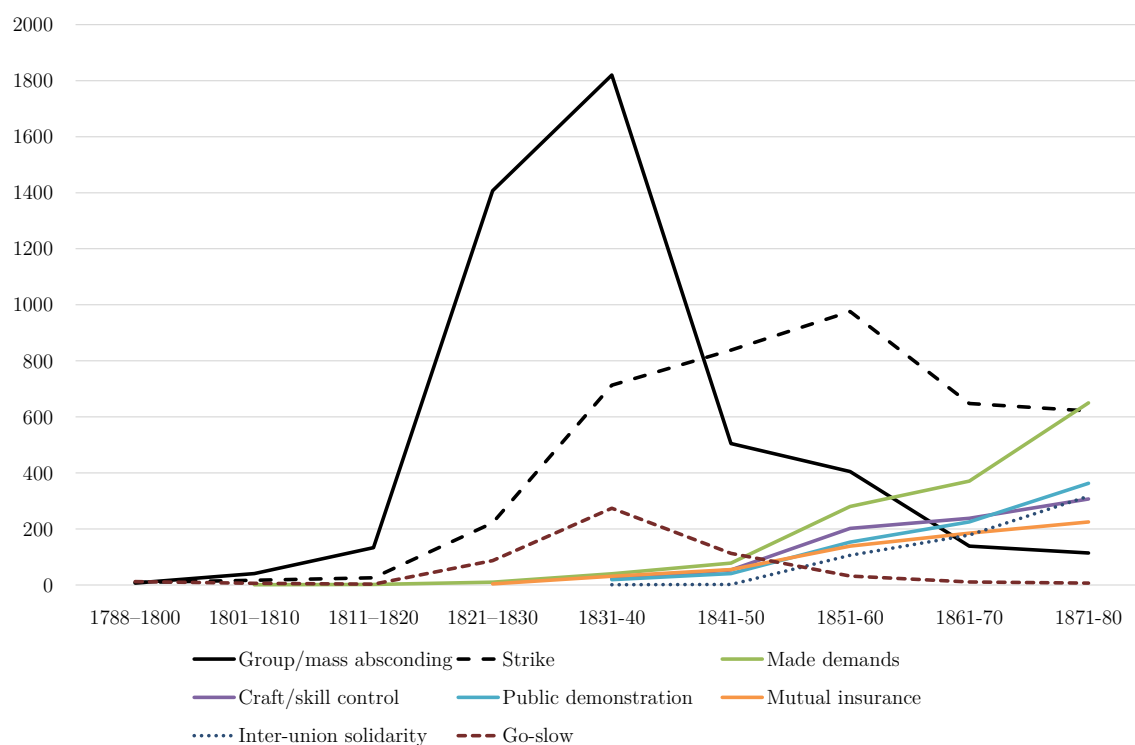


Figure 5.5: Compiled figures of instances of workers collective action by method used, from Quinlan (2018, Table 3.6, p. 94) and Quinlan (2021, Table 2.5, pp. 45-6).

famous for its “strong non-political class feeling and labour organization” (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 121). Even if capitalism (and to a growing extent unionism) came in their bones, Australian colonial contexts presented quite different ones to the English heart of industrial capitalism. Advanced workers’ traditions were injected into a climate where capitalist social relations were still taking hold, where a colonial mentality combined an imagined bush socialism and a genocidal settler colonial paranoia about its state in the Pacific. The subjective dynamism however imbued the advanced traditions of Britain’s working class into a new colonial context.¹⁵ The tendency towards workers organisation was accelerated by the implantation of British traditions, but which grew alongside a local radical nationalism.

Immigration played a critical role in this tradition of radical nationalism. Debate over transportation, free or assisted immigration, and the blackbirding of indentured labour revealed a growing conservative nationalism, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The combination of the rejection of transportation, the rejection of indentured

¹⁵“Rather than obtaining fair wages and recapturing disappearing British traditions of land access, assisted immigrants found themselves upon arrival in New South Wales in the midst of the same transition to capitalist labour relations they had fled but with the added complications of harsh treatment characteristic of a forced labour system as well as competition from convict workers” (Burkett, 2021, p. 124).

labour, and embrace of assisted immigration by the colonial governments cannot be explained by a recourse to *workers' self interest*, nor abstract humanitarianism. Rather, they require an explanation of ideological questions, including “respectability” (Jupp, 1998, p. 27) and nationalism (Martinez, 2005). An ideological shift from emigration to *colonisation*, a policy shift from transportation to assisted immigration, imbued the labouring class with these ideologies. Class formation brought together traditions of working class militancy, British legacy, Irish anti-imperialism, and Australia’s own settler colonial dynamic.

The development of Australia’s working class was shaped fundamentally both by the immigrants themselves, their habits, politics, and techniques of organisation, and by the politics of immigration, in the development of the quality of radical nationalism.

Immigration was in this way a key moment within class formation, providing the labour supply without which “[s]ettler capitalism was nothing” (McMichael, 1984, p. 183). It stamped that class with the contradictions of British class contradictions, distorted into a new colonial context. Nonetheless though, it remains that immigration never sufficed in itself for the production of the class of free labourers. Immigration was from the beginning supplementary to Australia’s forming labour market regime.

5.2.2 INDENTURE: THE UNEVEN END TO UNFREE LABOUR

This did not end landholding class attempts to introduce unfree labour, however. From the 1840s and 1850s, land-owning employers attempted the indenture of coloured immigrants (Burgmann, 1980, p. 12), recruited from Asia, Europe, as well as the Pacific (Quinlan, 2021, p. 17). In northern NSW and later Queensland, there was continuity between the formally penal use of assigned labour and the coercive indentured labour in Pastoral sectors (cf. Anthony, 2007).

From the early 1860s to 1904, around 60,000 Melanesian workers were brought to Australia as indentured labourers (Munro, 1995; Shlomowitz, 1981), referred to here as South Sea Islanders (SSIs). From 1863 to 1906, the sugar cane industry in Queensland grew on the basis of the importation of SSIs (Ryan, 2024). Although recent scholarship has pointed to the agency of SSIs, it remains the case that indentured labour was coercive (Bates, 2017), that a significant minority of SSIs were explicitly kidnapped, abducted, tricked, or misled, that historic sums of wages were stolen, in

the order of tens of millions,¹⁶ that mortality rates were very high (Parnaby, 1964, pp. 144–7). Pacific Islanders also worked in a wide array of other industries, both before legislation in the 1880s confining them to the sugar industry, and afterwards, for the approximately 2500 workers who avoided deportation from 1906 (Munro, 1995, p. 620).

The dismantling of indenture began very early on, with a rising White Australia agenda.¹⁷ In Queensland, Liberal legislation that oversaw, but also began to contain and ultimately deport SSI labour, started from the 1877 through to phasing out in the 1880s, and widespread expulsion from 1906 (Munro, 1995; Cronin, 1993b, ch. 3)—coinciding with anti-Chinese legislation (see p. 53).

This dismantling, however, was extremely uneven, ambiguous, and cautious in Australia and throughout the Pacific. Forms of indenture continue throughout the White Australia period (Martinez, 2005), and forms of unfree labour continue through to today (Stead and Davies, 2021).¹⁸

As seen in the quantitative study in section 4.3, Aboriginal workers continue to form the most disadvantaged portion in Australian labour markets in wages, unemployment, and participation outcomes. This corresponds to a unique history of state control of lives and livelihood, which included control over land as well as labour, as discussed in chapter 3. SSI workers cannot be entirely separated from this history, with a shared history of large-scale wage theft, bonded labour, alongside intermarriage and family and kinship ties (Martinez, 2005; Moore, 2015a).

This chapter's focus on White Australia runs the risk of ignoring the wider histories of non-white labour that push beyond 1888. There is an extensive history of Aboriginal labour in the cattle industry, Indonesian and Torres Strait Islander labour in the pearl shelling industry (May, 1994), Chinese labour in gardening (Frost, 2002) and cabinet-making, laundry-work and retail (Atkinson, 1991). Scholars have rightly invested great time in scraping out these histories from the forgotten annals of Australian history.

Class formation in Australia was imbued with the racial, demographic dynamics structurally preferencing white British labour in the construction of its working class. This was never successful, with histories of black convicts from the very first moment of

¹⁶Moore (2015a) estimates over 38 million Australian dollars in 2012.

¹⁷See §2.2.2

¹⁸The debate over Banaji; Banaji's (2010; 2020) critique lies outside the scope of this thesis, but see Callinicos (2014a, pp. 204–5), and Brass (2014).

	Year	Birthplace, Percentage					Population
		Britain	Ireland	US	China	Germany	
New South Wales	1846	37.6	24.9				154,534
	1851	33.4	20.6				187,243
	1856	34.0	18.8	0.3	0.7	2.0	266,189
	1861	30.4	15.6	0.3	3.7	1.6	350,860
	1871	21.7	12.5	0.3	1.4	1.3	503,981
	1881	18.1	9.2	0.3	1.4	1.0	751,468
	1891	16.9	6.6	0.3	1.2	0.8	1,132,234
	1901	11.8	4.4	0.2	0.7	0.6	1,354,846
Victoria	1846	43.9	27.8				32,879
	1854	57.4	16.9	1.1	1.0	1.6	223,074
	1857	50.7	16.0	0.7	6.2	1.9	409,038
	1861	43.7	16.1	0.5	4.6	1.9	540,322
	1871	31.0	13.7	0.3	2.4	1.3	731,528
	1881	22.7	10.1	0.3	1.4	1.0	862,346
	1891	18.7	7.5	0.3	0.7	0.9	1,140,405
	1901	12.7	5.1	0.2	0.5	0.6	1,201,341

Table 5.1: Sample of colonial census data. Proportion born overseas in New South Wales and Victoria. Britain is the sum of those born in England, Wales, and Scotland. NSW census of 1846 is divided into ‘middle’ and Port Philip District. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were not included in these census data.

colonisation (Chingaipe, 2024), and an ongoing presence of Chinese people in colonial censuses, averaging 1.5 per cent of the population in colonial NSW censuses from 1846 to 1901 and 2.4 per cent in Victoria over the same period (Table 5.1). The labour market regime constructed, however, was not based on a segmented labour market with a discrete stratum of imported non-white and/or non-free labour as a discrete labour segment. The exception to this rule is the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders which was uniquely determined by changing modes of settler colonial violence, assimilation, and incarceration.

The bourgeois construction of Australian labour market regime as white infected workers’ organisation. There is evidence of anti-immigration politics in working class mobilisation in the nineteenth century. In Quinlan’s (2021) detailed account of 9,692 instances of workers mobilisations, where just 1.6 per cent related to immigration, and these are split fairly evenly between “anti-Europe immigration” and “racial/anti-Chinese” (0.78 and 0.84 per cent respectively). Sir Arnold White told the British select committee on colonisation of 1889–90, that “the attitude of the labouring classes to those of their own class at home was as hostile as it was to the Chinese” (cited in

Jupp, 1998, p. 36).

Anti-Chinese attitudes did grow within the working class, not out of economic self-defence but as a part of this bourgeois process of class formation. The rejection of Chinese people contained an ideological and racial case against the Chinese, dominated by an increasing bourgeois desire for ‘homogeneity’ (Griffiths, 2015). The assisted immigration of British workers on the other hand was opposed “as a system . . . not the assisted immigrants themselves, unlike the anti-Chinese movement which objected to Chinese immigrants as people” (Burgmann, 1978, p. 26). Burgmann discusses the exception of paupers and convicts to this rule, who were often constructed in early nineteenth century European discourse as *racially* inferior (see Malik, 1996).¹⁹ Working class opposition to Chinese people reflected not economic compulsion but a growing racist nationalism (see chapter 6). These racial ideologies were inherently connected to labour market construction and to class formation—the working class under construction was required to support a white settler colonial elite and quell its paranoia about invasion.

The White Australia policy has been widely portrayed as a non-‘cheap labour’ strategy imposed through the state, as described above at section 4.1. In particular, its racially restrictive content has been portrayed as representing (in however distorted a way) workers’ economic interests: White Australia equals labour protectionism. Even where it is motivated by racism, the source of this racism is presented ultimately as Chinese immigrants, whose presence is translated into state policy via the proxy of working class anxiety. This view is described by Burgmann (1985) as the “baloney view” of Australian racism, ascribing an “unrealistic” degree of power of the working class over the state, and illogically suggesting that the middle class and capitalist class were motivated by a concern for high “working class wage levels” (Burgmann, 1978, p. 33).

Burgmann’s critique sharpens the analytical question: More important than the negative question as to why cheap Chinese, ‘coolie’, or SSI labour was excluded is the positive one—why White labour?

More importantly than the omission of importation of (cheap) coloured labour-power, White Australia was fundamentally a migration regime entailing the *commission* of importation of *white* labour-power. Deakin argued in 1904 that the intention

¹⁹See also Burkett (2021) on assisted immigration.

of a White Australia is “that it shall be an Australia peopled by white men, and not . . . white merely because of the blank unoccupied spaces on the map.”²⁰ Deakin’s main political rival, the Free Trade Party, accepted also that all who accept the doctrine of White Australia “must repudiate the suggestion that it means an empty Australia” (George Reid, Hansard, House of Reps, 4/10/1905). This argument is suggestive of this chapter’s key insight: White Australia was not a program of labour protectionism. It was a *labour migration regime*: one that consisted of populating Australia with White British immigrants, and therefore that required the exclusion of non-white immigrants.

Chapters 2 and 6 outline the critical motive force for that migration regime: the imperialist and nationalist dynamics of Australia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But even though White Australia was not motivated in the first instance by a will to keep labour expensive, it *certainly did* have concrete economic content, and central implications for labour markets constructed after 1888.

Immigration formed a component part of a much broader labour market regime, emerging from this process of capital accumulation in Australia. In the period leading up to White Australia, migration formed the foundation of the process of class formation, not only in the numerical demographic sense but ideologically in the colonial-cum-national movement, supported through assisted migration and the movement against convict and indentured labour, forming the economic, political and economic foundation for White Australia.²¹

5.3 THE ‘AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT’ AND CLASS FORMATION: 1888–1945

White Australia cannot be understood simply as a program of restricted migration, nor merely of selective commissioned migration. It entailed an array of state economic policies, and in particular a labour market regime of conciliation and arbitration that brought domestic and migrant workers under a regime of state economic management.

²⁰Hansard, HOR, 23/6/1904, p. 2588. This quote has been widely commented on, Hancock, 1930, p. 81, Eggleston et al., 1933/1968, p. 58. Hancock writes: “The Australians have always asserted that immigration restriction is but the negative condition of the positive policy” (Hancock, 1930, p. 81).

²¹When NSW Labor premier Jack Lang attempted to block assisted migration, the *Herald* attacked Labor for “setting itself steadily against the consummation of a White Australia” (Nairn, 1986, p. 91).

The most distinctive feature of Australia's labour market was not exclusion, but the system of centralised arbitration and bargaining over wages policy.

This section launches a critique of the widespread idea of the 'Australian Settlement': the idea that at federation a great policy compact was produced bringing together workers and bosses lasting almost one hundred years. These policies—White Australia immigration policy, the state conciliation and arbitration of wages, and the state economic intervention including through tariff policy—are often but not universally said to benefit both the working and ruling classes. This section argues however while this framework usefully re-frames the economic questions of labour markets by introducing arbitration as perhaps the central device, it nonetheless fails to capture one hundred years of processual dynamism in Australian capitalism.

This conceptual approach represents 'Australian Settlement' not as a successful inter-class compact, but as the form of appearance of a class process.

5.3.1 ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF WHITE AUSTRALIA

The Australian economy matured sharply in the second half of the nineteenth century. Intervention by the colonies was a constant feature of development, with the apparatus of the state directly involved from the system of convict assignment, the officer salaries that produced early sums of capital, onward. Public services and construction during the period before the end of the Napoleonic war comprised over a fifth of Butlin's retrospective measures of GDP (Figure 5.6).²²

Following the land reforms from the 1860s, protectionism began to take root. The McCulloch tariff in Victoria marked the start of its status as the protectionist colony. In the 1860s, the argument for protection had been linked to immigration, since state-aid to increase immigrants needed to be met with state-aid to their potential employers (Varian, 2024, Coghlan, 1969, p. 921–2, 1148, Shann, 1930, pp. 266–9).²³ Tariffs were increased from the mid-1860s in NSW, Victoria and Queensland, and reached their peak in the 1890s for all three colonies and Tasmania.²⁴

²²"State power and private control of production were articulated in many ways, from the magistracy to immigration schemes" (Connell and Irving, 1980, p. 38).

²³"much of Coghlan's work and all of Hayter's was done at a time, namely, the period of the 'go-ahead colonial pace' about 1880-90, when an intellectually drunken conception of the 'illimitable' resources of the principal colonies was fashionable" (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1969, p. xxviii).

²⁴Lloyd (2017) produces a weighted average of tariffs by colony for the 19th century. These figures do not distinguish between protectionist tariffs and revenue-raising tariffs.

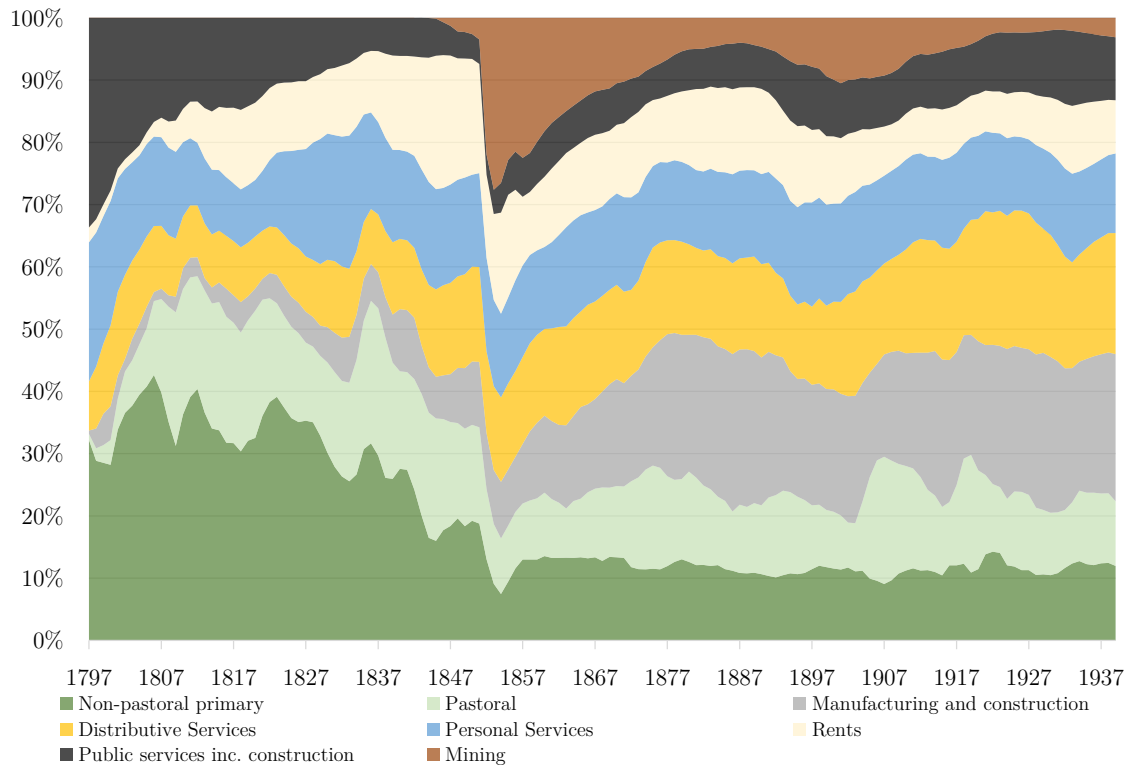


Figure 5.6: Proportional make up of ‘Gross Domestic Product’ across Australian colonies and after federation between 1795 and 1939, using retrospective calculations (Butlin, 1962; Butlin and Sinclair, 1986), smoothed with a 3-moving average.²⁶

Although it was first mining that proportionally displaced Australia’s pastoral and agricultural bias, manufacturing and construction grew sharply from the 1860s, supported by growing tariffs. “The pastoral equilibrium of Australian economy was upset in the first gold decade, 1851-60” (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1949, p. 130). Economic diversification away from the pastoral and agricultural sectors saw it fall from an average of 45 per cent to 24 per cent of GDP (Figure 5.6). This economic re-weighting was cause and consequence of a shift within class relations and Australian capitalism, with urban working class and manufacturers becoming the central contradiction, and a shift away from pastoral capital. This period of managed economic growth and maturation—the deepening of capitalist social relations, generalised commodity production and the real subsumption of labour—came along with a shift towards self government in the 1850s in the eastern colonies and the Robertson land acts of 1861.

Australia’s working class made strides in this period, including democratic victo-

²⁶Figures shift from calendar year to financial year in 1901, and equivalencies are established by the author between Butlin’s categories before and after 1860. Excludes Van Diemen’s Land (1804–1809) and Western Australia (1827–1860) due to data availability.

ries, reductions in working hours, the old age pension and public education.²⁷ Wage ‘protections’ and trade protectionism came about together within a combined process (Macarthy, 1967, p. 80).

Assisted immigration continued as an important economic support for White Australia, averaging 25 per cent of all population growth between 1831 and 1980, as shown in Figure 5.7. Two depressions in 1890s and the 1930s paused the regime of assisted immigration, before being resumed in the post-WWII period. The process of the rejection of convict and indentured labour proceeded along an underlying continuation of the regime of assisted immigration.

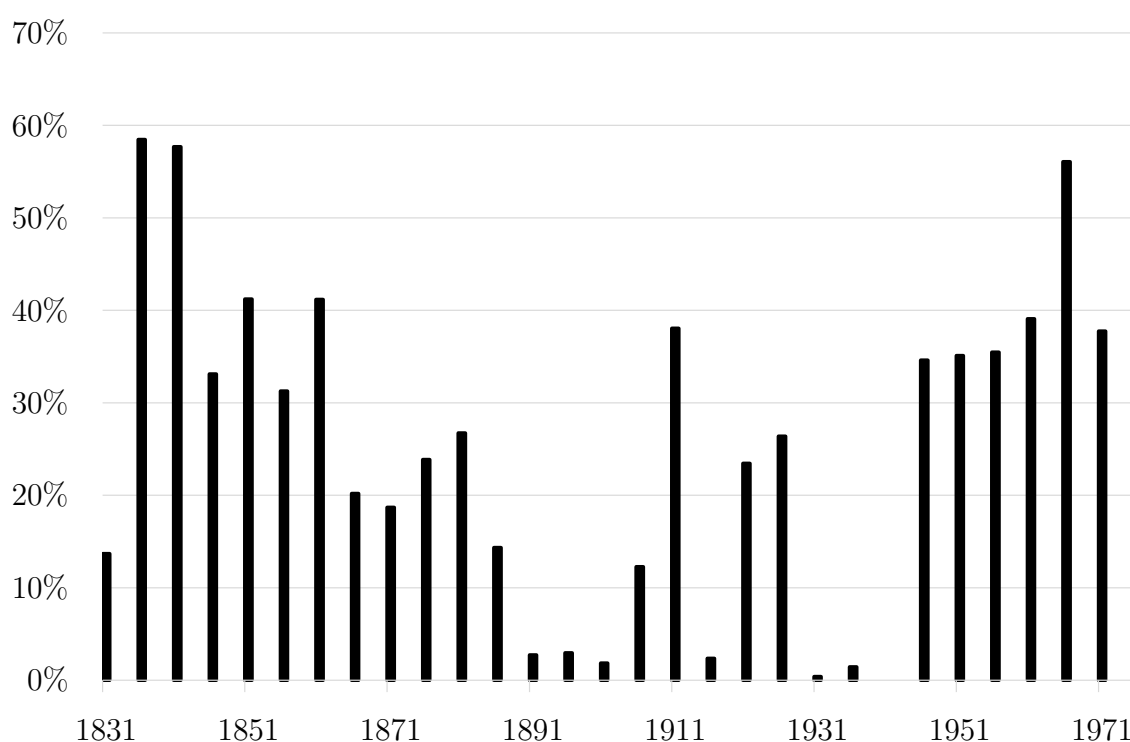


Figure 5.7: Assisted migration 1831–1980 over five-year periods, as a percentage of total population growth in each period (derived from Vamplew, 1987, p. 5).

These depressions were deep, each fundamentally shifting the processes of class formation. The rebound after the 1890s depression saw a “broadening of the industrial base”, a doubling in “investment in secondary industry” and a rise in factory production by the start of WWI (Wright, 1995, p. 15). Two world wars brought the manufacturing labour force to 28 per cent by 1940 (Wright, 1995, p. 17).

Capitalist social relations extended in the domestic sphere formed the real foundation of Australia’s Monroe doctrine. A relative break with the imperial motherland

²⁷Castles (1985) highlights the significance of pensions.

was not possible without its own bourgeois social basis, which grew rapidly between the growth of generalised commodity production from 1860 and the colonial agreement around White Australia in 1888. The Australian state had a long history in the colonial construction of capitalism, from the formation of capitalist relations through to the expansions of production and transportation in the later nineteenth century, and the formation Australia's ruling class evolved along with the class structure, including in response to working class dynamism.

5.3.2 ARBITRATION AND CLASS FORMATION

The key tenet of Australia's labour market was established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the distinctive system of wage-fixing, centralised arbitration and collective bargaining. Compulsory arbitration is the result of the relations between ruling classes within the contradictory development of capitalism—between the militancy of Australia's working class (especially in the 1880s and 1910s) and the spasms of the capitalist system (especially the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s).

In the 1870s and 1880s, there was a sharpening in class struggle. Though most unions before then had been craft unions, unskilled workers became organised. This militancy cannot be separated from that of skilled workers. Strikes developed faster in the 1880s. The 1880s were a period of a sharp influx of capital and to a lesser extent labour into the colonial economy. The roaring 1880s saw a massive inflow of capital, mainly from Britain, jumping from 3.5 million pounds in the 1870s to 13.8 million pounds in the 1880s, before falling rapidly between 1890–1894 (Butlin, 1962, p. 422). This allowed a sharp rise in construction works in the 1880s with manufacturing and construction rising to the largest component of Australian GDP, averaging 25 per cent over that decade (see Figure 5.6). Finance fuelled the construction of state-owned railways, a symbol of the technological advances of this period, which more than doubled in length between 1881 and 1891 (Figure 5.8). This occurred alongside a simultaneous increase in immigrants, though decreasing from the

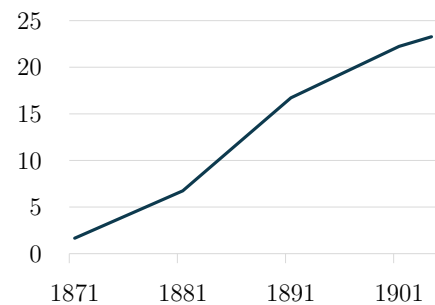


Figure 5.8: Railway construction in six Australian colonies from 1871 to 1904 in thousands of kilometres (Clark, 1908, p. 414)

mid-1880s.

The 1880s were a period of radical shifts in working class consciousness, and of “intellectual ferment” (Fry, 1956, p. 17): a “remarkable change in the ethos of the labour movement” (Buckley and Wheelwright, 1988, p. 176). The eight-hour day spread rapidly across occupations in Melbourne and Sydney.²⁸ By the end of the 1880s, many skilled workers had also won a weekly half-holiday, finishing early on Saturdays. Wages continued their rise, though moved backwards in real terms from the middle of the decade.²⁹ Employers’ organisations arose in response to the organisation of workers. The Victorian Employers Union was formed after the defeat of employers in the damaging 1884 strike of the Operative Bootmakers’ Union (Plowman, 1985).³⁰

The radicalisation in ideas in the 1880s was dominated not only by pre-existing colonial ideologies (McQueen, 1986), but by a new international growth in nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1992), by the ascent of social Darwinism, and by the political current of Georgism.³¹ Spence’s (1909) position represented one pole of this within the working class, placing the monopolisation of land as the “bedrock of the Labor Movement” (p. 14), and conceptualising immigration as an employers’ assault against the labour movement.³² Working class consciousness saw a period of growth, but within a tradition of rising nationalism, dominated by liberal, populist, and nationalist politics. In such a period, proposals for compulsory arbitration were not popular with workers. The 1887 Trades Conciliation Bill for instance was defeated, opposed by the NSW Labour Council president and receiving no votes from representatives subsidised by unions (Macarthy, 1968, p. 189).³³

Everything changed in 1890, the year proclaimed by W. G. Spence (1909, p. 24) as “by unanimous assent, the turning point in Australian Labor history”.³⁴ But although

²⁸See Fry (1956, Appendix IV)

²⁹NSW records this trend in nominal terms. Queensland is stationary. But inflation degrades across the board.

³⁰Conversely, Card and Olson (1995) describe American union disputes at this time as ‘winner take all’.

³¹See chapter 6.

³²“[W]e had the evil of private ownership of land before we had population. Naturally the best land was secured by the first landgrabbers” (Spence, 1909, pp. 11–12). The Liberals “spend the money of the workers in spreading lies in the old world for the purpose of attracting immigrants, so as to secure cheap labor and crush the worker here. Australia needs people badly . . . [but t]he land must be thrown open first, and then bring the people.” (Spence, 1909, p. 570).

³³The “majority of workers and unions were opposed to the idea of compulsory arbitration” (Buckley, 1971, p. 98). Exceptions to this rule include the calls for arbitration by the Melbourne Typographical Society in the 1870s (Quinlan, 2021, p. 192).

³⁴“This [union development between 1890 and 1894] was a class war, and it was recognized as such by the participants” (Fitzpatrick, 1941/1949, p. 194).

Spence describes workers turning from trade union action to the “political machinery” resulting in the “abolition of class dominance and the introduction of truly democratic government”, these were years of declining industrial strength. The great depression of the 1890s, combined with drought, and the defeats of the Maritime and Shearers’ strikes. This “radical shift in union tactics as unfavourable economic conditions threw up new problems” (Macarthy, 1967, p. 74) saw advocacy for compulsory arbitration of disputes and wages boards (Quinlan, 2021, p. 218).³⁵ In the 1890s conciliation and arbitration evolved, with voluntary arbitration provisions (NSW 1891, Victoria 1892), compulsory arbitration (SA 1894), until eventually being enshrined in limited form in the *Commonwealth Constitution* s 51 (xxxv).³⁶ Colonial parliaments adopted seven shillings per day as a living wage for unskilled labourers from the mid-1890s (Macarthy, 1967, p. 75).³⁷

The crisis also scared employers, with three bank crashes in 1893, and the much wider pragmatic adoption of these policies as a method of containing contradictions (Millmow, 2020, p. 72). A growing vein of Liberal protectionism pushed for wage and tariff controls to restrain the deep class convulsions and buttress the colonial economies against global markets.

After federation, this evolved with the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904, and the Harvester Judgement (Harvester, 1907) which established seven shillings per day as the minimum ‘family’ wage to be earned by white men. This was underpinned by the “nation-building task in post-Federation Australia” (Hearn, 2018, p. 346) and Deakinite Liberalism of ‘New Protection’. This reflected “anxiety over the global pressures being exerted on the young nation and its workforce, and the fearful identity and employment consequences of allowing alien populations to infiltrate the Commonwealth or, in the case of Pacific Islander labour, to remain present in the Queensland sugar industry” (Hearn, 2018, p. 347). Migration policy was built around a broad set of goals: “output, employment and high standards of living, and directly, and indirectly, in support of population growth” (Pope, 1976, p. 1).

The apparatus differed across the states, guided by amalgams of wage boards and

³⁵Employers preferred wages boards.

³⁶See Hancock (1979a,b).

³⁷“The public . . . has had “living wage” so much dinned into its ear that it has come to regard a bare “living wage” as the proper wage for a working man to get” (*The Bulletin*, cited in Macarthy, 1967, p. 82)—which goes some way to explaining why it was that unions did not push for a living wage during the Higgins Harvester case (Macklin, 2005).

arbitral courts. State based awards had grown rapidly over the 1880s and 1890s.³⁸ From the 1910s, unions increasingly won awards under the federal system, from the first AWU pastoral workers award in 1907, railways and engineering awards in the 1910s, and the metal industry award in 1929. Figure 5.9 shows a rapid increase in coverage of commonwealth awards from a minority to the majority of wages outcomes between 1913 and 1929.

More than a minimum wage though, it represented a regime of social reproduction with concrete gendered and racialising content. The fixation of women's wages at around half of men's wages provided a specifically *white social reproduction*. Dabscheck (2017) outlines the racial arguments proliferating in the early twentieth century based on Progressive economists (Leonard, 2017) for lowering of women's basic wage:

Unless there exists the division of labour involved in a system of domestic help, the day of the white race is approaching its close. The typical mother of the white race cannot endure child birth, and the more or less prolonged period subsequent to child birth, unless she is helped and helped materially. A scheme of wages which involved the abolition of the domestic help must involve the ultimate failure of the white race and their gradual disappearance before the less sensitive, less educated and less developed races to the tropical or semi-tropical areas (William Jethro Brown, 1919, cited in Dabscheck, 2017, p. 337)

White Australia was about more than mere exclusion of non-whites. The mayor of Broome in 1917 called unsuccessfully for an exception to be made to allow for indentured male domestic servants to assist with "cooking, washing and looking after children" (cited in Higman, 2003, p. 4). That is, the cause of white social reproduction could ideologically admit non-white labour in service of white reproduction. In

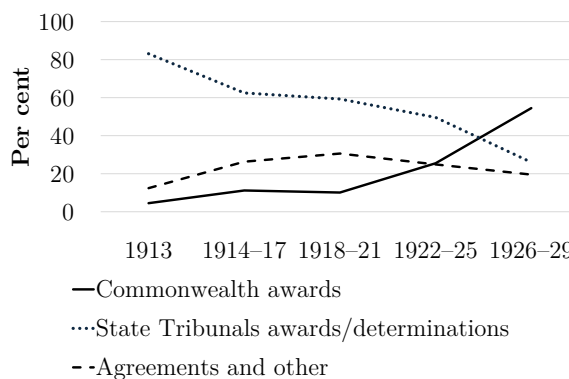


Figure 5.9: Method of wages determination between 1913 and 1929 (Hancock, 1979a, p. 6)

³⁸The first arbitration award was in 1886 (Sutcliffe, 1921, p. 41).

censuses around the turn of the century (1891 to 1921) women comprised one fifth of the workforce, concentrated in Manufacturing, Commerce, Community and business services, and Other services (Butlin and Dowie, 1969).

Together this comprised the distinctive ‘Australasian model’ of labour regulation (Macintyre, 1989), what Watson et al. (2003) call ‘Harvester man’. As shown in Figure 5.9, by the late 1920s, most wages were set under Commonwealth awards. The “elaborate structure of protection” continued to grow, to cover 80 per cent of employees with not only wage but also a wider set of supplementary clauses (Campbell and Brosnan, 1999, p. 355). One distinctive feature was the combination of multi-employer bargaining with this system of awards, with the deliberate aim of preventing industrial disruption (Clegg, 1976). The seemingly opposite systems of arbitration and bargaining evolved together into a single regime.

The evolution of Australian industrial relations provides a critical grounding to migration practices, shifting attention from immigration considered as a plain question of demographic flows, to the form of appearance of Australia’s labour market regime: the state economic strategy known as the ‘Australian Settlement’ and in particular the distinctive labour market strategy of arbitration and conciliation. While immigration was a critical moment within the production of Australia’s working class and labour force, it was far from the primary form of labour market regulation preferred by the state.

5.3.3 BEYOND THE ‘AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT’

The concept of the ‘Australian settlement’, associated with Paul Kelly (2008), refocuses attention from White Australia as an immigration program to the role of a wider array of state policies in securing accumulation. It encapsulates how the politics of racist exclusion were invoked alongside the politics of economic protectionism and state control, under the political banner of liberalism. This section argues, however, that it tends to ossify these policies into a rigid institutional framework insensitive to class processes. By situating White Australia within the overall Australian settlement, its economic content is clarified. White Australia, protectionism, and arbitration were a part of *an economic regime*.

The policies that come together for the Australian settlement are best understood as arbitration, immigration, and state developmentalism. In Kelly’s original formu-

lation, “White Australia, Industry Protection, Wage Arbitration, State Paternalism, and Imperial Benevolence”, worked together to produce “eight decades of national unity and progress despite its defects” (Kelly, 2008, p. 1).

Kelly’s formulation has been widely challenged. It is “now conventional” to think that the “idea of the Australian settlement is not an especially good one” (Beilharz, 2008, p. 61). Despite this remark, there is no scholarly consensus as to why it is deficient, or what alternative framework could replace it. As a result, this institutionalist framework continues to influence conceptions of Australia’s federation economy.

Critiques of the settlement have centred on the best account of its policy makeup, and the degree of historical continuity. But these have tended to hone the framework, rather than signal a break from it.

For instance, Kelly is said to over-emphasise tariff policy (Smyth, 2004, p. 39), as opposed to the broader framework of state developmentalism proposed by Stokes (2004).³⁹ Though Australia’s high levels of manufacturing tariffs were critical to the confluence of policy in the period, other policies, such as assisted immigration, and land reforms have been critical to Australia’s state-led development. Beilharz and Cox draw similar connections to policies that reach before the 1890s: colonial autonomy, including the early commodification of land and labour, prosperity for white settlers including workers connected to colonial exports, mass immigration—which lead to “distinctive patterns of inter- and intra-class relations and political institutions” (Beilharz and Cox, 2007, p. 112).⁴⁰ Some of these attempts therefore “retrospective[ly] enlarg[e]” the Settlement and thereby “settl[e] too much” (Macintyre, 2006, p. 32). The historical, political, and economic specificities of the 1890s is purged.

Secondly, the framework is said to fail in its historicisation of the settlement, both downplaying the shifts within the period, and the reasons for its acceptance. The Australian settlement was not a contemporary term used at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Rather, Beilharz calls Paul Kelly’s usage a “myth of foundation” used “as

³⁹Kelly is said to have too narrowly specified the cluster of federation policies, which should be expanded to “nine clusters of political ideas and policies” (Stokes, 2004, p. 19).

⁴⁰“early and significant degree of political autonomy from the imperial power out of which they were established; the early commodification of land and hence labour, with a corresponding absence of a large peasantry; relative economic prosperity for white settlers, including workers, despite or perhaps because of a highly dependent form of economic development that was disproportionately centred on primary production for the imperial market; mass immigration of white settlers from the metropolitan power and the attendant physical and cultural destruction, or at least the brutal subjugation, of indigenous populations” (Beilharz and Cox, 2007, p. 112).

⁴¹In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the social laboratory explanation was more

a foil for its transcendence” (Beilharz, 2008, p. 61). Kelly’s book was a journalistic account written approvingly of the Hawke-era reforms, and the settlement was a retrospective term to identify in broad strokes the old way of doing things that needed reform in the 1970s and 1980s. Kelly’s account was of an inexorable shift of this latter period in response to economic crisis, rather than a serious explanation of the regime that preceded it.

The dubiousness of the historical account of the prior period is therefore unsurprising. It tended to overstate the unity of federation on the one hand, while understating the shifts throughout a long stretch of Australian history. For Macintyre (2004, p. 33), it was a historic “fragile alignment of circumstances”. The ‘Australian Settlement’ “was not a settlement” but a “response to challenges that jolted established arrangements and assumptions” (Macintyre, 2006, p. 154). He points to Deakin’s own account of the period: “All History takes on the appearance of inevitableness after the event” (Deakin, 1944/1963, p. 172).

As well as a historically contingent foundation, its stability is over-stated in this account. Kelly’s Australian settlement is a “static, legalistic device that emptied the intervening years of any serious intellectual and ideological contest and policy innovation” (Smyth, 2004, p. 40). There were significant shifts in the frameworks of arbitration, from the wages boards of the 1890s to the Higgins and wages policy of the 1930s. Smyth emphasises two separate periods, the policies adopted from the 1890s and the focus on full employment that developed after WWII (Smyth, 1998). McAloon (2008) points to shifts after the first world war where industry substitution was consolidated.⁴² For these authors, the settlement notion understates the differences in Australian policy formation between the two key depression eras: the 1890s and 1930s.

At its best, academic critique of the settlement has reached far enough to suggest the way out of this intellectual rut. Many theorists hint at a more political analysis, such as Stokes’s (2004) argument that “to describe a Settlement is also to outline

common. (Beilharz, 2004, p. 433).

⁴²This point is also made by Francis Castles (1988, p. 49). For McAloon, the economic break was in the 1930s and 1940s. He sees international regulation, including the Marshall plan as the prime mover (McAloon, 2008, p. 59). “The postwar period, like that in other parallel experiences, saw the more extensive development of important substitution as nation-building” (Beilharz and Cox, 2007, p. 121). McAloon’s allusion to the international is a welcome stretching of the institutional framework, though by occluding global economic questions, profit rates, or subjective class developments, he positions himself as a variation on the theme of institutional emphasis. This adds to a widespread tendency to exaggerate the impact and effectiveness of economic management.

the character of a dominant *political* tradition” (Stokes, 2004, p. 6, emphasis mine). Jill Roe’s (1995a) re-framing of the Settlement as an “Australian Way”, also aims to capture some of this historical dynamism, and the fact that particular leading liberal figures actively intervened to produce it.⁴³

Although these policies have sometimes been seen as undifferentiated and parallel, many theorists point to the institutions of *conciliation and arbitration* as the most significant defining feature for labour markets in the period. It is not racial discrimination in the selection of immigrants that stands out as the most significant or international distinctive policy, but the agreements that bind all workers. Alan Fenna (2012) points out that “[d]evelopmentalism, tariff protection and racial exclusion were common” with Canada and the United States, while “only arbitration and old-age pensions were peculiar to New Zealand and Australia” (Fenna, 2012, p. 99). For Beilharz (2008), “there is really only one central concept (and institution) to the settlement, which contains or suggests the others, or at the very least is really distinct to other national comparative experience”: *arbitration* (Beilharz, 2008, p. 62). Burgmann calls this the “triangular social contract”: “Arbitration was the apex angle, protection and immigration restriction were the base angles” (Burgmann, 1980, p. 120).

This account is consistent with ‘cheap labour’ thinking about Australian history. It is frequently assumed that the exclusion of ‘cheap’ labour by White Australia was a necessary support for the positive results in terms of high wages obtainable through arbitration. White Australia was the “indispensable condition of every other Australian policy” and an “economic and racial necessity” (Hancock, 1930, p. 77).⁴⁴ Even if immigration was not at issue during the federation conferences of the 1890s, though, this was simply because “the problem of Asian immigration which had bedevilled the colonies was commonly regarded as solved” (Norris, 1975, p. 59).

Across this divergent literature though, critiques do not destabilise the settlement as a class compromise, settlement, or accord. The account of a ‘settlement’ suggests a compact reached by workers and employers—a mutually beneficial trade off. Workers won centralised wage fixing and the exclusion of Chinese people, while employers won a series of protectionist trade measures that propped up manufacturing while paying off the sugar planters maligned by the exclusion of indentured labour. Kelly calls the

⁴³Roe’s founders tend however towards a retrospective progressive nationalism, bringing together Alfred Deakin, Bernhard Ringrose Wise, Rose Scott, Catherine Helen Spence, and David Unaipon (Roe, 1995a, pp. 76–9).

⁴⁴Hancock’s *Australia* “beg[e]t” Kelly’s *The end of certainty* (Beilharz, 2008, p. 58).

settlement an “emerging national consensus” (Kelly, 2008, p. 1), and White Australia in particular was “a creed which became the essence of Australian nationalism and, more importantly, the basis of national unity . . . endorsed by Labor and Conservatives, employers and unions, workers and housewives” (Kelly, 2008, p. 3). It was a “deal struck between Labor and the protectionist faction of the conservatives” (Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, 1990, p. 169); “a consensus that spanned the manufacturing interests and progressive middle-class followers of protectionist liberalism with the collectivism of the organised working class” (Macintyre, 2006, p. 149).⁴⁵

Markey’s account is typical:

All of the major classes were offered a “stake” in the new Commonwealth. Manufacturers received state subsidies and a protective tariff, which were justified, as they had been in the colony of Victoria for thirty years, as a necessary aid to domestic manufacturers through their infant stages against unfair, cheap overseas competition. However, in return manufacturers were expected to pay “fair and reasonable wages” to employees. The primary mechanism for this exchange became the arbitration system, which was established at federal and state levels. Workers also received an old age pension in NSW in 1900, and then in the Commonwealth in 1908 . . . In addition, workers received protection, so it was argued, from “cheap” Asian labor through the White Australia Policy adopted in 1901. Finally, this corporatist political program was extended to small farmers, who gained government subsidies, and, theoretically, assistance in land settlement because of a land tax designed to encourage subdivision of large estates. (Markey, 1987, p. 78)

In assessing the mutually acceptable ‘stakes’ of the settlement, the question is eluded: was the settlement an actual concurrence of interests or a perceived one? For Stuart Macintyre, the historical confluence of factors saw working and ruling class interests come together, and the resulting order produced mutual benefits. The “counter-cyclical pattern of government migration activity helped secure the labour movement’s acceptance of this aspect of nation-building”, while tariffs “safeguarded” jobs (Macintyre, 2006, p. 150). The point is not just the theoretical treatment of the state

⁴⁵Kuhn on the other hand criticises “the consensus policy of employers and most trade unions, of conservative and Labor parties from the middle of the first decade of Federation” (Kuhn, 1988, p. 110).

as benevolent or at best neutral. It is the ahistorical immediacy with which class is treated within that process.

Revisionists have sought to defend White Australia as a key nationalist plank that served workers' interests. Markey dismisses contemporary critiques as "historicist" (Markey, 1997b). Quinlan complains that it is "now unfashionable with historians" to admit that campaigns to restrict immigration "aided worker mobilisation" (Quinlan, 2021, pp. 310–11). For Alan Fenna, racial discriminatory immigration policy was "most beneficial to the working class", with the success of workers due to a "convergence between the material interest of workers and a broader societal conception of national identity and social interest prevalent in white settler societies" (Fenna, 2012, p. 113). Even amongst those who find racially selective immigration policy more distasteful, arbitration has increasingly been regarded as positive for workers. For Beilharz and Cox (2007, p. 122), "arbitration is worth revaluing".

This pervasive account of class compromise lacks convincing theoretical account of the interaction between class and institutions. A tendency to foreground institutions can sometimes obscure class shifts, and global political economic processes,⁴⁶ while class interests and consciousness are portrayed as immediate, as if they could be read from Labor party how-to-votes.

A contributory factor is the Polanyian institutionalism of Francis Castles, who should be recognised as one of the "co-founding fathers of the Australian Settlement paradigm" (DeAngelis, 2004, p. 657; see also Fenna, 2012, pp. 101–2). Castles' account seeks to put the policies ascribed to the settlement within institutional context, in what he calls a "historically contextualised political economy of public policy (Castles, 1988, p. 35). His understanding of the Settlement is expressed as what he calls the "logic of historic compromises" (Castles, 1988, pp. 69–78). This theory combines a particular account of class interests, class subjectivity, and the impact of substitution. Castles argues that since the interests of capital can only compromise in response to revolution (Castles, 1988, p. 76), and since revolution has never been a realistic immediate possibility in Australia, the theory of false consciousness is unable to be applied to Australia, and Lenin's labour aristocracy theory must be adopted in its place.⁴⁷

⁴⁶One lost strength of Francis Castles' early account of the settlement is his description of the crisis of accumulation that destabilised the pre-existing order: "parameters for accumulation provided by the capitalist economic order changed for the worse (Castles, 1988, p. 37).

⁴⁷McQueen (1986) similarly conceives of labour as representing a pro-capitalist part of the class

But the labour aristocracy class content is key for understanding the flaws in this debate, and the prevailing institutional emphasis. As discussed in subsection 4.2.3, this attempt to conceptualise working class consciousness through objective economic spoils of imperialism presumes a mechanistic conception of the class process. It sees the thin crust of reformism as holding back the surging magma of working class radicalism, rather than seeing the two as dialectically intertwined. There is enough sloppiness in the framework that it permits various positions on the actual ‘class interest’. It fails to understand the relationship and distinction between the development of working class consciousness and the immediacy of bourgeois modes of thought which inhere to capitalist social relations (López, 2019; Lukács, 1923/1968).

Subjectivity and the ALP

An assessment of the dynamics of class consciousness requires political history and economic theory. The rise of Deakinite liberalism for instance has been seen as expressing and reflecting the shift towards the urban bourgeoisie. The politics and nature of Labor has been a more vexed issue.⁴⁸ The contradictory nature of Labor is associated with the contradictory role of union officials that played a role founding it. On the one hand empiricist approaches have treated working class interests as immediate and reflected in Labor policy. Others have condemned Labor as committing an original sin that duped workers for decades. Tietze (2016) critiques the “teleological air” hanging over Bramble and Kuhn’s (2011) account of Labor’s betrayals, and the downplaying of class resistance within the ALP, such as via the Lang split.

The Australian Labor Party was the child of the radical nationalism of the 1880s and the crisis of the 1890s, following the defeated Shearers’ strike (Markey, 1987). The fact that a labour party was founded in Barcaldine nine years before one was founded in London is a powerful exemplar of the process of uneven and combined development (Archer, 2008; James, Markey, and Markey, 2006, p. 11). It was this combination—of the strength of organised labour within a nationalist outlook—that shaped not only working class but all Australian politics in the following decade. Had workers been weak, it is unlikely such a settlement would have occurred, whilst had workers had an

(see Irving, 1994).

⁴⁸Irving (1994) argues against the totalising empiricist and new left accounts of ‘labourism’. He concludes with the call to “talk about labourism without excluding the contribution of socialism, without assuming that its constituency is passively subordinate, and without distorting it in the interests of the political agenda of the intelligentsia” (Irving, 1994, p. 10).

internationalist outlook, it is unlikely such a capitulation had been accepted.⁴⁹

Labor was neither an original sin for Australia's working class, nor a simple representation of the 'immediate' interests of Australia's working class. Rather, it was a contradictory force expressing and encouraging the development of the working class within the colonial context—representing workers' interests, but seeking to do so within bourgeois limits. Such an exercise confounds any representation of Labor as a vice-like grip totally obscuring the possibilities of socialism, as the aspirations of Australia's working class were expressed in and through the party as well as without it. The policies of the Australian settlement were adopted by Labor: White Australia, protectionism, and compulsory arbitration (Hagan, 1981, see Irving, 1994).

Labor predominated not only working class consciousness, but also huge successes in Australian politics more broadly. Unionism, conciliation, the representation of workers' interests, evolved alongside Deakinite 'new protection' in reconstructing Australia's class structure.

	<i>Strike Days Lost</i>	<i>Labour Force</i>	<i>Strike days per 1,000 workers per year</i>
1830–1839	17,200	–	–
1840–1849	42,700	128,700	33.2
1850–1859	62,000	305,500	20.3
1860–1869	238,100	547,800	43.5
1870–1879	334,500	674,400	49.6
1880–1912	–	–	–
1913–1919	15,464,800	2,093,100	1,055.5
1920–1929	15,143,200	2,394,800	632.3
1930–1939	5,798,500	2,745,100	211.2
1940–1949	13,175,400	3,214,200	409.9
1950–1959	9,619,200	3,746,500	256.8
1960–1969	8,624,500	4,642,600	185.8
1970–1979	31,458,900	6,024,700	522.2
1980–1989	19,240,700	7,337,600	262.2
1990–1999	8,253,000	8,896,900	92.8
2000–2009	2,680,500	10,486,000	25.6
2010–2019	1,370,100	12,177,500	11.3
2020–2024	484,900	14,151,000	6.9

Table 5.2: Compiled dataset of strike days lost over Australian history rounded to nearest hundred, compared to estimated labour force.

⁴⁹This is the answer to the puzzle posed by Markey as to why great union upsurges happen in very period of adoption of White Australia Policy (Markey, 2002).

Although the politics of the ALP predominated, it is a mistake to portray its rise as automatic, structural, or uncontested. The same period of its consolidation saw the embryos of a vibrant non-laborite left. Burgmann (1980) has outlined the schism between ‘revolutionaries and racists’, with an international socialist club founded by immigrant members of the Australasian Socialist League (Farrell, 1975, p. 8). As early as 1896, British socialist Edward Aveling’s successful motion at the Second International’s London Congress that trade unions “should not appeal for restrictive legislation against the immigration of aliens” (Taber, 2021, p. 63) was passed while acting as proxy delegate for the Australian Socialist League (Farrell, 1975, p. 18), a motion later championed by the International Socialist Club to have the ASL rescind their opposition to immigration.

Even if these parties sat on the fringes, in the 1910s and 1920s class mobilisation infected the working class and Labor more deeply. In 1908, Sydney Labour Council determined “[t]hat all Unions in the State be advised to ignore the Industrial Disputes Act; that no steps be taken by Unions to form Wages Boards; and that the method of the strike be relied upon as the only means of securing fair and reasonable conditions which Parliament has denied them” (cited in Sutcliffe, 1921, p. 137). Unions continued to register for awards against this determination. “While the Unions have not been averse to using the various tribunals created for the regulation of wages and conditions of labour, they are by no means unanimous in their approval of them. The attitude of many of the unions is one of toleration rather than appreciation. The system is accepted and made use of because there is no other course possible without endangering their financial position” (Sutcliffe, 1921, p. 144).

The “tumultuous decade” of the 1910s (Wickens, 1928, p. 54) saw some of the highest rates of strike action in Australian history. Table 5.2 provides a quantitative comparative estimate of workers’ militancy in the 1910s, with over 15 million strike days lost between 1913 and 1919, for an estimated labour force of 2 million.⁵⁰ This time series peaks with 2,882 strike days per 1,000 workers in 1919, followed by 1917 (2,077 days lost), 1929 (1,732 days) and 1974 (1,049 days lost). Between 1911 and 1920, wages exploded, by 6.5 to 7.5 per cent per year in private water transportation

⁵⁰Strike data is taken from Quinlan (2018, 2021) for the years 1830–1879, including formal and informal strikes, from Australian yearbooks from 1913–1949, from RBA from 1959–1989, and ABS from 1990 to 2024. Labour force estimates are taken Ville and Withers (2014) from the 1840s to 2010, averaging across all available data, and from the ABS from 2011 onward.

for all but engineers (Butlin, 1962, p. 180), 8.5 per cent for barmen and hotel-keepers, 6.3 per cent for hairdressers, and 3.9 per cent for domestic workers (Butlin, 1962, p. 223).



Figure 5.10: ‘Clash of Colors’, cartoon in (The Herald, 1928, p. 4).

An alternative political pole to that of the Labor leadership grew, both outside and inside the labour (and Labor) movement. The International Workers of the World played a critical role opposing the first World War. Labor experienced a deep split over conscription, and then over responses to the great depression, with the federal party expelling the entire, governing NSW branch, over Lang’s dissent to Scullin’s repressive Premier’s plan of fiscal austerity (see Millmow, 2010). The founding of the Communist Party, including union leaders like Garden, created a new pole for working class mobilisation. Figure 5.10 depicts this divide within the labour movement (and party) in the 1920s, with the Australian Workers Union

seeking to paint ‘Labor’ white, while the Australian Council of Trade Unions seeks to paint the figure red. This symbolises the struggle for the two souls of Labor. While the AWU trumpeted arbitration and industrial peace, the Barrier labour council represented the opposite tendency, pushing for one big union, breaking the arbitral trap, and a militant fight for high wages.

By 1921, Jack Holloway, then president of the Australian Labor Party Executive described the “mental revolution which has taken place among the workers throughout the world” (AATUC, 2021) and the need for a conference to ascertain “what the mental point of view of the Australian Labor Movement really was” and whether a “surer and shorter road to the objective” was known. The socialisation objective was forced onto the unenthusiastic ALP. William Earsman reported to the Communist International that year that “in terms of the level of trade-union organisation, Australia is probably the most highly developed country outside Russia” (Riddell, 2015, p. 648). This was an obvious exaggeration, but reflects the depth of union growth and the potential that some saw in it.

This developed further through the 1920s, where profitability issues and commodity

prices led employers on an offensive to increase exploitation (Bennett, 1989). The shifts towards mass production in the economy linked to movements in the industrial courts to improve conditions, which spread to the metal working industry (Cockfield, 1993). Bruce took an ‘industrial law and order’ approach to the 1925 election (Bennett, 1989) and tariff policy survived the Brigden report (Millmow, 2020). His 1929 attempt to abolish the arbitration court was opposed by unions and manufacturers alike (Bennett, 1989).⁵¹

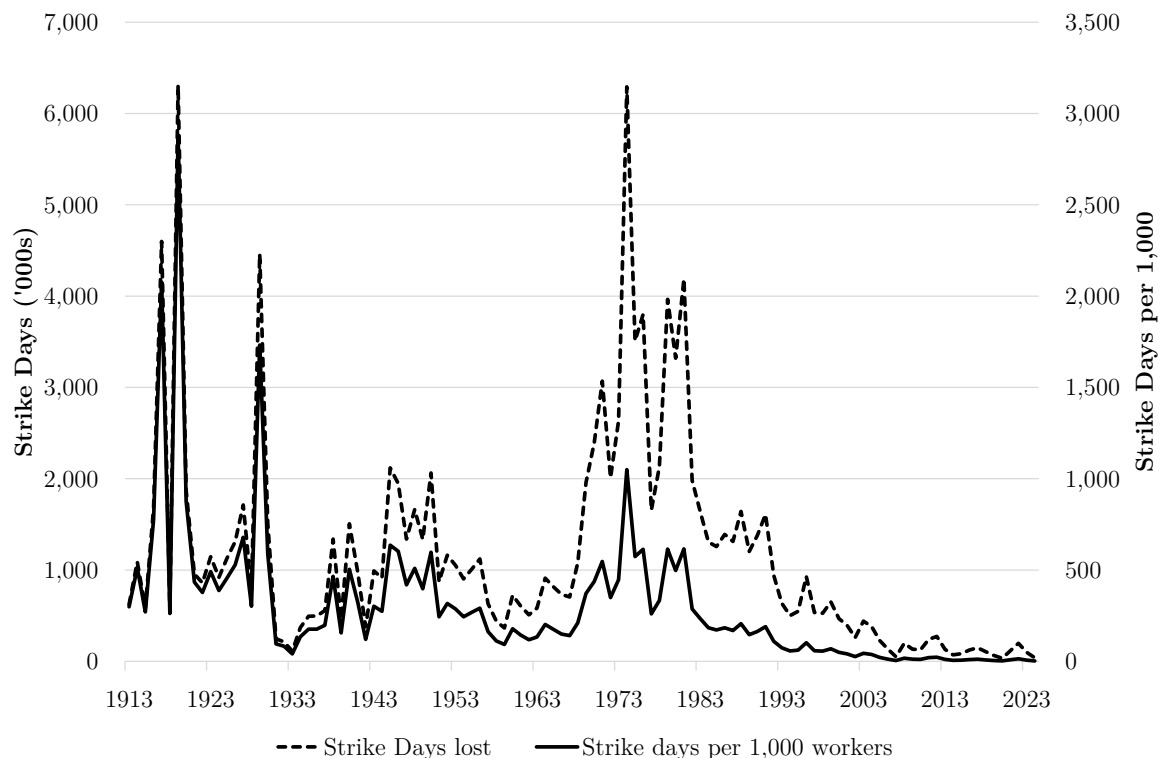


Figure 5.11: Strike days lost 1913–2024, measured in relative terms compared to the total labour force (see note to Table 5.2).

Arbitration, Labor, the settlement, and the union bureaucracy were not mere outgrowths of working class power, nor a vice-like grip on union activism. It contradictorily expressed both, with challenges growing continually from within the system. Concretely, state formation and class formation were in a conjoined process in which the program of state development (expressed by the concept of the Australian settlement) was a resulting form of appearance.

This settlement was not a ‘meeting of interests’. The labour market regime that emerged was in many ways counterposed to workers’ interests, involving as it did a

⁵¹One justice wrote in 1929, “the Court exercises quasi-legislative power for one purpose only—the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes” (cited in Bennett, 1989, p. 50).

suppression of the working class through arbitration. But the wider point is that political expression of interests is not straightforward and involves historically contingent processes that produce concretely expressed ideological outlooks. *Class consciousness* (Lukács, 1923/1968) cannot be avoided through recourse to the predominance of institutions.

Arbitration, White Australia, neo-Listian developmentalism, were not in workers' interests in the cosmic sense. They were an impactful centre of workers' political outlooks, and many workers expressed an interest in the regime as a result for many years. There were of course many workers who expressed dissent to White Australia, but this dissent was not generalised until the 1940s. These policies were in an important sense expressions of ruling class interests. Yet to say this may convey some cosmic sense of ruling class interests. Far from such an implication, the construction of the settlement was a critical subjective moment in the production of this 'ruling class interest', in the sense of a unified political project and outlook. Workers acquiescence to the Settlement, arbitration, and nationalism, was not complete.

This reconceptualisation of the 'Australian Settlement' as an unstable bourgeois formation, which won the assent of Australia's union bureaucracy, emphasises that obeisance to that strategy by the working class was far from unanimous or automatic. Recurrent convulsions threatened to destabilise it, both from labour and from global economic destabilisation. While immigration was secondary to deeper industrial relations policies in Australia's unusual labour market regime, and while labour was brought behind bourgeois strategy, the working class produced under White Australia was not held completely in its vice, and already by the 1940s showed signs of opposing the White Australia policy.⁵²

5.4 WHITE AUSTRALIA RECONSTITUTED: 1945–1973

The period after WWII consolidated the architecture of Australia's state immigration program, much of which continues through to today (represented graphically in Figure 5.12). Immediately after the war, the first Immigration Department was established to facilitate and coordinate large-scale immigration, widely thought to be a

⁵²Jupp (1998) points out that working class opposition to White Australia grew in the 1940s and 1950s, though of course Labor support for the policy would continue to the extreme in the post-WWII period.

dominantly from Britain and Ireland into Australia with each of the absolute peaks with relative peaks in the 1860s (1.8 per cent), the 1880s (1.8 per cent), 1910s (1.2 per cent), 1920s (0.7 per cent) and 1950s (1.3 per cent).⁵⁵

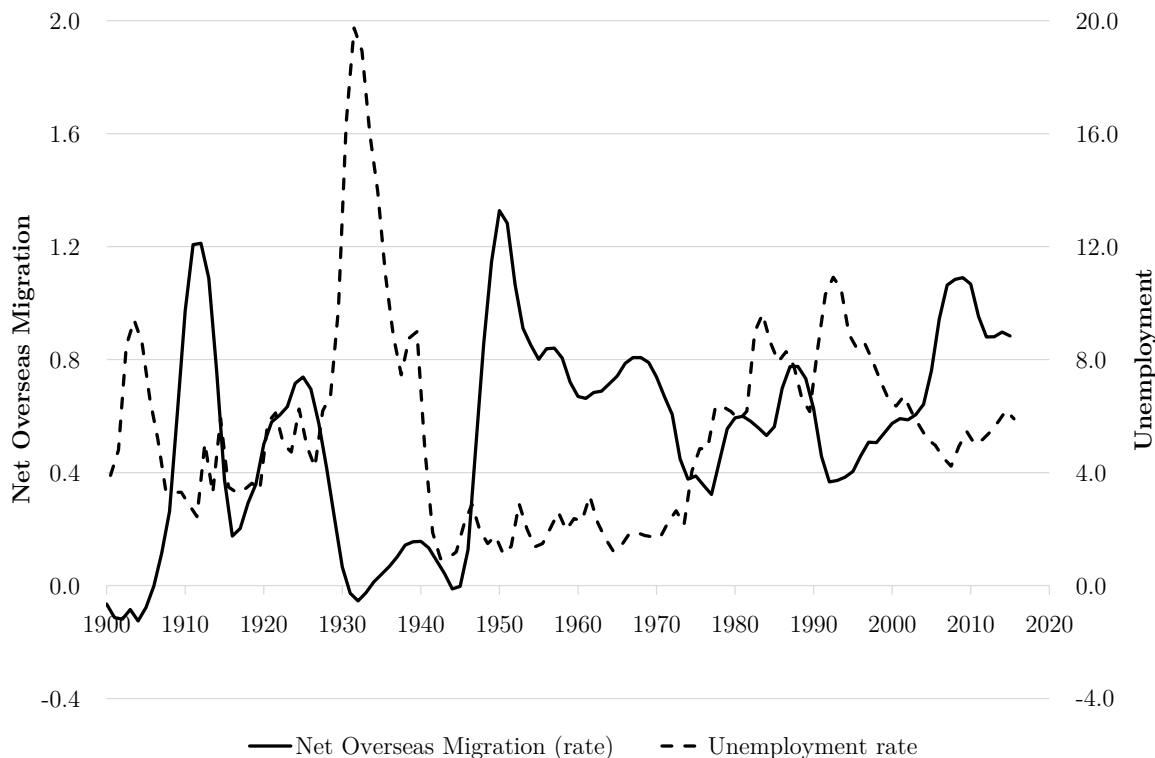


Figure 5.13: Relative Adjusted Net Overseas Migration (5 moving average) versus unemployment since Federation (appendix A.1; DFAT, 2018).

More than raw numbers, the migration program retained its settlement motivation, with a strong stream of family migration. The intake was underpinned by the assisted immigration regime, which brought in more than 65,000 assisted immigrants per year between 1946 and 1975 (see Figure 5.7). Australian intentions were from the start to integrate immigrants through permanent settlement into the growing post-war economy, rather than subordinated inclusion. As White Australia began to come unstuck, the rest of the pre-existing ‘settlement’—arbitration and protection—was more durable. Although decreasing from war-time highs, Australia’s tariff rates remained high through the post-war period (Lloyd, 2007), with high protection for manufacturing. Australia’s centralised wages determination established in the 1930s continued. This is despite the fact that the post-war period was mostly dominated after 1949 by Liberal rule. This was not a result of economic working class supremacy through the

⁵⁵The relative rate is displayed at Figure 5.13 and the absolute rate at Figure 5.25. Peaks correspond to absolute peaks in Figure 5.25. The unemployment figures displayed alongside the relative immigration figures will be discussed below.

Labor Party.

This dynamic was questioned during the 1960s, where the Australian recessions came alongside no decreases to the immigration program (this can be seen in Figure 5.25). Migrants returning home formed a minor crisis for this state-building migration regime in the 1960s.⁵⁶ The shift against integration had less to do with a purely ideological retreat from Britishness and more to do with pragmatic regime of migrant incorporation (Griffiths, 1988; Mann, 2013). The state's approach to migration remained focused on permanent settlement and integration into the broader working class, even as racist attitudes and practices created barriers to that integration.

5.4.1 THE POST-WAR ECONOMY

The systematic approach to a planned immigration system was reflected by a wider transformation in Australia's approach to economic regulation.⁵⁷ The newly formed immigration department was not exceptional in its focus on planning. The new rhetoric on planning engulfed the entire economy. "We are all planners now", said Crawford in 1959 (Crawford 1959 in Smyth, 1998, p. 91). Coombs (1944) notes that "labour control" and "control of industry" sit side by side as some of 'The Special Problems of Planning'. This new emphasis extended the pre-war economic trends towards national development.

As outlined in Section 2.1.2, the post-WWI economy should be understood as an economic, and not only as an imperialist shift. Michael Kidron (1974/2018) argued that it was not so much the end of WWII in itself but rather a change in the structure of the economy (towards a 'permanent arms economy') that pre-empted and explained this economic period. Kidron (1974/2018, pp. 19–23) provides a useful summation of his theory of the permanent arms economy. Arms expenditure expands the market for end goods while taxing capital (shifting funds that otherwise could have been spent on productive investments to state non-productive investments). This leads to high growth rates and high employment, but because state expenditure goes into "Department III" or luxury goods (neither capital nor labour products), the tendency

⁵⁶"Beginning in the late 1960s, there was a growing concern about the incidence of migrant settlement problems, and about the high rate of settler departure from Australia, raising questions about the suitability of the migrants selected for permanent settlement" (Hawkins, 1989/1991, p. 105).

⁵⁷The "largest planned immigration intake in Australia's history" (Collins, 1988, p. 10), impelled by a renewed White Australia, as described in section §2.2.3. In Collins' account, "'planning' was more rhetoric than reality" (Collins, 1988, p. 23).

towards the increasing organic composition of capital is held back, and therefore to the LTFRP (discussed in subsection 2.1.1). The geo-political competitive dynamics that exist between state blocs of capital lead to a self-reinforcing dynamic. Increased state spending on non-productive goods, financed by increased taxation, might be expected to elicit protest from capitalists, eager to spend their money on investments rather than losing it to taxes. But the dynamics of inter-state competition bring out a domestic ruling class unity behind geo-strategic interests, which necessitates military spending. Due to dynamics of mutually-assured threats of destruction, both the US and the USSR were forced to increase taxation to ensure against “losing strategic superiority to the rival imperialism, enabling it to extend its sphere of dominance” (Harman, 2010, p. 181). This temporary set of “interdependent and autonomous [elements], held together by mutual compulsion” (Kidron, 1974/2018, p. 19) produced a post-war boom. It was a fusion of competitive economic and military growth.

In Australia, wartime economic trends set a new trajectory, spurring forth large scale immigration, but also an economy built for war. Sharp spikes in expenditure during the war prompted the expansion of Australia’s steel and iron industries, with increased demand met by new works in Newcastle (1915), Port Kembla (1928) and Whyalla (1941). Production rocketed from less than 100,000 tonnes before the war, to 1.6 million tonnes of ingot steel during WWII (Figure 5.15, Wills, 1950; Zierer, 1940). The new BHP monopoly was set up with state and federal Labor government support in 1912 (White, 1981, p. 115).

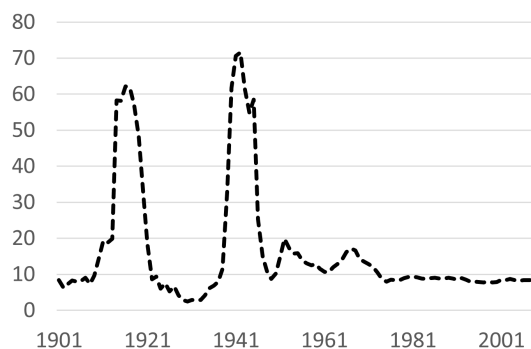


Figure 5.14: Australian defence outlays as percentage of government expenditure, from Thompson 2003.

These trends continued after the war, with excess capital soaked up by industrial development. Unproductive expenditure, spurred on through the cold war, eased the pressure on the OCC, though this would ultimately be undercut by profitable investment in Japan and Germany. After the war, Australian defence spending averaged 13.8 percent from 1945–1975 and 8.5 percent from 1976–2010 (see Figure 5.14). This sum, far less than US or Russian expenditure, was premised on the strategic orientation towards the alliance with US imperialism from Curtin onward (Bramble and

Kuhn, 2011; Kuhn, 2002).

Australia did not experience the same destruction of values as Germany, Japan or even Britain. Globally, corresponding to these favourable conditions of heightened capital accumulation is a steady trend decline in rate of profit of enterprise from the end of the war to around 1980 (Shaikh, 2011, p. 48): the depression of the 1970s was not a “‘black swan’ in a hitherto pristine flock” (Shaikh, 2011, p. 44).⁵⁸

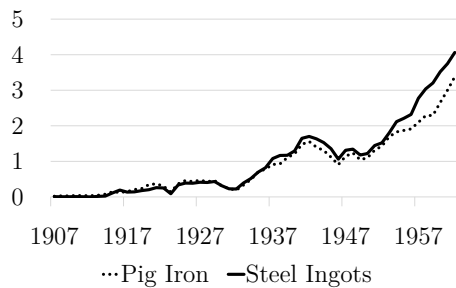


Figure 5.15: Australian Steel and Pig Iron production in millions of tonnes, 1907–1964 (Hueges, 1964, Appendix).

Australia benefited from the new arrangement, with healthy GDP growth underpinned by international growth, increasing trade and high immigration. Unemployment averaged 2 per cent between 1945 and 1975, compared to 7 percent between 1976 and 2010 (Figure 5.13). Increase in Australian export volumes after WWII, and its increasing reliance on non-British exports.⁵⁹ The annual real rate of growth of exports of merchandise goods increased substantially, from a rate of growth from 1855 to 1945 of 1.3 per cent to 4.0 per cent from 1946 to 2017, imports increasing from 1.2 to 4.2 per cent over the same period.⁶⁰

The strategy of White Australia was reproduced within a dynamic global order. Understood together the post-war program is marked by a contradiction between Australia colonial era racism and the liberal world order in construction. This liberal world order conscripted both major political parties.

Ideologically too, the war had seen “[a]lmost the entire Australian economic profession . . . drafted into war administration duties” (Millmow, 2017). The transition to Keynesianism, the White Paper, are thus not the automatic reproduction of a stable institution of the Australian settlement, but rather its active reproduction. In the context of the unity of state and capital described in chapter 2, immigration came to be increasingly analysed in economic (rather than purely demographic) terms.

In Jock Collins’s (1988) definitive study of post-war migration, he argues that for

⁵⁸See Choonara (2011)

⁵⁹A position taken against British desires (McAloon, 2008).

⁶⁰Measured in 2016-17 prices, recorded trade basis, non-linear models. Based on DFAT publications ‘Composition of Trade, historical economic indicators. Time series presented at Figure 5.16 at page 198.

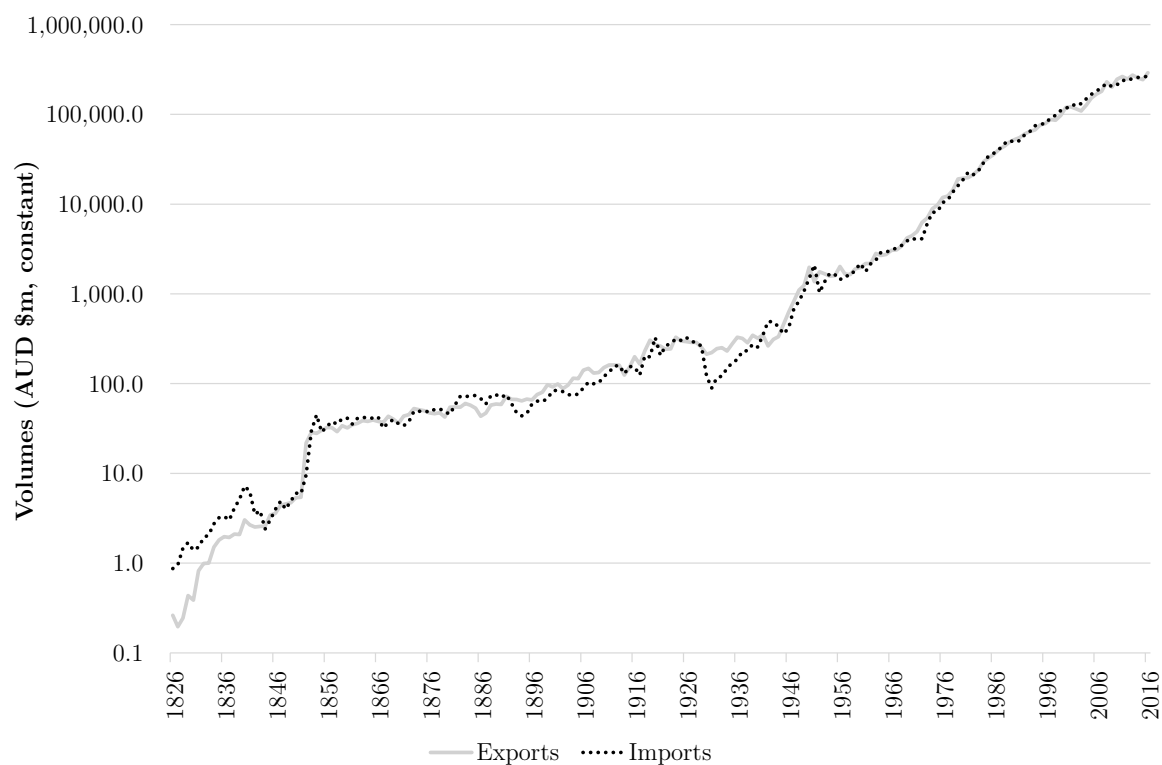


Figure 5.16: Trade volumes in constant 2016–17 prices, recorded trade basis, on a logarithmic scale. Based on DFAT publications ‘Composition of Trade, historical economic indicators’.

“settler capitalist societies like Australia”, immigration serves as the “major source of Australian capitalism’s latent reserve army of labour” (Collins, 1988, p. 42). While agriculture had been the source of the reserve army in Marx’s time, since 1945 particularly, “new sources of the latent reserve army were found: women in the home and workers and their families overseas” (Collins, 1984b, p. 58). Collins draws on Marx in suggesting this incorporation of labour is used as a “means to weaken the strength of labour in terms of wage determination and general workplace conflict” (Collins, 1988, p. 42).⁶¹ Immigration both ought to be, and for Labor governments often is, a labour market lever managed in response to unemployment in Collins’ thinking. Hawke for instance is “more attuned to the relationship between immigration and unemployment” (Collins, 1988, p. 27).⁶²

⁶¹Collins’ statement of the reserve army thesis should be read with broadly anti-racist corollaries (1) Collins explanation is focused on this ‘latent’ reserve army (emphasising incorporation of external labour reserves); (2) his emphasis is on the discrimination faced by migrants especially during recessions (rather than an imagined discrimination faced by domestic workforce); (3) Collins is roundly critically of econometric studies; (4) Collins dismisses blaming migrants for unemployment as “blaming the victim” (Collins, 1988, p. 115). He argues that immigration intake must be “gradual” unless “adequate funding for labour market programs and other ‘ethnic affairs’ initiatives such as English language classes” is provided (Collins, 1988, p. 124).

⁶²There is evidence for this claim, but not for the reason that immigration drives unemployment.

Quinlan references “a clear compact engineered by organised labour’s political and industrial wings about the parameters of migration” between 1946 and 1975 (Quinlan, 2021, p. 310), citing evidence that “organised labour’s opposition to immigration enhanced real wages in Australia when compared to Canada” (Quinlan, 2021, p. 312). This argument runs counter, however, to the finding of the study cited by Quinlan. Despite their discussion of the opposite effect in Canada after 1890: “A tendency for labour’s share of income to rise in the years to 1914 runs counter to immigration exerting a strong downward force on real wages” (Greasley, Madsen, and Oxley, 2000, p. 193).

Figure 5.13 shows the relationship between the rate of net overseas migration and the unemployment rate. High unemployment coincides with low migration during the depression, and the sharp rise in unemployment predates the decline in immigrants. During the post-war boom, high immigration occurred without an increase in unemployment. The rise in unemployment starting in the mid-1970s came as immigration was decreasing, not increasing, and the increase in migration trails rather than leads the increase in unemployment.

The post-war migration program rekindled the dynamics of White Australia, assisted immigration (which contributed more than 30 per cent of population growth in the post-war period as shown in Figure 5.7), and the policies associated with the Australian settlement. But two world wars had shifted Australia’s economic makeup, shifted world geopolitics, and produced new dynamics of class subjectivity. Simultaneously, new ideologies of state economic management responded to two great economic crashes. These created the foundation of the post-war inter-party consensus of a controlled economy, wage setting, public infrastructure, protected development and strike suppression.

The seemingly exceptional nature of immigration in this period, with high rates of immigration, a historic focus on immigration and population policy and the revival of White Australia, did not destabilise or undermine Australia’s labour market. There was no collapse in wages, and unemployment sat at historic lows (Figure 5.13). The

Pope and Withers (1993) provide a statistical analysis of the relationship between immigration and joblessness, using a disequilibrium model to measure the relationships over time between the migration rate, unemployment rate, and real wages rate, amongst a number of other variables. Their finding was that “rising unemployment in Australia cut back the migrant inflow historically, but there is no evidence of an association running from increased immigrant arrivals to higher unemployment” (Pope and Withers, 1993, p. 735). That is, they found a statistical tendency for governments to restrict immigration in response to high rates of unemployment, but not the inverse—a tendency for unemployment rates to increase following spikes in immigration.

domestic political economy of the so-called 'Australian Settlement' was revived to facilitate Australian growth in the post-war boom. Such a situation cannot be grasped with external relations account of causal interaction, but requires an internal relations conception of labour market regimes as expressing the dynamics of class formation, underpinned by global imperialism. That is, migration comprises a moment within the inner dialectic of the circulation and accumulation of capital in capitalist imperialism.

5.4.2 POST-WAR LABOUR MARKET REGIME

Any great 'settlement' or compact between capitalists and workers over wages, conditions, or immigration did not stop a spike in workers' militancy after the war. In the six years from 1945 to 1950, an average of 1.7 million work days per annum were lost to strike action (see Figure 5.11). Labour had suppressed many wage demands during the war and were let off the leash in 1945 fighting on wages conditions, and against war-time "speed-up of work" (Bramble, 2008, p. 6). This included meat workers, railway workers and a major iron workers' strike starting in Port Kembla which alone accounted for 2 million days of stoppages (Sheridan, 1989, p. 90). O'Lincoln's history of the period cites the strike of the Leichhardt Boy Scouts as a measure of this high water mark (O'Lincoln, 1985, p. 53), remarking "the unions had so far [til 1949] won every major strike" (O'Lincoln, 1985, p. 57).

In the immediate aftermath, Labor's focus was to "restrain market forces and to limit labour's advance" (Sheridan, 1989, p. 1). The major 1949 offensive by coal workers were met with arrests and the mobilisation of the army under Chifley in July (Deery, 1978).⁶³ More broadly in the period though, Labor had a more pragmatic regime of suppression, culminating in "the cumbersome and conservative federal Arbitration Court" (Sheridan, 1989, p. 2).

These trends continued in the Menzies era. Menzies embodied this contradiction even more so, inaugurating a long line of Liberal Party prime ministers as an authentic ruling class warrior. He maintained the anti-union Penal Powers from 1956 and pursued the suppression of the Communist Party. But the post-war economic boom demanded pragmatic leadership through a new world economy. Menzies oversaw ongoing wage increases under centralised wage determination that produced strong wages growth, while extensive public expenditure in housing and electricity meant these wages went

⁶³See O'Lincoln (1985) for a critical re-reading and defence of the strike.

further. Menzies argued, in a manner echoing Bukharin (1917/1929), argued that the boundaries between government and industry had “disappeared under the pressures of modern complexities . . . Politics and industry are deeply involved with each other, acting and reacting to the other” (Menzies, 1964, p. 2; see Bell, 1993, p. 1).

Rather than extrapolating the settlement backwards as a meeting of working and ruling class interests, there exists a fundamental contradiction between growth of unions within a more limited terrain of struggle, alongside the possibility of breaking outside of it. The role of the ALP in Australian capitalism is related to this ongoing need. The next great wave of resistance came in the 1960s and 1970s. Over 40 million strike days were lost in these two decades, with another 19 million in the 1980s, as shown in Figure 5.11. Rising proletarianisation and class consciousness brought strikes in some areas that had gone without strikes for half a century, such as Sydney council workers and NSW cinema workers (Lavelle, 2009). The uproarious strike over the gaoling of tramway secretary Clarrie O’Shea in 1969, leading to the defeat of the Penal Powers, was an early high point in this process. This defeat embodies the relation between consent and coercion in working class suppression, and the ability for class struggle to break free of vices placed on it.

Workers recruited to Australian capitalism from overseas from increasingly diverse sources came into predominantly industrial spheres.⁶⁴ The fact that Australia began to import non-Brits and even non-Europeans in the period, the eventual introduction of successively less discriminatory policies, presented a deep ideological challenge to Australia’s colonial mentality, captured perfectly in Menzies’ discomfort.

It was a historical question whether non-white immigrant would be integrated into Australia at arbitrated wages, or would they be brought in at a lower rate. It cannot simply be assumed. Migrants were certainly paid less. The worse employment outcomes and conditions experienced by migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (laid out importantly by Collins 1988), certainly reflected widespread racism and discrimination. They faced restrictions on political and industrial action. Periods of economic slowdown were exceptions to the general union support for immigration.⁶⁵

⁶⁴From 1970, this became services: “After 1970 in particular, the major growth area in employment was the service sector which had not been a major employer of post-war immigrants” (Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, 1990, p. 171).

⁶⁵“During periods of recession such as 1952 and 1961-1962, the ACTU called for a complete cessation of immigration. By the mid-nineteen sixties, the notion that immigration must be tied to the capacity of the economy to absorb newcomers was firmly ensconced as provision . . . of ACTU economic policy” (Quinlan, 1979, p. 269).

Some immigrants were on the receiving end of anti-migrant pushes: waves of Eastern European immigrants immediately following the war “suffered discrimination from the outset, largely at the insistence of the trade union movement”, judged by the CPA to be reactionary at heart (see Griffiths, 1988; Jordan, 2011, ch. 5).

But post-war migrants were also progressively incorporated into Australian capitalism and its structure of wage determination. Australia’s labour market institutions created some barrier to immigrant workers being turned into a source of ‘cheap labour’, employers facing general barriers to paying below minimum rates, which were regularly updated for shifts in inflation. During the post-war period, wages increased alongside productivity, producing:

a gradual accretion of additional rights and benefits within the framework of the continuing (‘permanent’), full-time employment contract, together with a gradual improvement in wages and workingtime conditions for most employees, as a form of distribution of national productivity gains. (Campbell and Brosnan, 1999, p. 357)

But the existence of discrimination and racism in employment cannot be equated with the *structural segmentation* of labour markets. This is quite different to the deliberate construction of a ‘cheap labour’ segment. Lever-Tracy (1983) in an important article argued that immigrants in Australia were not a reserve army of labour. Dynamics within migrant workers themselves played a role, where the upsurge in migrant struggles was connected to broader labour militancy.⁶⁶ But by the 1970s, the deed was done. Migrant workers were to be “core troops in the front line” (Lever-Tracy, 1983, p. 127). As discussed in the next chapter, workers’ resistance, with the 1973 Broadmeadows strike as a high marker point (Tracy, 1989) played a critical role in this.

This apparent contradiction between formal protections and discriminatory outcomes reflected the particular political economy of post-war Australian capitalism. Migrants were not intended as a reserve army to suppress wages, but as permanent additions to an expanding working class under state management.

Large-scale immigration could coexist with low levels of unemployment (Figure 5.13), few recessions (Figure 5.25), and relatively high levels of wages growth. The post war

⁶⁶This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

period should really be a decisive moment against the idea that large-scale immigration is the principal form of wages reduction or labour suppression, but rather migration should be conceptualised as internal to processes of class formation and social reproduction.

The true unwinding, including the pivot within Australian migration, ripening of the contradiction growing within the belly of the ‘Australian settlement’, came through shifts in the global economic order, by the revolt of the global South, and by developing class struggle.

5.5 NEO-LIBERALISM, ECONOMIC RATIONALISM AND THE HYBRID MIGRATION REGIME

From the post-war migration regime to today, a dramatic reconfiguration appears to have occurred in the policies and practices of Australian immigration, dubbed by Markus, McDonald, and Jupp (2009) ‘Australia’s immigration revolution’.

From overt White Australia racism came the adoption of multiculturalism. The dictation test was replaced with the points system. Assisted immigration ended in 1981, with government assistance now given to refugees comprising a tiny proportion of the annual intake, while most were met with mandatory detention, boat turnbacks, and offshore concentration camps in Australia’s former colonies. Most sharply perhaps has been the shift from permanent migration to a mass growth of temporary migration and the smorgasbord of visa categories that govern it: students, skilled workers, working holiday makers, and New Zealand citizens (444 special visas).

This was a gradual and contested process. When Al Grassby declared in 1973 that White Australia was dead and could be buried (Tavan, 2005), this had “no immediate impact” for Jupp (2007, p. 38). The shift had been “incremental ... [flowing] from disparate and disconnected initiatives” (Mares, 2016). But moreover, it took until Fraser for the migration program to finally lose “its national security rationale” (Kelly, 2008, p. 128). The demographic logic can still be seen at the time of Whitlam’s famous 1972 ‘It’s Time’ speech, where he proclaimed that the “important thing is to stop the drift away from Australia” (see Freudenberg, 1977, p. 232).⁶⁷

⁶⁷There was little of the bombast of the rest of the speech in his treatment of immigration: to “change the emphasis in immigration from government recruiting to family reunion and to retaining

The makeup and overt rationale of the permanent immigration program shifted gradually from the 1960s onward. Immigration was increasingly analysed as an economic rather than demographic question, with the Vernon report 1965 and the Australian Institute of Political Science conference on immigration in 1971.⁶⁸ Following the Committee for Economic Development of Australia study (Norman and Meikle, 1985), the FitzGerald report 1988 “supported an increase [in migration] but insisted this would be acceptable only with a new rationale; the old ‘populate or perish’ rationale was both inappropriate and obsolete” (see Kelly, 2008, p. 421).⁶⁹ But this was still a long way from full blown economic rationalist approach to government management that grew in the 1980s, from the seeds planted under Fraser (Pusey, 1991).

One critical and early moment within this transformation was Australia’s points system. The origins for this shift are in the gradual re-production of a non-discriminatory immigration policy, in the new imperialist realignment of Australia’s foreign policy (subsection 2.2.4).⁷⁰ In 1979, Australia introduced the predecessor to its now infamous points system with the Numerical Multifactor Assessment System (NuMAS) by the Fraser government. This codified the previous preference for some migrants over others, in particular skilled over family migrants, producing a shift in the method by which immigration agents calculated entry requirements. NuMAS replaced a short-lived predecessor, the Structured Selection Assessment System, introduced in 1973 under Whitlam which put powers in the hands of officers. Although NuMAS has been called “an intersectional reform” (Thomas, 2023, p. 123) in that it rationalised the preexisting system that put all power in the hands of immigration officers, a system deemed by Martin (1989) one of “angels and arrogant gods”, it facilitated an ever more restrictive set of selection criteria for immigrants, one that has favoured English speaking and ‘skilled’ migrants over others. Australia’s points system has gained praise from the international far right, such as the UK Independence Party, as a way to express the racist demands for immigration restrictions in a seemingly neutral way (Gibson and Booth, 2018), praise likely influenced by a corresponding period of expanding refugee cruelty.⁷¹

the migrants already here” (Freudenberg, 1977, p. 232).

⁶⁸See Collins (1984a, ch. 5)

⁶⁹See Stilwell (1990).

⁷⁰Hawkins (1989/1991) describes this period.

⁷¹The Fraser government also oversaw the production of Australia’s modern refugee architecture, later joined by the state tendency towards privatisation, and the shifting culture of the departments dealing with it (see Cronin, 1993a). Offshoring was also a tendency during Fraser’s term, as has been pointed out by (Stats, 2014b). Higgins broadens the account to a discussion of national interest,

The immigration program shifted further in the 1980s, focusing on ‘skilled’ rather than ‘family’ migration. From the mid-1980s under Hawke, skilled migrants increased on a proportional basis to family stream immigrants, with so-called skilled migration overtaking it as the primary form of permanent migration from the mid-1990s onward (see Figure 5.17). This marks a relative shift from the prior regime where colonisation and imperialism were seen to rely primarily on demographic and material control over the Australian continent. Even during the migrant intake cutbacks of the 1920s, family migration had been held sacrosanct to the White Australian settlement. Contemporary critics noted that a shift towards skilled rather than family immigrants would produce a care deficit, and shift within social reproduction (Collins, 1988, p. 124).

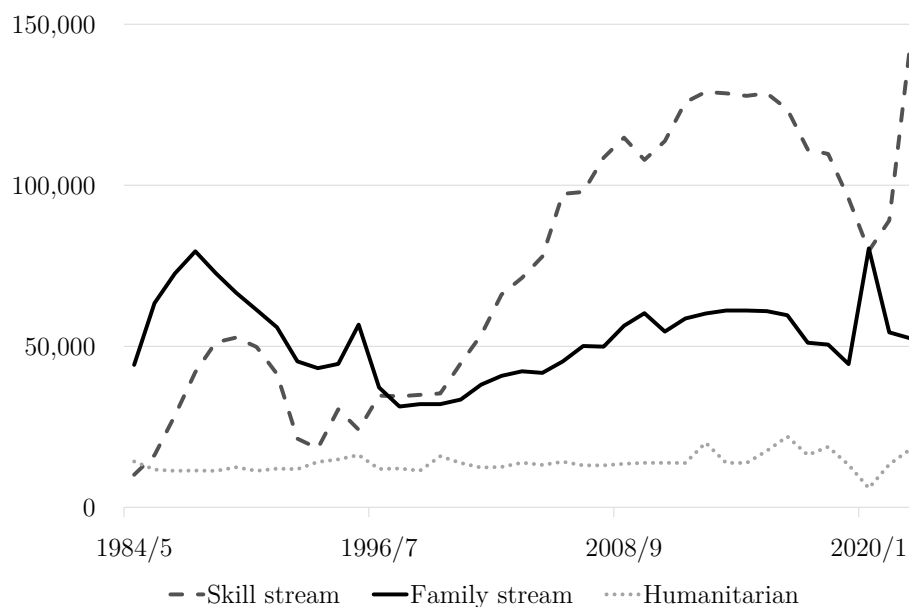


Figure 5.17: Permanent migration program outcomes from 1984/5 to 2022/3.⁷²

Even these shifts look insignificant when compared with the radical rise of temporary migration from the 1990s. Compared to the ongoing political controversies about permanent migration, the shift to temporary migration has garnered comparatively little attention, with a few notable exceptions (Mares, 2016; Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009). The “revolutionary change” of the first ten years of the twenty-first century was dominated by the “increasing arrival of temporary or ‘guest workers’, a radical Pacific cooperation, and Australia’s reputation after WAP.

⁷²Permanent migration program outcomes are broken down into the skilled stream, family stream (including children), and humanitarian stream, excluding special eligibility. Data for migration program is taken from DHA (2023a, Table 1.0), and humanitarian program figures are compiled from (Phillips, Klapdor, and Simon-Davies, 2010, p. 13) to 2009/10, DHA (2023a, Table 3.0) to 2012/13, and DHA (2023a, Table 3.0) from 2013/14. There are rounding irregularities in yearly reported figures.

shift in the balance from permanent to temporary immigration” (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, p. 4). It has also insultingly and inaccurately been represented as a modern form of ‘indenture’.

5.5.1 A HYBRID REGIME

From the 1990s, temporary migration has become a major new factor in Australia’s border regime, with now over two million temporary migrants in Australia. Rates of temporary visa grants display an upwards step change in the mid-1990s (Hugo, 2006, p. 214). Temporary immigration is regulated via an array of separate visa categories and regulatory systems, including categories of students, temporary skilled workers, and working holiday makers, as well as New Zealand citizens, refugee and asylum seekers (Mares, 2016). The dozens of active visa classes are compelled by distinctive dynamics: commodified education, refugee policy, or tourism policy. This was a major shift in Australia’s migration strategy (Figure 5.18; see Vasta, 2006).



Figure 5.18: Migration Strategy Document AS SUPPLIED (DHA, 2023B)

But these seemingly separate programs cannot be analytically separated from one another, for a number of reasons. Firstly, each program is embedded within an underlying political economy: in particular, overarching economic and geo-political state strategy. Second, the immigrants themselves do not sit neatly in one visa category but rather move consistently within and beyond the visa categories.⁷³ Finally, they cannot be separated from Australia’s system of permanent immigration.

Taken together, these comprise a large and growing stock of migrants living on

⁷³“aspiring 457 visa applicants include not just foreigners outside of Australia but also various categories of temporary migrant workers in Australia” (Berg, 2016, p. 108)

temporary visas. Figure 5.19 presents quarterly stock of temporary migrants on visas. The largest categories between December 2011 and May 2025 are: special category or NZ Citizens (33 per cent), students (22 per cent), visitor or tourist visas (15 per cent), bridging visas (9 per cent), temporary skilled visa (8 per cent), Working Holiday Makers (7 per cent), temporary graduate visas (4 per cent) and other temporary work visas (3 per cent), with the other categories comprising less than one per cent (crew and transit, temporary protection, and other temporary) (see note to Figure 5.19).

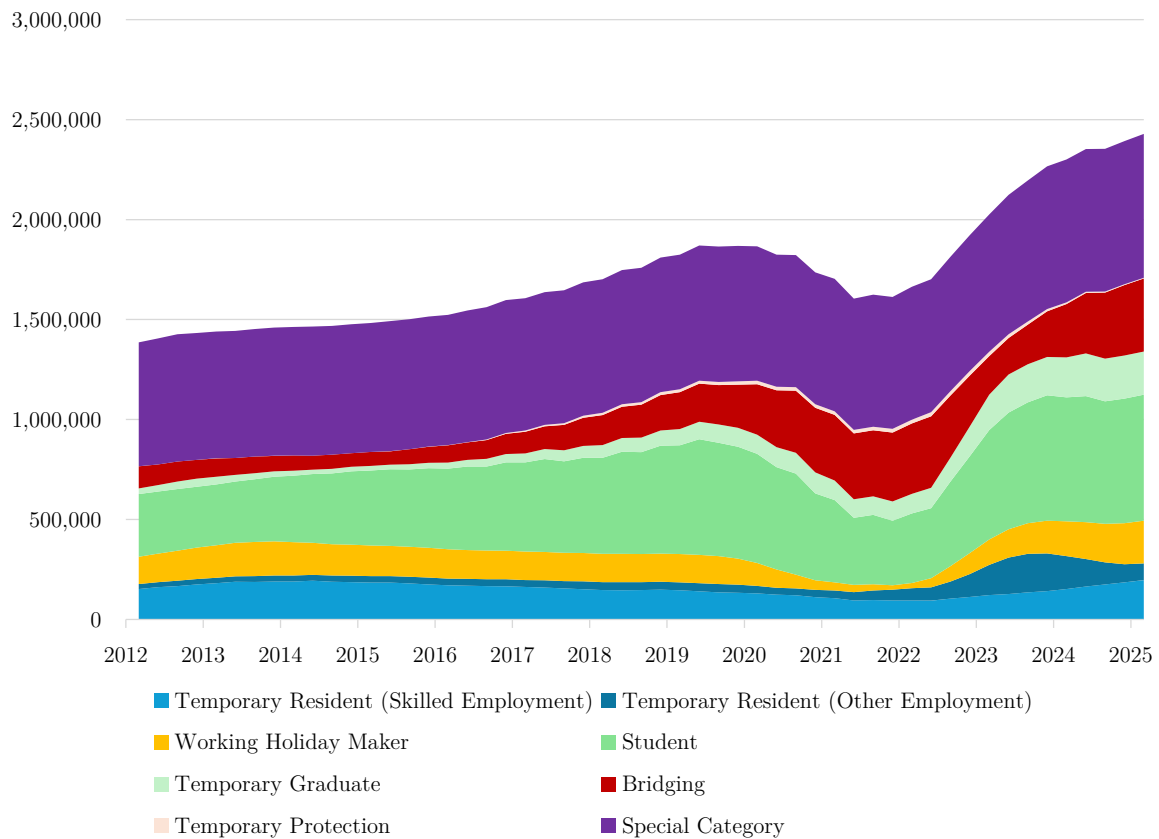


Figure 5.19: Quarterly Temporary Migrants 2012–2025, deseasonalised, 3-moving average. Excludes crew and transit, other temporary, and visitor visas (DHA, 2025a). Bridging visa figures exclude Bridging Visa E.

The most controversial and most widely studied visa for Australian labour markets has been the long-stay temporary skilled work visa: the 457 visa from its introduction til its abolition in 2018, now the 482 or temporary skill shortage visa.⁷⁴ Although the visa intended to uphold minimum rates of pay,⁷⁵ there are widespread reports of

⁷⁴Studies include Berg (2016), Tham, Campbell, and Boese (2016), Wilson (2018), and Wright, Groutsis, and Broek (2017).

⁷⁵Wages and conditions should meet “accepted Australian standards”, that the program not be used to overcome “long-term labour market deficiencies” such as in teaching or nursing, and that the program “must not provide an avenue for the recruitment of unskilled or semi-skilled workers, or the channelling of overseas workers into low paid and low skilled work” (Roach, 1995, p. 4).

workers being paid at below market rates of pay, the charging of exorbitant ‘fees’ for securing visas and/or training, and the consequences of reduced access to healthcare and social welfare (Berg, 2016; Deegan Review, 2008; Tham, Campbell, and Boese, 2016).

The origins of the 457 visa are the Roach report, commissioned under Keating. This review outlines that temporary migration must meet the “national interest” (Roach, 1995, p. 4). But a central part of this interest was economic integration with the “increasing globalisation of business, and Government policy to open the economy up to greater international competition”, as well as Australian integration with the region and “achieving closer ties with the APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] region” (p. 84).

While other temporary visa categories appear to be analytically distinct from Australia’s labour market, the development of these forms of subordinated inclusion cannot be separated from Australian class formation and social reproduction. Students, working holiday makers, and refugees form a composite part of Australia’s labour markets, and the section below provides an account for their connection.

The late-1980s to 1990s was the key period of expansion for international education. Australian higher education had been radically transformed following WWII, with the number of public universities increasing from six to thirty-seven, an increase in state expenditure from less than 1 per cent of GDP in the 1950s to 2.8 per cent in 1974, the massification of education from an elite minority to 33.4 per cent of the population with a bachelor degree or above today (ABS, 2024b), and a novel move from a historical focus on scholarship towards mostly state-directed ‘research’ (Forsyth, 2014). International education emerged as a key component of cold war foreign policy in the 1950s, as discussed in subsection 2.2.3, though many Chinese students in particular came privately through the Colombo plan. But the regime was transformed in the 1980s with the Dawkins reform and the first thousand overseas fee-paying students were admitted to Australian tertiary education in 1987. Fee-paying students rose from 6 per cent to the overwhelming majority of international students. Overseas students in tertiary education rose at 14.8 per cent per annum through the 1990s, depicted in Figure 5.20. The growth depicted in the figure, and the two ‘dips’ in the series at 2010 and 2020, are exaggerated if non-tertiary students are included.

⁷⁶Official statistics for overseas students (onshore) in tertiary education. Measurement changed from numbers to enrolments in 2001, resulting in a 20–30 per cent increase in figures. Numbers

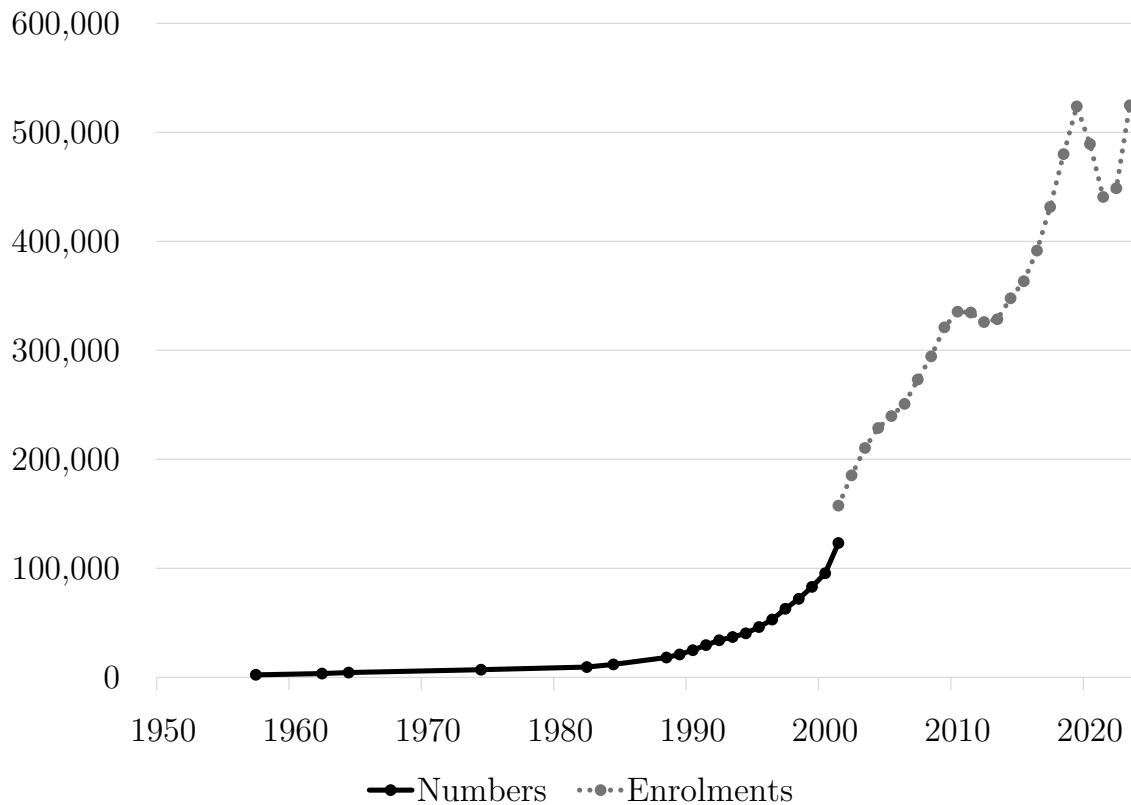


Figure 5.20: Overseas Students, Tertiary Education, 1957–2024⁷⁶

International students are often described as an ‘export commodity’,⁷⁷ but they have increasingly comprised a component part of labour markets that Neilson (2009) calls “students-migrants-workers”. This phrase captures the interpenetration of experience as workers, as students, and as migrants. Although international students are frequently disparaged and racialised as wealthy and passive, Briedis (2018) presents international student activism, including resistance to the imposition of fees and international solidarity, as central to the mobilisation of students in the 1980s.

Many students work while on their student visa, with a reported participation rate of 70.6 per cent, and an unemployment rate of 10.0 percent (Table 5.3). Employed non-managers report low wages and high rates of poverty, with an average weekly income of \$741, and 25.9 per cent below the poverty line (Table 5.4). Student income and labour force data from the census presents particular problems in analysis, due to restrictive legislation limiting working hours for student visa-holders, with absolute

compiled from Abbott and Doucouliagos, 2003; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001; Fraser, 1984, and enrolments from Department of Education (UCube and Pivots 2023).

⁷⁷This is based on the dubious counting of student spending as export income, which comprises approximately 59 per cent of this ‘export’ (Department of Education, 2025). This accounting practice is not reflected for those on bridging visas, nor even those on tourist visas, who have their spending reclassified after 12 months in Australia.

		Unemployment	Participation	Number ('000s)
Temporary	Skilled	2.8	86.8	79
	Working Holiday Maker	5.4	90.6	31
	NZ Citizen (subclass 444)	5.6	71.9	576
	Other	6.1	83.7	134
	Bridging	7.8	67.7	297
	Student	10.0	70.6	349
	<i>Sub-total</i>	6.9	73.0	1466
Permanent	Non-Indigenous, Australian born	4.5	66.9	12 334
	Non-Indigenous, overseas born	5.2	59.1	5415
	Indigenous	12.3	55.8	547
	<i>Sub-total</i>	4.9	64.3	18 297
Total		5.1	64.9	19 763

Table 5.3: Temporary visa holder labour market statistics, 2021 census. This table is compiled from Australian Census and Temporary Entrants, 2021, using Country of birth of person (BPLP), Visa Subclass (VISAP) and Labour force status (LFSP), and the same categories in Australian Census of Population

caps on hours worked.

Student temporary visas form a component part of the overall immigration program, with the ability for visas to flow into graduate and skilled visas, as well as permanency. From 1998, the inclusion of Australian qualifications in the points system for permanent migration further enabled the movement of students into skilled permanent workforce, usually via stepping stones of further temporary visas (Robertson, 2011b, p. 2194).

Student data also provides insight into the regulation of labour markets across the domestic-migrant divide. Temporary student visa holders stand out as having the worst labour market outcomes of any visa class, as shown above in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4. But these figures can be compared to the total cohort of students in Australia (those answering the census, $n = 2,838,984$ or employed nonmanager students only, $n = 1,541,749$). Labour market outcomes for temporary student migrants are not at all dissimilar to those of the total student population in terms of unemployment (10.0 per cent compares to 10.1 per cent for the cohort of all full-time and part-time students), participation rates (70.6 per cent compares to 64.7 per cent), in percentage of employed non-managers below the poverty line (25.9 per cent compares to 41.9 per cent for all students), or average income of employed nonmanagers (\$741.00 compares to \$766.00). These data capture only a snapshot and rely on self-reports.

	Description	Below Poverty Line (%)	Average Income (\$)	Number ('000s)
Temporary	Skilled	3.6	1777	53.1
	Working Holiday Maker	3.6	1094	23.1
	New Zealand Citizen	7.7	1379	305.7
	Other	6.2	1104	88.9
	Bridging	11.3	1010	148.4
	Student	25.9	741	187.9
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12.0	1150	807.2
Permanent	Non-Indigenous, Australian born	13.7	1352	6644.1
	Non-Indigenous, overseas born	10.2	1487	2597.7
	Indigenous	16.1	1133	234.4
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12.8	1384	9476.2
Total		12.8	1365	10 283.5

Table 5.4: Average incomes of employed non-managers on temporary visas at 2021 census. This table is compiled from Australian Census and Temporary Entrants, 2021, for average incomes, rounded to nearest dollar, and for percentage below the 60 per cent poverty line (set at \$483.00), using the method described at §4.3. Numbers differ from Table 5.3 as it selects a proxy of current workers: employed non-managers.

Working Holiday Makers also show high levels of labour market participation at 90.6 per cent (Table 5.3). The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program was first instituted in 1975 to allow Brits to spend up to 12 months studying and working in Australia. It has been transformed in the intervening decades (Clarke, 2004; James, 2024; Reilly et al., 2018). Caps were introduced in the 1990s, and transformed again in 2005 (Reilly, 2015). This has been called “back-door migrant work programs to help fill demands for labor in occupations and industries characterized by precarious jobs undesirable to locals” (Vosko, 2022). But just 3.6 per cent of employed non-managers on WHM visas were below the poverty line (Table 5.4).

In Australia’s refugee policy too, Vogl (2019) argues that the temporary bridging visa regime is “central to the logic and policy of punishment and deterrence of onshore asylum seekers seeking protection within Australian territory” (p. 150). Employed non-managers on bridging visas see some of the highest rates of working poverty (11.3 per cent) and low average incomes, while numbering 148,400 (Table 5.4), though these are lower than working poverty for non-Indigenous Australian-born persons.

Different laws regulating labour help produce different labour market outcomes. Table 5.3 presents the different unemployment and participation rates for temporary visa holders, comparing them Australian-born Indigenous and non-Indigenous per-

manent residents. Temporary visa holders have significantly higher participation rates than permanent residents, and no group has a higher unemployment rate than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Table 5.4 shows that average weekly incomes of Working Holiday Makers, Students, Bridging Visa Holders, and 'Other' temporary visa holders are lower than non-Indigenous Australian-born permanent residents. Only overseas students have a higher rate of working poverty than all classes of permanent residents. This is likely due to the confounding factor of age and the inherently transient role of education within the process of social reproduction in Australian capitalism.

These programs should not be conceptualised as distinct and separate from the permanent program. There has been a clear link of temporary migrants becoming permanent for decades, as well as emigration of permanent immigrants (Hugo, 2006, p. 228). At the time of the 2021 census, temporary migrants transitioning to permanency went through an average of 2.4 visas, with 35.6 per cent going through three or more (ABS, 2021b, author's calculations).

Visa (visa class)	Number
Partner (801/100/820)	516,060
Skilled Graduate (485)	402,720
Employer Nomination (186/121)	325,530
Skilled Independent (Permanent) (189)	271,680
Skilled Nominated (Permanent) (190)	211,730
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (491)	80,210
Global Special Humanitarian (202)	61,450
Skilled-Regional (887)	61,110
Regional Employer Nomination (187)	58,010
Contributory Parent (143)	51,800
Refugee (200)	50,740
Distinguished Talent (858/124)	32,070
Business Innovation and Investment (Residence) (888)	26,690
Child (101/802)	26,150
Other	172,590
<i>Total</i>	238,550

Table 5.5: Permanent Settlers with date of settlement between 2015 and 2024, by visa class, with "< 5" coded as 2.5 and rounded to nearest 10 (DHA, 2025b).

Far from being separate from the permanent migration program, the temporary and permanent streams form a hybrid program, serving to vet migrants before permanent residency is granted (Dauvergne and Marsden, 2014). Markus, McDonald and

Jupp describe the shift towards what they call a “guest worker” program (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, pp. 4, 152, see also Wright and Clibborn, 2020). But this tends to overestimate the separateness of this program to permanent immigration. Australia’s system is closer to what Mares (2016) calls a “two-step program”. The temporary and permanent migration systems operate together in an interconnected hybrid system, wherein temporary visas act as a kind of filtering or, better, *moulding* function (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright, 2009, p. 6) for the state, helping to produce a particular kind of migrant.

	Skill	Family	Humanitarian
Waiting time (mean)	4 years, 1 months	4 years, 3 months	3 years, 7 months
Waiting time (median)	3 years, 8 months	3 years, 9 months	3 years, 5 months

Table 5.6: Average time spent on temporary visas for temporary migrants made permanent. Computed from census tablebuilder using mean and median methods described above (4.3) for unbounded histogram data.

The following pages outline four numerical estimates for the degree of ‘hybridity’ between the temporary and permanent immigration fractions. Of those who achieve permanency from temporary visas, waiting times average from 3.5 to 4.3 years, with significant numbers waiting longer (see Table 5.6).

Most permanent migrants come through the temporary migration pathway. Of migrants that obtained a permanent residency in Australia, 59 per cent had held temporary visa holders in the past 12 months, shown in Figure 5.22, with the predominating proportion of the permanent migration regime made up of people who used to be on a temporary visa (excluding bridging visa, visitor visas).

However, the permanent program (an annual ‘flow’ measure) is much smaller than the actual number of temporary visa holders (a stock measure). Of some 2 million temporary migrants, an average of just 6 per cent achieve permanency in a given year. These proportions are shown in the two left columns of Table 5.7. That is, the temporary program represents a significant filter. While a minority of temporary migrants living in Australia are made permanent every year, on average, these temporary migrants make up the majority of the permanent migrant intake.

To help bridge the stock and flow variables, a final, basic quantitative measure is presented for understanding the relationship between permanent and temporary measure is modelling the relationship between the two to enumerate the ‘*permanency*

	Temporary proportion of permanent migrants	Permanencies as proportion of temporary migrant stock	Permanency efficiency at lag 1
2016–17	50.9	6.7	
2017–18	53.0	5.9	58.7
2018–19	52.6	5.2	28.6
2019–20	64.5	5.6	110.4
2020–21	67.5	8.1	-54.7
2021–22	63.8	6.7	67.5
2022–23	61.8	6.2	17.7
2023–24	57.2	5.3	49.3
2016–24	58.7	6.1	50.5

Table 5.7: Estimation of the hybridity of the migration regime, as percentages. Excludes bridging and visitor visas. 2016 to 2024 figure averages stocks and flows over the whole period, rather than averaging the annual results.

efficiency’ of the hybrid system. This measures the ‘efficiency’ with which the hybrid migration system transforms net temporary migrant intake N to permanency P via the stock variable S . Consider the following basic system, presented visually in Figure 5.21, representing flows into and out of the stock of temporary migrants. This can be enumerated as an annual model over t as $S_{t+1} = S_t + N_t - P_t$, where P_t is temporary migrants made permanent at time t , and N_t represents the net temporary migrant numbers (temporary migrants entering minus those leaving Australia). Migrants can either be converted (recorded as P_t), ‘rejected’ (return to country of origin, negatively counted within N_t), or new migrants may be added (positively counted within N_t). This allows a moving estimation of the permanency efficiency of the system at lag 1, $\frac{P_t}{N_{t-1}}$, representing the permanencies at time t as a proportion of the net increase to the temporary migrant stock at time $t - 1$. Bridging and visitor visas are excluded from the calculations of N , S and P due to data availability. The basic model is represented in Figure 5.21, and the results are represented in the right-hand column of Table 5.7.

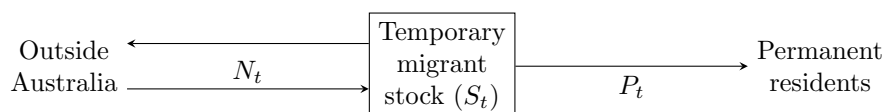


Figure 5.21: Representation of permanency efficiency model

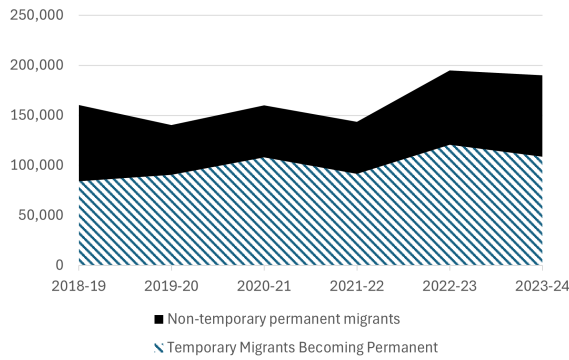


Figure 5.22: The proportion of the permanent migration intake made up of transition from temporary visas (patterned) to purely permanent visas (in black), from Migrant Trends (2018-2024). These figures exclude visitor and bridging visas and any visas held more than 12 months prior to permanency being granted.

rate or a collapse in new migrants in the system. As shown in Table 5.7, the permanency efficiency for this system is an unstable quantity, symbolising an unstable non-equilibrium system, with no clear correlation year-on-year between net temporary migrations and temporary migrants becoming permanent. It is generally positive and lower than 100 per cent, with a large drop during the COVID-19 pandemic in which a large number of temporary migrants were forced to leave the country.

A Permanency efficiency of 50 percent represents a strong flow through to the permanent migration regime, but also an increase in the stock of temporary migrants.

This method fails to disaggregate between visa classes, meaning the quite different dynamics impelling student migrants, New Zealand citizens, temporary protection visas, skilled temporary worker visas and working holiday makers are obscured. The calculation also excludes bridging visas altogether, which comprise a significant portion of temporary migrant outflows (12 per cent over 2006–2024) and 5.2 percent of the total stock of temporary migrants in 2023-24 (Migrant Trends). A more important limitation is the failure to separate N_t into inputs and outputs from S_t , which would allow for more clearly model flows into permanency, rejection, and stagnation.

So the rise in temporary migration cannot be separated from the permanent migra-

Over the whole period of 2016–2024, the system has a permanency efficiency of roughly 50 per cent at lag 1, symbolising that the rate of permanency over the period is around half of the flow into the temporary migrant stock. To help give this figure an intuitive meaning, consider the following. A permanency efficiency of 100 per cent indicates a strong flow through the system towards permanency (though still accounting for filtering effects), while figures above that represent some clearance of the temporary stock into permanency. A zero rate indicates no net permanencies. A negative permanency efficiency rate represents a net outflow of the stock, such as a large rejection

tion stream. Temporary and permanent immigrants, young and old workers, students and non-students, all form parts of Australia's workforce, exhibiting clear differences in labour market outcomes, but not in such a way that they are a separate discrete stratum.

The mode of repression used against Australia's working class was much deeper than merely tipping the scales and hoping for a wage payoff. Rather, the punitive shifts that stripped temporary immigrants of substantive rights comprised just one part of an overall push towards 'flexibility' in labour markets that crosses not only the artificial divides between temporary and permanent migrants, but also across the immigrant and 'domestic' fractions of the working class.

5.5.2 LABOUR MARKET 'REVOLUTION'

These shifts in immigration policy cannot be removed from the wholesale shift in Australian labour markets that occurred over the same period. The shift towards economic rationalism from the 1980s onward, and its intensification in the 1990s, revolutionised Australian labour markets as a whole, along with a deep shift in Australia's political economy.

While migrant status produces its own sharp and racialised "precarious" labour practices (Anderson, 2010; Berg, 2016), the 1980s and 1990s inaugurated a shift towards precarious labour practices across the Australian economy and particularly amongst young workers. Watson et al. (2003) described a "[f]ragmentation of the older world of work" (p. 203), from the 1980s and 1990s. This went far beyond the increase in unemployment—which increased from 1.9 per cent from 1945–1970, to 4.1 per cent in the 1970s and 8.2 per cent across the 1980s and 1990s (Figure 5.13). Casualisation increased sharply over the 1980s and 1990s from 13.3 per cent in 1982 to over a quarter of the workforce (Burgess and Campbell, 1998a; Campbell, 1998).⁷⁸ Precarious work in general, more broadly defined to include other forms of insecurity in work, also rose with pressure towards "flexibility" and "neoliberal policies of labour market deregulation" (Burgess and Campbell, 1998b, p. 16; see Campbell and Burgess, 2018). Caution is needed not to overstate the rise of casualisation, which can risk underplaying the stability of ongoing employment (Choonara, 2019, 2020).

⁷⁸These "casual jobs are inferior jobs, irrespective of the satisfaction levels of their incumbents" (Watson, 2005, p. 371).

These shifts were produced through a combination of employer strategies and state reconstruction of the award system. Australia's system of awards was gradually dismantled—displaced relatively by single-employer bargaining (Campbell and Brosnan, 1999). Award-reliant employees collapsed rapidly from 80 per cent in 1990 and remains a minority of employees today (23.2 per cent in 2023).⁷⁹ Employers opportunistically weakened internal labour markets, laying off staff in the early 1990s (Burgess and Campbell, 1998b).

Figure 5.11 shows the high strike action that continued throughout the 1970s under the Fraser government's unsuccessful attacks on the working class, during what O'Lincoln (1993) called the 'Years of Rage'. The union movement's new policy of wage moderation though from the 1980s plunged incidence of strike action to fewer than 1,000,000 strike days lost per year. The legalisation of strikes under the narrow limits of the regime of 'Enterprise Bargaining' from the 1990s, combined with heavy penalties for the unlawful strikes held outside those limits, began Australia's "internationally unusual" increasing restrictions on the right to strike (Peetz, 2016, p. 153). Liberal Prime Minister John Howard further entrenched a full "neoliberal re-regulation" of Australian industrial relations (Cooper and Ellem, 2008, p. 532), including secret ballots from 2005.

The shift towards temporary migration in the immigration program came alongside a flexibilisation of the labour-market as a whole, increased casualisation, and an increased rate of exploitation. These labour market regime shifts were part of a ruling class strategy to realign Australian capitalism to the new 'neo-liberal' period, a shift inaugurated by the crisis of the 1970s.

As described in chapter 2, the global economic shifts that saw accumulation dynamics in the post-war era reproduced economic crisis, which gradually crept through Australia from October 1973, a period that can be described as neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is a slippery concept, referring to the amalgam of state strategies used to combat the economic crises, the economic ideologies that became popular in the period, and the name for global or local regimes of capitalism that existed in that time. This thesis has tended to assess it in this third capacity, following Davidson (2023). Neo-liberalism, as a *response* to these "persistent problems with profitability" (Parker, 2013, p. 31), therefore exists plurally in part as a set of strategies and ideologies by different ruling classes, carried by disparate state and employer actors, but coexisting

⁷⁹Australian Bureau of Statistics, Award Coverage Australia 1990 and ABS, 2023.

within a concrete era.

As a state strategy to combat the crisis, its economic heart is an attempt to increase the rate of exploitation (Harman, 2010). From the 1970s and 1980s, Australian wages have stopped keeping up with GDP per capita growth, while recent decades have seen a well documented trend of real wage stagnation (Stewart, Stanford, and Hardy, 2018). Since the late 1990s, wage growth in Australia has fallen well more than 26 per cent short of productivity growth, signalling an increase in the rate of exploitation (shown in Figure 5.23). On top of this should be added attacks on the social wage, privatisation, financial deregulation and supply-side monetary policy (Cooper, 2024; Humphrys, 2019).

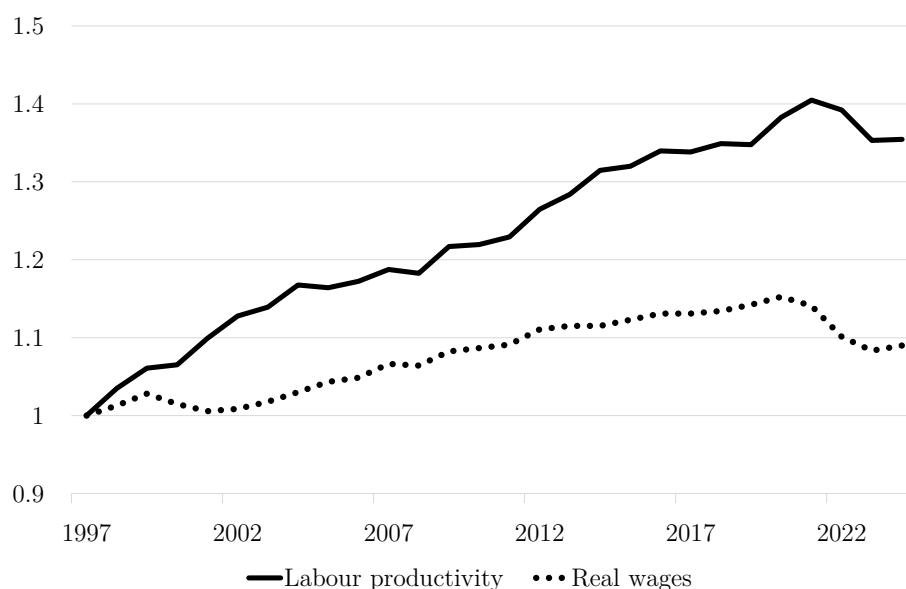


Figure 5.23: Indices for real wages versus productivity 1997–2024 (1997 = 100). Wage Prices Index (ABS, 2025b, CPI deflated), versus labour productivity growth (GDP per hour worked, seasonally adjusted ABS, 2024a).

But although these shifts in the rate of exploitation have had an impact on crises, the fundamental changes to capital accumulation and the organic composition of capital have been relatively limited. The neo-liberal assault on wages has had the impact of forestalling the decline of the profit rate referenced in Section 5.4 (Shaikh, 2011, p. 46), rather than reversing the decline.⁸⁰ The “main substantive achievement of neoliberalization, however, has been to redistribute, rather than to generate, wealth and income” (Harvey, 2005a, p. 159; see Passant, 2013, p. 126), as well as ruling class power and hegemony (Dumenil and Levy, 2011).⁸¹ The series of crises over fifty years

⁸⁰See Choonara (2011)

⁸¹See Parker (2013, pp. 31–3).

do not appear to have altered the profitability crisis. This may also be due to high levels of Chinese and to a lesser extent Indian growth, which would expect to exert a negative pressure on profits due to the OCC.

Although exploitation rates are the most important for the purposes of assessing labour market shifts in Australia, the global nature of the underlying economic shifts, and the generalised profitability crisis engendered wider economic shifts, where different states and employers all took action in response, producing shifts in the international economy built since the Second World War. These structures of internationalisation, developed from the second world war, deepened the production of immediate goods.

The impacts on Australian capitalism were serious. The manufacturing sector, despite never encompassing a majority of Australian workers, has always been central, whether it is the driving urban protectionist faction of the bourgeoisie with its base in manufacturing, or the centralised system of wage fixing which to this day is based on the C13 to C1 manufacturing levels. These sectoral shifts played some role in the declining rate of unionisation, though the primary dynamic is discussed below. State directed development and protectionism declined as an effective state strategy for Australia, since Australian manufacturing was no longer competitive. The brakes on state-led developmentalism that goes along with it, including tariff protections, and state production, though importantly *not* a decline in state expenditure. Australian expenditure on welfare for instance increased from 1979 from 13.2 to 16.1 per cent of GDP (Harman, 2008).

This perspective on neo-liberalism challenges Markus, McDonald, and Jupp's (2009) immigration revolution. Global pressures enter their conception via a conception of the "realities of the laws of supply and demand" (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, p. 6). The dynamic of increase in labour demand in the West and the global inequalities which produce emigration, mean that Australia is "another competitor in what was becoming a crowded sellers' market" for labour-power (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, p. 4). Racial discrimination was jettisoned so that Australia could attract 'human capital' from more various sources. "Australian immigration policy has first and foremost served economic goals, at no time more so than over the last decade" (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, p. 152). Temporary migration in particular serves the "objectives of maximising economic growth and minimising cost to the state" (Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, p. 152), through low welfare payments

(p. 10), the possibility of “flexibility” of deportation during labour shortages (pp. 12–13), and holding down wages (p. 26). The primary problem with the programs, for these authors, is in the sphere of racial relations.

Such an account divorces the particular patterns of immigration from the shifting political economy of the period: a conscious reconfiguration of Australia’s geo-political positioning, shifts in production across the global capitalist system, and an attempt to increase the rate of exploitation to face fifty years of recurrent crises in productivity. While the rise of Asian manufacturing meant that international labour markets for these skills increased, this an account underplays the underlying dynamic shifts within word production that preceded this factor, the conscious process by which Australia’s ruling class embarked on geopolitical repositioning, and the dominance of neo-liberal reform in managing Australian labour markets.

To recapitulate, understood in this way, the neo-liberal shift consisted of a flexibilisation of the working class as a whole, including within immigrant and non-immigrant fractions. Employer and state strategies of wage restraint, commodification, privatisation, casualisation produced a new international order. The dynamics of migration were internally related to those of Australian labour markets as a whole.

Underlying economic crisis unseated the ‘Australian settlement’, producing a huge shift in the Australian working class. The commodification of the migration system was *not* a revolution within the migration system, but rather a component part of the economic realignment of Australian labour markets to neo-liberal capitalism.⁸² This is not to understate the significance of the shift in labour markets as a whole, or in the system of immigration.

At the heart of economic labour restructuring was not immigration but industrial relations. Immigration played a complementary role. The key conceptual move here is the movement from quantitative to qualitative understanding of shifts within labour markets. More precisely, it is a question of the ordering of abstractions—that the class dynamics of labour market reform precede immigration.

But despite these wholesale economics shifts, a remarkable subjective continuity can be drawn from the way unions, workers and labour were drawn into the policies of the Australian settlement, and the way they were drawn into an accord with

⁸²It is not a ‘revolution’ as such. Cooper (2024, p. 375) suggests framing neo-liberal monetary reforms as a “counterrevolution without a revolution”, recognising the role of labour advances in the 1930s, and 1960s and 1970s in constructing neo-liberal ideology.

Labor during the 1980s and 1990s. The Price and Income Accords have often been remembered in the Australian left as a kind of original sin of labour/Labor, marking a transition to the acceptance of the neo-liberal order, the attitudes of passivity towards the government, and maybe most importantly in the minds of trade unionists, an acquiescence to the new institutional structures of labour market regulation. This narrative is in some ways a voluntarist mirror image to the rationalist excuses of the contemporary union bureaucrat.

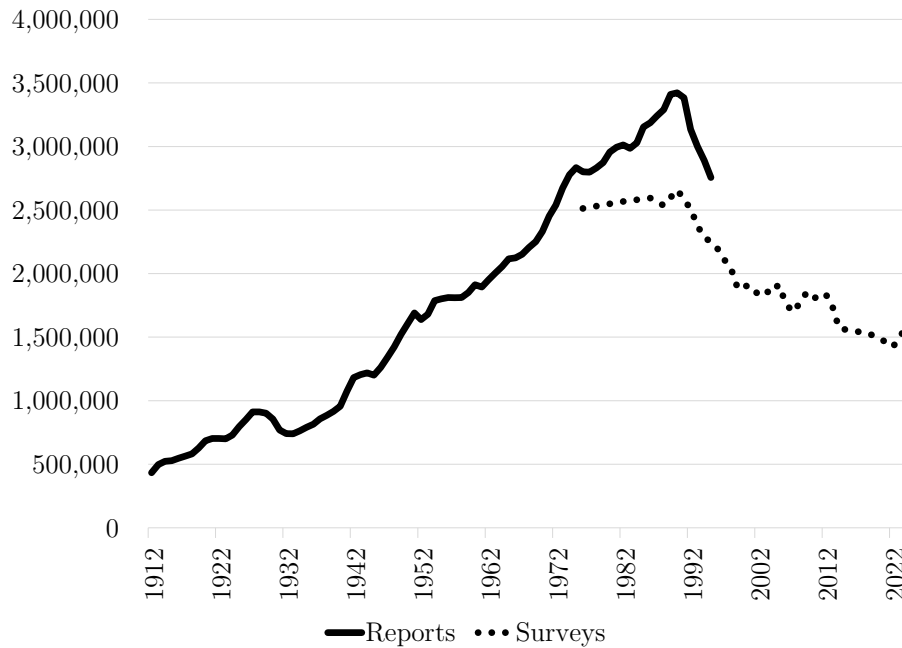


Figure 5.24: Number of union members in Australia, 1912–2024. The series of report data is from the federal government Labour Report (1912–1967), Labour Statistics (1968–1975) and Trade Union Statistics (1976–1995).

Subjectively speaking, however, what is most remarkable about the Accord is not disjuncture from the preexisting union attitudes towards government intervention in labour markets, but its continuity. Humphrys calls it “a process of *corporatism within corporatism*”, where the social contract between the political and industrial wings of labour “deepened and intensified already existing arrangements” (Humphrys, 2019, p. 36).

The trade union outlook of wage moderation, decentralised bargaining, and the facilitation of workplace restructuring (which was undergoing its own transformation) delivered a historic blow to union membership (ACIRRT, 1999, pp. 56–8). Relative union membership dropped from historic high of 65 per cent in 1948 (Bowden, 2011) to 51 per cent in 1976 (Peetz, 1997) to 13 per cent in 2024 (ABS, 2024e). These

relative shifts in unionism are only partially attributable to sectoral economic shifts and privatisation (Griffin and Svensen, 1996). As Figure 5.24 shows though, absolute membership crashed rapidly from around 1990.⁸³

Much as the settlement contained a particular bourgeois economic strategy (protectionism, wages policy, within the geopolitics of White Australia), the Accords also represented a bourgeois strategy expressed through the Australian Labor Party about how to integrate Australia into the global economy, producing stability for workers and bosses alike.

The neo-liberal period radically changed the economic management strategy of Australia's ruling class. Tariffs and centralised bargaining and arbitration were rapidly demoted from central labour strategies. There was a historic breakdown of wages and productivity growth, immigration was transformed into a hybrid system, slanted towards skilled immigration, labour markets were radically flexibilised, and exploitation was jacked up across the migrant-domestic divide. Immigration played an internal role to this, with flexibilisation and attacks on the working class acting in parallel, but certainly not the primary role. The historic collapse of the Australian trade union movement came less from an about face of the attitude of trade union leaders, but a continuation in the form of accords with capital, to the content of the new bourgeois strategy.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Together with chapter 4, this chapter delivered an internal relations account of immigration in Australian labour market regimes. Institutional assessments of labour markets reveal a regime managed not between an 'inside' of domestic workers and an 'outside' of immigrants, but rather one that disciplines and constitutes class formation across the domestic-migrant divide. As well as acknowledging the interpenetration of state and market, of labour market regimes in motion, it stressed the potency of class

⁸³This form of reporting using trade union reports involves an unknown amount of double counting, a major revision in 1968, shifts in which bodies are identified as unions, and inconsistencies about the inclusion of financial or all members. From 1976, the ABS shifted to semi-regular surveys to estimate gross membership (reported in *Trade Union Members from 1976 to 2013* and *Characteristics of Employment from 2014*). These measures tend to under-count total membership numbers, as they count only whether respondents are members of union in their main job. The series inconsistently includes and excludes owner managers of incorporated enterprises (appearing to exclude owner managers in 2009, and after 2016).

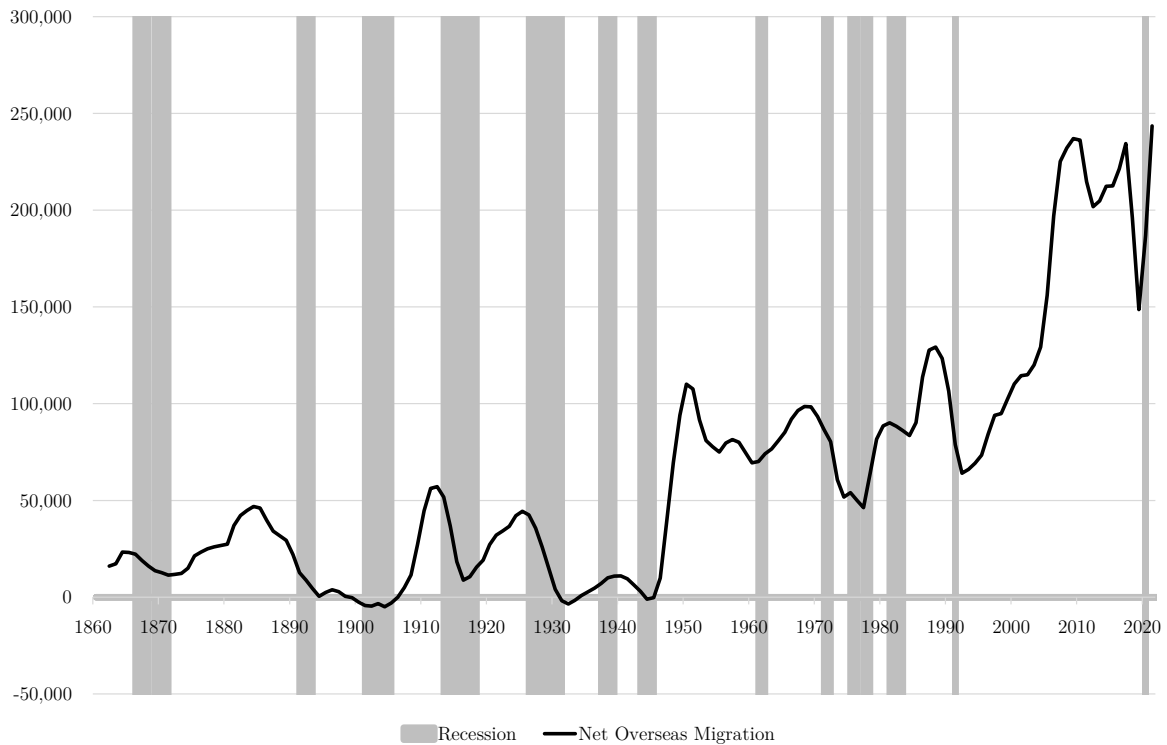


Figure 5.25: Adjusted Net Overseas Migration (derived at A.1) against recessions.⁸⁴

agency within and beyond these restrictive confines as a key feature of Australia’s contradictory class development.

For decades, the growth of Australia’s population by means of immigration has been likened to the *boa constrictor* which gulps immigrants in fits and starts, represented graphically in Figure 5.25. Statistician C. H. Wickens in 1928 described the dynamic of immigration from 1860s onward as a “boa-constrictor” in which Australia exhibits a “habit of bolting our immigrants and then resting until we have digested them”, through periods of “alternate gorging and inertness” which “does not seem the most desirable way to organize the development of the country” (Wickens, 1928, p. 54). The analogy has been repeated as a descriptor of Australian immigration ever since (Hancock, 1937, p. 446; Price, 1975, p. 304; Borrie, 1994, p. 283; Richards, 2008, pp. 350–1). Jock Collins decried therefore the “institutional rigidities” that saw immigrants incorporated through that decade’s recession (Collins, 1988, p. 24). Figure 5.25 shows this well documented tendency of reductions in immigration following recessions, including Collins’ complaint about high migration during the recession during the high migration post-war boom.

This chapter has not so much sought to disprove this analogy but transform it. Within an internal relations account, foregrounding the inner dynamic of accumula-

tion in explanations of turbulent booms and busts as discussed in chapter 4 makes the corresponding turbulence in the incorporation of new migrants unremarkable. A steady flow of capital, profits, finance, and immigrants, is a Utopian one presuming the state controls the capitalist economy. This chapter drew attention to another analogy of the boa constrictor—one evoked by Marx:

The centralized state machinery which, with its ubiquitous and complicated military, bureaucratic, clerical and judiciary organs, entoids (inmeshes) the living civil society like a boa constrictor (MECW:22, p. 483).

Migration was not an outside agitator towards an otherwise harmonious Australia “social organisation” (Deakin, 1901/2019, p. 266), held together with labour protectionism. These Liberal mythologies are belied by resistance to arbitration from the ‘inside’ of the nation. There has been a squeeze on civil society, but not in the form of migrants, but in these Liberal practices themselves, combined with the “contingent conservatism” (Bramble, 1993b; Vassiley, 2024, p. 399) of the union bureaucracy. From the ‘Australian Settlement’ to the Prices and Incomes Accord, an integrative function of the state has played a critical role in Australian historiography and in the labour movement. Migration was not an external lever of control, but a moment within the dynamics of capital accumulation.

These processes of state integration are, in turn, shaped by dynamics of capital accumulation. In shifting from a quantitative conception of immigration as fuelling population in fits and starts to a qualitative function within the process of class formation, an internal relations account recasts immigration policy as second fiddle to industrial relations in state labour market management, which itself has undergone repeated reorientations with the shifting political economy of Australian accumulation, from early colonial shifts to free labour, to the Australian settlement and the neo-liberal labour market regime. The labour market regime and immigration within it evolves as a process rather than a structure, produced and reproduced by international economic shifts, political and ideological shifts, and class subjectivity, the topic developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Manufacturing Illusory Community

Immigration, Racism and Australian Nationalism

I am an advocate of immigration. But why? Because without the element of population we cannot build up a nation in this country. I want men and women—free men and women—of our own stock to assist us in laying the broad foundations of an Empire.

— HENRY PARKES, 1881, P. 2

no accidental impulse can precipitate an infant community into a nation.

— SYDNEY UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL JOHN WOOLLEY, 1861, P. 5

The preceding chapters have developed an increasingly complex picture of the internal relations of migration in capitalist accumulation, and an increasingly dynamic picture of Australian migration in the *longue durée*. Chapter 2 outlined the key hinges in this thesis' periodisation of Australian migration, through the intertwined processes of imperialism and accumulation, which were in chapter 3 shown to have implications 'inside' and 'outside' the national form. Through chapters 4 and 5, these migration shifts were situated within inner dynamics of labour markets in Australian capitalism, developing an account of internal processes of contestation that challenge fixed structural and institutional accounts of stability. This growing theme of agency/structure through migration identified in chapter 1 is developed in this chapter, which investigates how migration through its exclusionary and incorporative moments ideologically mediates these contradictions, and how these inner contradictions of capital-labour

within many capitals erupt so spectacularly through these periods of seeming stability.

In order to situate this contradiction of exclusion and incorporation, it introduces the fourth and final determination considered by this thesis in its account of how migration is constituted within processes of accumulation: *nationalism*. The following sections suggest a reading of nationalism as the category that best expresses these internal connections within these contradictions. The first section develops a conception of migration within Marxist political economy as constituting an ideological moment in capital accumulation via: (1) reproducing processes of nationalism that ideologically bind together ruling and working classes against other nations; and (2) the inherent contradictions within the structure of 'the nation', which fracture into the popular ideological construction of immigration. The following four sections follow the development of this inner and emergent connection between migration, racism, and nationalism, seeking to understand the ideological moment within the shifts in Australian migration.

6.1 IMMIGRATION, EMPIRE AND 'MANUFACTURING COMMUNITIES'

The inner connections between exclusion and incorporation have been identified by Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) and De Genova (2017), who stress how borders heterogenise and multiply labour subjectivity while reasserting an increasing crisis in state sovereignty, and how the spectacular exclusion of migrants hides real dynamics of illegalised exclusion. Turam (2024) identifies a dialectic between securitisation and the resistance it elicits.

The contradiction within migration as mediating imperialism and capital accumulation has sharp ideological consequences. Migration is charged on the one hand with the dynamics of racialisation, which are "traces of history" (Wolfe, 2016b) carved out through the imperial and colonial division and re-division of the world, according to the inner domination of capital. On the other, it expresses in a peculiar neo-Malthusian way, returned to in chapter 7, the externalisation of the miseries inflicted on labour by capital by its anarchic quest for profit, which not only generates crisis, but exists through exploitation and alienation.

This section turns to these expressions of migration in Australian history, through an internal relations account of nationalism and capital accumulation, investigating how migration mediates these contradictions, and the ideological moment through which they erupt continuously through the hinges of periodisation established in chapter 2. These ideologies are not separate from or epiphenomenal to the way capital accumulation is expressed through migration, but form an inner moment. In Dietzgen's famous "materialist theory of knowledge" (Dietzgen, 1917, p. 309), thoughts and cognition are every bit as real and a topic of science as are the natural sciences. These developments were commendable for Marx (MECW:43, p. 173; Lenin, 1977c, pp. 246–8) despite the "lack of dialectical development" (MECW:43, p. 121). Bieler and Morton (2018, pp. 67–75) provide an alternative account of the "material structure of ideology", developed through Gramsci and the critique of International Political Economy. Against Dietzgen's tendency to stress the material over the ideological in his analysis of the latter (Russell, 2021), Bieler and Morton stress the need to transcend ideology and material as a dualism (Bieler and Morton, 2018, p. 73). This thesis enlivens a classical Marxist approach that against both of these to internal and asymmetric relations that inner dominance in the ordering of the categories, including that of the inner dominance of the material over the ideological (see Bieler and Morton, 2018, p. 23).

The following section outlines an account of the ideological reproduction of racism through migration as centring the materio-ideological process of nationalism as a contradictory process, through a return to Marx's political economy. These processes are situated not externally as in Dietzgen's form, but dialectically through the internality of capital accumulation and imperialism developed through the thesis.

6.1.1 MARX AND ENGELS ON MIGRATION, 1870

Accounts of Marx's conception of migration typically focus on Marx's letter of April 1870 to "two very good workers living in New York, A. Vogt, a shoemaker, and Sigfrid Meyer, a mining engineer" (MECW:43, p. 184). In this letter, Marx outlines his understanding of the divisions between Irish and English workers, and the utility of these divisions for the capitalist class as the "*secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation*" (Marx, 1870b, p. 222, emphasis original). This section offers a critical rereading of this letter, suggesting tendencies to read Marx's account

of migration in an external relations way, connected to the discussion in chapter 4.

This letter has been used to evince Marx's critical attitude to immigration. Angela Nagle (2018, para. 16) argues that Karl Marx's "position on immigration would get him banished from the modern Left". David Wilson writes "[i]mmigrant rights advocates in particular have ignored Marx's thoughts on the issue, especially his remark—which reflects his assessment of how the capitalist system operates—that the influx of low-paid Irish immigrants to England forced wages down for native-born English workers" (Wilson, 2017, p. 20). Looking at a slightly wider selection of Marx's works on migration,¹ Helge Schwiertz (2024) concludes that a "doubly negative picture of migration is drawn, albeit with a critical intention . . . a passive, disposable mass and an exploitable human resource of capital . . . [and] a potential opponent of the already resident working class, or as an instrument that capital uses in the labor struggle to stir up competition and depress wages", drawing attention to the inner connection between the sympathetic position of membership to the reserve army or surplus population, and the immigrant as victim of the capitalist press (Schwiertz, 2024, p. 334).

Many Marxists make slightly more guarded concessions about the letter, using it as a basis to ground the production of racism in the material base of economic competition. For Selfa (2002, para. 65), Marx's letter provides an account of the "main sources of racism under modern capitalism", the fostering of competition between workers, and the stoking of those divisions by capitalists (economically and ideologically). Although slightly more careful in her exposition of the 1870 letter itself, Hannah Cross (2020) nonetheless concludes that "[m]igrant labour tends to benefit the middle and upper classes, while it is deliberately used to drive down working conditions among diverse groups in the sections of the labour market that are undervalued within the capitalist economic system". Marx's (1870b) letter "illustrates this composition of the political economy of migration". In Castles and Kosack's (1973) famous work too, Marx's letter is used to conclude that the "main roots of working-class prejudice towards immigrants are to be found in these relationships of competition" (Castles and Kosack, 1973, p. 479). Callinicos (1992) and Alexander (1987) also ground their understanding of racism in general on Marx's (1870b) letter, emphasising three factors: (1) economic competition between workers; (2) the exigencies of political struggle as the main roots of ongoing racism; and (3) the ideological construction of racism by the ruling class.

¹Schwiertz, unusually, references the January circular on which the April letter to Meyer and Vogt was based (MECW:21, pp. 86–90), rather than the April letter itself (MECW:43, p. 471–76).

Alexander (1987, pp.17-20) emphasises this factor—competition between workers—in his explanation of anti-Irish racism. For instance, the defeat of the 1798 Irish rebellion, and subsequent famine in the 1830s, increased migration to England, providing a larger material basis by which bosses use ‘foreigners’ to further encourage a split within the workforce (Alexander, 1987, p.17). More recently, Callinicos reiterates “[c]ompetition in the labour market between ‘natives’ and migrants creates conditions for the kind of divisions that can be worked up into racial antagonism and can undermine the cohesion and effectiveness of the working class as a collective agent, as Marx already saw in mid-nineteenth century Britain” (Callinicos, 2023, p. 157). These theorists differ mainly in the degree to which they emphasise *ideological mobilisation* of labour-market competition as racism; where they agree is in the pre-existing material basis for that racism in the form of working class economic competition.

Yet Marx’s treatment of competition in this context (labour markets) should be placed within his broader philosophical treatment of competition. Marx is infamously “ambivalent” (Wheelock, 1983, p. 18) about the way in which to incorporate competition in his analysis. Competition is not an immediate reality within labour markets, but rather is “the relation of capital to itself as another capital, i.e. the real conduct of capital as capital” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 650). It is its “inner nature” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 414). Competition “merely *expresses* as real, posits as an external necessity, that which lies within the nature of capital” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 651, emphasis his).

Such an opposition presumes, of course, divisions within labour markets. Competition between capitals necessarily implies the (re)production of corresponding divisions amongst workers. “The worker produces capital, capital produces him” [sic] (MECW:3, p. 3), and so the “competition among workers is only another form of the competition among capitals” (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 651). Competition within many capitals, this thesis argues, came to subsume imperialist competition between blocs of national capital represented by the state (chapter 2), a historical development that has been appropriated into the structure of capital itself. Lebowitz argues that “rather than the competition among workers being recognized as a form of the competition of capitals and as a condition of capital securing its goals, the competition of capitals spontaneously appears as a form of the competition of workers and as a means for them to satisfy their goals” (Lebowitz, 2013, p. 157).

Marx’s ambivalence about competition between capitals suggests the need for a double ambivalence about the nature of competition between workers, rather than

treating it as objective. Returning to the 1870 letter and its immediate context, a closer reading shows that at the end of 1869 and the beginning of 1870, Marx stressed the way in which immigration expressed and brought to life within England the questions of British imperialism in Ireland—propelling the thesis towards its investigation of migration's ideological moment.

Re-Framing the 1870 Letter

Marx's letter of 1870 comes at the end of a period of increasing comprehension of the revolutionary potential of Irish nationalism through the end of the 1860s (Anderson, 2016). It is instructive therefore to compare how Marx and Engels speak about Irish immigrants to England in the 1840s, to the 1869–1870 period.

In the 1840s, Marx and Engels had not yet developed their conception of international development, suffering at this time especially of a “geopolitical deficit” (Teschke, 2020, p. 304). They tended to grasp the dynamics between polities in their external aspect, rather than as dialectically intertwined. The context of the Crimean war forced Marx to reconsider the topic of “foreign policy”, which he and Engels had “very much neglected” (MECW:39, p. 395). With regard to immigration, they tended to single out “Irish immigrant labor in Britain, both as an index of Irish oppression at home and as a factor in holding down the wages of English workers” (Anderson, 2016, pp. 123–4).

In the 1840s, Engels in particular, and in turn often Marx, thought about immigration primarily in its role devaluing labour-power, particularly English labour-power. Engels stresses the impact of competition as “the completest expression of the battle of all against all which rules in modern civil society” (MECW:4, p. 375), pessimistically remarking that the “proletarian is helpless” (p. 376). Competition amongst workers (between branches of production as much as internationally) drew down conditions, and the differences in customary comfort or ‘civilisation’ between the English and the Irish meant that the introduction of Irish resulted in “gradually forcing the rate of wages, and with it the Englishman's level of civilisation, down to the Irishman's level” (MECW:4, pp. 376–7).² The emphasis was historical about moral and historic element of wages determination rather than supply and demand an external relations sense. For instance, Engels gives the example of the Irish introducing “the custom, previously

²“Nothing else is therefore possible than that, as Carlyle says, the wages of English working-man should be forced down further and further in every branch in which the Irish compete with him” (MECW:4, p. 392).

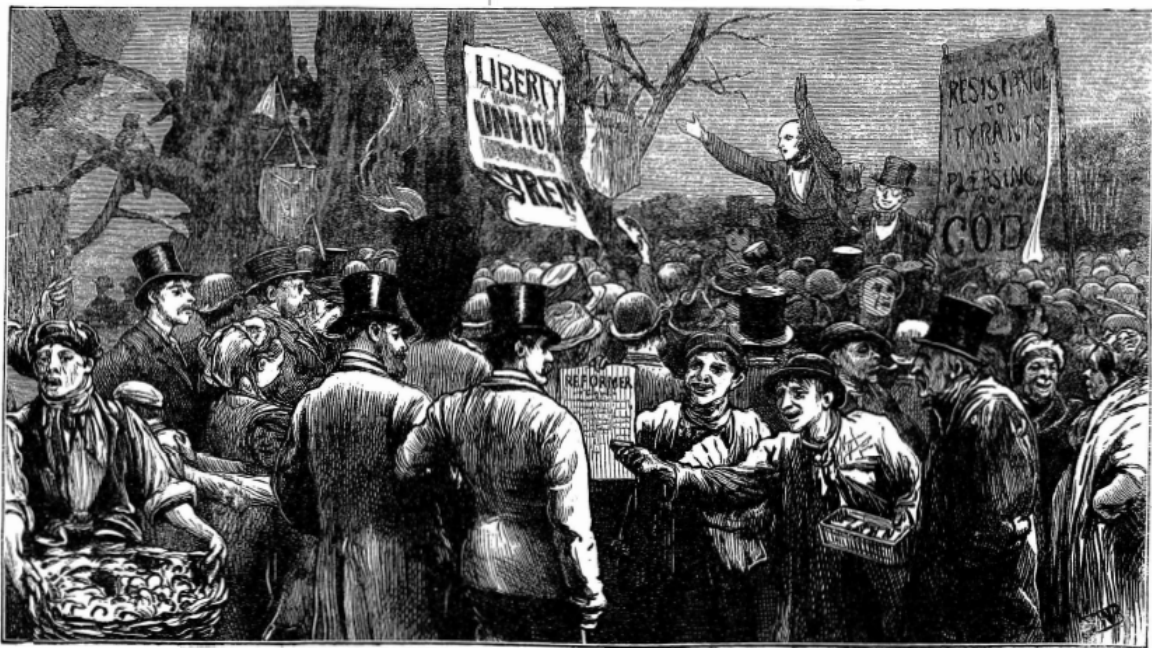
unknown in England, of going barefoot” (MECW:4, p. 368). Notable in this context are Engel’s repeated remarks about the nature of Irish and English workers as a “race” (pp. 361, 362, 390, 392), a growing ideological construct (Malik, 1996).

Even at his height of hiberno-pessimism though, Engels emphasises the qualitative contribution of Irish migration to the English working class. Economically, the migration from rural areas including Ireland produced this “colossal centralisation, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world” (MECW:4, p. 328). And politically, it “deepened the chasm between workers and bourgeoisie, and hastened the approaching crisis” (MECW:4, p. 419). More importantly, Engels disparages the “condemnation of the Irish national character” (MECW:4, p. 390) and conversely praises the impact of the Irish on the English temperament (MECW:4, p. 419):

the Irish, by their immigration into England, have furnished England a leaven which will produce its own results in the future. (MECW:4, p. 560)

This angle is developed further through Marx’s recognition of the ongoing international development of capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century, an analysis that anticipates understandings of imperialism to describe the international development of capital at the end of the nineteenth century. Pradella argues that “in the wake of the Taiping Revolution (1850–64), which spread throughout China from the early 1850s, Marx changed his previous unidirectional view of international revolution, tracing a relation between proletarian struggle in the metropolis and anti-colonial movements in the colonies” (Pradella, 2017, p. 120). In this period of European reaction “China and the tables began to dance when the rest of the world appeared to be standing still” (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 164, fn. 27). Marx followed the founding of the Fenian movement in 1858, and their actions in the 1860s, which he publicly defended, though privately critical of the unfortunate targeting of civilians. The suppression of the 1867 Fenian rising in Ireland had a profound effect on Marx and Engels conception of immigration. Marx’s vision of the potential of Irish immigrants as their own potential force reassessed the revolutionary potential of the English and Irish working classes. Marx increasingly concretised in this way the “dialectics of class and national liberation in the struggle to uproot capitalism” (Anderson, 2016, p. 151).

Marx attended a Fenian march in London in October 1869 drawing an estimated 200,000, the largest march since Chartism, at which flew banners such as “Disobedience to tyrants is a duty to God!” (MECW:43, p. 546), and was profoundly affected by it. Jenny Marx remarks of the demonstration she attended with her father, and noted “all the papers made a furious onslaught on those confounded ‘foreigners’, and cursed the day they had landed in England to demoralize sober John Bull by means of their bloodred flags, noisy choruses and other enormities” (MECW:43, p. 547). A related march is depicted in Figure 6.1, including on the right the slogan that so scandalised the press. Kirkland notes the “noteworthy number of women” and “sympathetic non-Irish working class marchers” at the later march (Kirkland, 2014, p. 146). It is the month following the 1869 march that Marx wrote “the English working class . . . they will never do anything decisive here in England before they separate their attitude towards Ireland quite definitely from that of the ruling classes, and not only make common cause with the Irish, but even take the initiative” (MECW:43, p. 390).



THE RECENT FENIAN DEMONSTRATION IN HYDE PARK

Figure 6.1: Engraving of a Fenian demonstration in Hyde Park, London, on 3 November 1872, *The Graphic* (1872, p. 472).

COURTESY OF BRITISH LIBRARY

The immediate cause of the 1870 letter was a dispute with the newspaper associated with Marx's rival Bakunin *L'Egalité*. The editor³ wrote a poorly judged article attack-

³The editor who Marx supposed to be Bakunin was in fact Bakunin's associate Paul Robin (Graham, 2021, p. 125).

ing the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) for its advocacy for Ireland as a “*mouvement politique local*” [local political movement], and for its failure to have a separate British organisation of the IWMA separate from the General Council (Mares, 2018, p. 39). Between December 11th and January 1st, Marx wrote up a confidential circular to be passed at the IWMA general counsel. This was circulated to French, Genovese and German groups between January and March, with Marx happily reporting the “Bakunin gang” departing *L’Egalité* as a result (MECW:43, p. 424). The April 1870b letter to Meyer and Vogt was an explanation and popularisation of the position outlined in that circular. The January 1st circular outlines a number of positions regarding the economic and political situation in England and Ireland. These particular debates about Ireland were a concern to him throughout the first months of 1870, and he copied the resolution that contained many but not all of the key ideas (and some identical phrases) from his letter to Meyer and Vogt to the German Social-Democratic federation—months in which he was finalising *Capital* Volume II. In these months, Marx developed a critical argument about how to understand racism.

Marx emphasised the economic development of England as “metropolis of capital” (MECW:21, p. 87), stressing not only the development of capitalist social relations and class struggle but “because of its domination on the world market, every revolution in economic matters must immediately affect the whole world” (MECW:21, p. 86). Despite England’s unique importance though, the English working class lacked “the spirit of generalisation and revolutionary ardour” (MECW:21, p. 87). Such inspiration would need to come from without, from France, from the IWMA, or he now saw, from Ireland.

Ireland is linked economically to England as “the BULWARK of English landlordism” (MECW:21, p. 21).⁴ Not only would the consequence of English defeat in Ireland be an economic and moral defeat for English landlordism, but also the key justification for England’s substantial standing army. Marx’s conclusion that “Any people that oppresses another people forges its own chains” (MECW:21, p. 89) is not mere verbiage but is connected to a concrete analysis. Such representations circulated too in Australia, as shown in Hopkin’s cartoon of an Irish St Patrick stoning landlordism (Figure 6.2).

⁴“If England is the BULWARK of landlordism and European capitalism, the only point where official England can be struck a great blow is Ireland” (MECW:21, p. 21). See Anderson (2016) for a discussion of Marx’s conception of applying the ‘lever’ in Ireland.

In this internecine dispute over the structure of the IWMA therefore, Marx is making the case against what the naïve disconnection between “the social movement and the political movement” (MECW:21, p. 89). Marx stresses that the political movements must be subordinated to the economical emancipation of the working class only “as a mean” (MECW:21, p. 89), and is furious about the removal of this phrase and “the abolition of all class rule” from the French translation of the IWMA rules. Swain points out “Marx does not limit himself to saying workers must see their shared interests in the wage relation, but that it must be extended to the social and political question of Irish independence” (Swain, 2022, pp. 175–81).

In the more famous letter to Meyer and Vogt, Marx repeats “quite shortly, the salient points” of that circular (MECW:43, p. 473), concluding that “the task of the ‘INTERNATIONAL’ [was] to bring the conflict between England and Ireland to the forefront everywhere, and to side with Ireland publicly everywhere” and in London to “awaken the consciousness of the English working class that, for them, the national emancipation of Ireland is not a QUESTION OF ABSTRACT JUSTICE OR HUMANITARIAN SENTIMENT, but THE FIRST CONDITION OF THEIR OWN SOCIAL EMANCIPATION” (MECW:43, p. 475). Rather than a crass image of competition dividing the economic interests of workers into national blocs, Marx’s letter is directly about deeper and more ideological questions of English nationalism, English landlordism, and the oppression of Ireland. The Progress Publishers edition of the letter is repeated here at length, as this is the one that has received the most attention, including footnotes about the translation from German using MEGA² where it impacts the meaning.

And most important of all! Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker



Figure 6.2: Reproduced from Hopkins (1904, p. XXIX)

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hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he feels himself to be a member of the *ruling* nation and consequently he becomes a tool⁵ of the English aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is roughly that of the “poor whites” to the Negroes⁶ in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the *English rulers in Ireland*.⁷

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. *This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.⁸ And the latter is quite aware of this. (Marx, 1870b, p. 222, emphasis original)

The English worker imagines himself as a member of the ruling nation and makes himself a tool of his aristocrats, a process realised through what he elsewhere calls the “means of mental production” (MECW:5, p. 59).⁹ This was emphatically not a crass re-inscription of supply and demand. It is a call for rallying English workers for Irish independence, rather than bemoaning the futility of division.¹⁰ The heart

⁵“and, therefore, makes himself a tool [*u. macht sich eben deswegen zum*]” (MECW:43, p. 475; Marx, 1870a).

⁶The Progress Publishers edition omits the more offensive racial slur used by Marx, written in English (MECW:43, p. 475; Marx, 1870a).

⁷“English rule in Ireland [*englischen Herrschaft in Irland*]” (MECW:43, p. 475).

⁸“It is the secret of the maintenance of power by the capitalist class. [*Er ist das Geheimnis der Machterhaltung der Kapitalistenklasse.*]” (MECW:43, p. 475; Marx, 1870a).

⁹Lenin clearly sees the potential of this letter to conceptualise Imperialism, reading it as he prepared *Imperialism* (1933/1964), picking up Marx’s emphasis on imperialism, thrice underlining the following phrases in the letter: “And most important of all!”, “member of the ruling nation”, “only” (England being the ‘only’ country with mature development of revolutionary material conditions), and “make Ireland independent” (Lenin, 1974d, pp. 656–7). Anderson (2016) develops the imperial content of the letter.

¹⁰Marx prefaces his letter with “Among the material sent you will also find several copies of the resolutions of the General Council of *November 30* on the *Irish amnesty*, resolutions which you already know and which were initiated by me; likewise an Irish pamphlet on the treatment of the Fenian convicts” (Marx, 1870b, p. 221, emphasis in original). “I have sought by every means at my disposal to incite the English workers to demonstrate in favor of Fenianism” (MECW:42). This does not mean Marx abode “narrow-minded nationalis[m]” (MECW:43, p. 537, see Anderson, 2016, p. 138). Cf. Schwartz (2024) writes “The struggles between nations or national groups and the divisions that accompany these struggles are thus problematized as a strategy of the ruling class” (Schwartz, 2024, p. 334).

of Marx's key discussion of racism and immigration was not that racism was erected on the material basis of competition within the working class. Rather, the argument centred around the way in which immigration expressed and brought to life within England the questions of English rule in Ireland. These reflections are the foundation for a reconsideration of immigration's role in the nationalism which developed later from the principle of nationality and national liberation into modern nationalist at the end of the century.

6.1.2 MODERN NATIONALISM

The modernist school of nationalism situates nationalism as the historical product of states, rather than abstract teleologies (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 10; see Gellner, 1987, p. 55). It situates contemporary nationalism within the production of national languages, the print media, the school system, and industrial society, formed at the end of the 18th century, with the term popularised at the end of the nineteenth (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 4). For Gellner (1987), nationalism expresses the need for "homogeneity" (p. 39) that occurs in industrial societies, which require a kind of internal dynamism and "social entropy" (pp. 73–4). The standardisation of education and a shared (high) culture become a new basic entry requirement into capitalist society (cf. Eriksen, 2007). Hobsbawm (1992; 2022) stresses the shift from Mazzinian nationalism of the 1830s to its Liberal form in the 1880s, emphasising state processes of printing, literacy, and schooling (cf. Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 71). For Anderson (1983/1991), the rise of print journalism reconfigured time and social epistemology through networks of 'imagined communities', emphasising a succession of models of nationalism.¹¹

These theorists do not adequately conceptualise immigration for the purposes of understanding the settler colonial context of Australia. Migrants figure in the general processes of capitalist concentration (Hobsbawm, 2022), the personnel of colonisation (Anderson, 1983/1991). Balibar and Wallerstein (1991, ch. 3) stress the domination of internal over external borders. These internal borders are produced via the complex

¹¹These range from the end of the eighteenth century through to the present: from the "pioneer" nation-state building by Europeans in the Americas, to the "popular" nationalisms of Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the "official nationalisms" imposed from above in the second half of that century in reaction to the popular nationalisms, until finally those anti-colonial nationalisms ("last wave") after WWII. He emphasises print media across this, from the map and census which provided the "grammar" of colonisation (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 185) to the novel and the newspaper which allowed for a popular culture, or the schoolmasters books that allowed for the "systematic historiographical campaign[s]" of official nationalisms (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 201).

of “[r]oads, railroads, schools, markets, military service, and the circulation of money, goods, and printed matter” (Weber, 1976, p. 486), a morally and materially un-integrated nation was brought together in the key period from 1870–1914 in France (see Weber, 1976, p. 493). The ideological unit of the nation constituted through racism is built on this basis (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, pp. 61–2).

They also inadequately stress its the contradictory nature (and thereby the contradictory role of immigration). Anderson has been criticised for theorising the imagination but not the community of *Imagined Communities* (Robertson, 1998, 2011a). This thesis suggests introducing Marx’s “illusory community” developed in the *German Ideology* (MECW:5, pp. 78, 83).¹² Marx’s theorisation of communities in the abstract stresses the illusion in which freedom for the bourgeois is domination for the worker. It is “the combination of one class over against another” and for the oppressed class “not only a completely illusory community, but a new fetter as well” (MECW:5, p. 78). This allows a more dynamic understanding of Anderson’s ‘official nationalism’ as it develops in the nineteenth century, along with his remarks about immigration made through the middle of the nineteenth century. Marx’s dialectical philosophy nonetheless has the potential to deepen the considerable conceptual apparatus established by Anderson and other modernists of nationalism studies.

Anderson’s materialisation of imagined community through print capitalism is suggestive of conceptualising immigration as materially constituting nationalism in settler colonial contexts such as Australia, while Marx’s ‘illusory’ community and account of Irish immigration suggests its internal contradiction be stressed. For the purposes of understanding migration in the *longue durée* of Australian capitalism, the category of nationalism reinforces and expresses two underlying contradictions at the seams of bourgeois society, between capital/labour and within many capitals.

6.2 PRE-NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES IN THE COLONIES

Prison camps do not require, nor do they tend to produce, dynamic reinforcement of unity observed in modern nation-states. The complex social process of the prison has tended to reproduce two distinct and opposed ideologies of the imprisoned and

¹²This phrase is far less often investigated (but see Ollman, 2012; Megill, 1970; Poole, 1991, p. 911 Ollman, 2003, p. 207; Humphrys, 2016, pp. 42–3). A number of shallow references (Archard, 1996; Kong, 2023; Yu, 2024).

the official (Weinberg, 1942), quite the opposite of the production of ‘nations’ in industrial society. Figure 6.3 shows an engraved representation published in the 1840s memoir of convict Edward Lilburn: obedience is secured by the whip and the guard rather than complexes of social loyalty (see White, 1981, p. 19). This is not because ideological work was not necessary to address the convict problem: issues including homosexual sex, drunkenness, prostitution, were of enormous concern to colonial ruling classes, with state aid given to churches to deal with some of the moral depravity that the convict system seemed to create (Carey, 2015; Smith, 2009). This “convict spirit” remained a problem in the mid-nineteenth century (Gascoigne, 2002): prisoners were considered a separate criminal class, which risked a contagion effect (Sturma, 1983), and these “Detritus of Empire” (Elder, 2021, p. 205) were unlikely to consider themselves particularly bound to the great British nation. As discussed in chapter 5, domestic capital-labour relations emerged from the relation between gaoler and convict, while Masters and Servants Acts lived on to regulate the new social relations. A society so formally and overtly divided does not exhibit the social entropy of capitalism—not the same education system, popular press, literacy, or even the kinds of national traditions.



Figure 6.3: Engraved image criticising colonial society (Lilburn, c. 1840).
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The cultural politics in the Australian colonies were more British than Australian, and even then were more imperial than national, for most of the nineteenth century. English nationalism certainly existed in this time, though with a different dynamic to that of the late nineteenth century modern nationalisms (Colley, 1986).¹³ Anderson likens imperial nationalisms like this to “stretch the short, tight, skin of the nation

¹³Like capitalist social relations, nationalism in Britain required less state direction.

over the gigantic body of the empire” (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 86). Not until late in the twentieth century did Australia’s own national day, anthem, and flag displace the Queen/King’s birthday, ‘God Save the King’, and the Union Jack as the official symbols of the colonies. English capital pre-dominated, various particular local adaptations of British culture did not displace British imperial culture, economics, and politics, let alone produce a totalising materio-ideological ‘nationalism’.

6.2.1 PROTO-NATIONALISM

Nationalist myth-making has retrospectively cast mid-nineteenth century developments into a teleological embryo of an Australian nation. Bushmen, gold-diggers, bush rangers, and a larrikin working class are imagined to hate England, authority, and hierarchy. They won democracy, self government and eventually threw off the yoke of British imperial supremacy in their continent, to create a much more equal world. For Blackton though, there was prior to 1850 “no general popular Australian identity” (Blackton, 1961, p. 351). The development of Australian nationalism would take until the end of the nineteenth century (Blackton, 1961).

Ward’s (1958/1964) investigation of the national mystique or “embryonic national feeling” (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 53) is a typical expression of the idea that “Australian tradition is as old as our history” (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 239). Yet in his search for the “unselfconscious but deeply-felt outlook of the common folk” (p. 57), contemporary references to nationalism are notably vague and limited in the early to mid nineteenth century. In 1805, John Turnbull references “the general manners, or what may be called the national character, of Botany Bay” (referenced in Ward, 1958/1964, p. 35). In 1824, a “degree of nationality in Van Diemen’s Land” (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 56). Far more common are references to the “British nation” (Herald, 1843).

Two movements of the 1850s have been remembered as proto-nationalist. This includes most famously, the Eureka stockade, immortalised by Mazzinian Raffael Carboni (1855) (Figure 6.4), and the Australasian League founded in Hobart to oppose transportation and the Eureka stockade in Ballarat. Both adopted flags with the Southern Cross on them, with the blue ensign of the Australasian league in particular resembling the later national flag. Such retrospective foundational myths need to be treated with particular care. The dynamics of Eureka in particular are complicated further by the gold rush context, which mobilised immigrant and non-immigrant alike,

and produced immense social and economic flux from the middle of the nineteenth century. Roe has called the years from 1850 to 1880 the “most intractable in interpreting Australian history” (Roe, 1982, p. 124). A flash of petty-bourgeois economic opportunity produced a sharp shift in class relations on the gold field, which produced resistance in Victoria, including not only the stockade but also the impressive Chinese movement against the racial poll tax levelled on them (Kyi, 2009). These were complex class phenomena, neither righteous proletarian struggles of resistance, nor limited taxation demands by an established middle class; rather they represent in terms of class struggle the fundamental flux and change of this era.

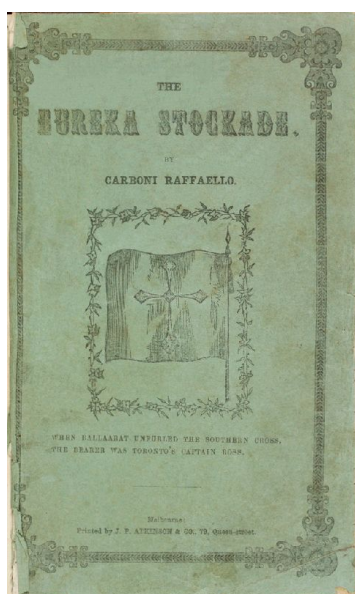


Figure 6.4: Carboni (1855)

Both played a role in the development of Australian nationalism. Their very class ambiguity makes them ripe for appropriation into retrospective Australian nationalism. The Transportation movement was a breeding ground for class figures like Parkes able to articulate urban bourgeois politics, and a great moral and economic transformation that catapults this society into the dominance of new relations of production from the 1860s (Wells, 1989). Meanwhile the movements towards democracy also laid the foundations for national homogeneity in the second half of the nineteenth century, with universal franchise and public education particularly important (Blackton, 1955).

‘White Australia’ has been decontextualised and dehistoricised as a teleological essence arriving by ship in 1788. The projection over the colonies of a coherent British white Australia misrepresents reality in several key ways. Firstly, it is only with the benefit of hindsight that we can say that the federation colonies’ varying cultures were embryos of Australian culture, differing with respect to their proclivities towards empire, trade preferences, or convict reliance (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 183). This is combined with the foreknowledge that Papua New Guinea and New Zealand would not be counted in the mythological embryo of national feeling. The bulletin mocked Henry Parkes’ bill in the NSW parliament to rename New South Wales ‘Australia’ (Figure 6.5). The radical nationalist historians associated with the left played a strong role popularising these ideas after WWII, which may be why a survey this century found that colonial figures are more important to left leaning col-

lege educated individuals than to most conceptions of Australian nationalism (Tranter and Donoghue, 2007).

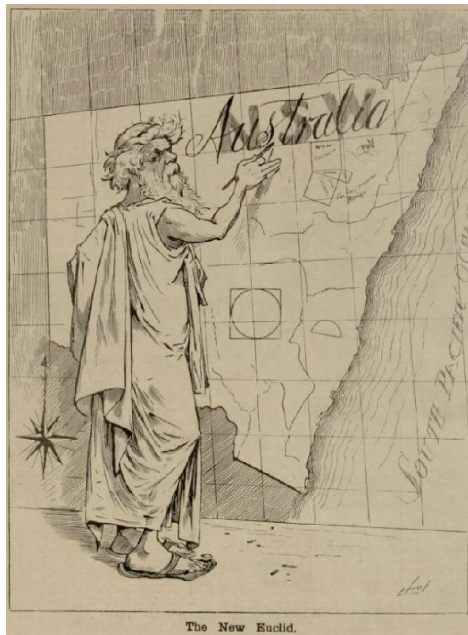


Figure 6.5: The Bulletin satirises Parkes' bill to rename New South Wales 'Australia' (Hopkins, 1887)

Recent historical scholarship has stressed the diversity and differences in the colonies. Nineteenth century Australia saw large influxes of Irish, German, Chinese immigrants, as shown in the below table. Table 6.1 shows the decades in the proportion of people in Australia born in countries reached their maximum over recorded censuses. The Australian continent in the middle of the nineteenth century saw its height of Irish, German, Chinese, and English immigrants.

This chapter (Table 6.1, Table 6.2, Figure 6.7), presents information from a dataset of country of birth as reflected in colonial censuses from 1846 to 2021. Country of birth was chosen as a stable measure over which shifts in migration patterns could be observed over the longest possible period. Despite the enormous shifts in identity and racialisation over this long time scale, country of birth is a relatively stable referent over which qualitative assessment of these dynamics can be based.¹⁴ Linear interpolation was used to produce an annualised dataset consistently across the period, in order to arrive at an understanding of the shifts in composition of the population. Before federation, colonial censuses were held at irregular intervals across the colonies, so

Secondly, there was not yet the kind of cross-colonial material basis for an economic and political unit, 'Australia', binding together the inter-colonial ruling and working classes. One critical shift is in those economic foundations themselves. Inter-colonial economic connections were yet quite modest (La Nauze, 1949). These economic foundations shifted in the mid-19th century. The relations of production that dominated in Australia shifted from pastoral relations towards "progressive urban commercial forces" focused on producing a domestic market (McMichael, 1984, p. 242; Wells, 1989).

Thirdly, it ignores the comparative diversity of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in Queensland and the northern half of South Australia where White Australia was particularly tenuous.

	Maximum proportion of censual population	Decade
Ireland	15.5%	1840s
Great Britain	44.2%	1850s
China	3.5%	1850s
Germany	2.4%	1850s
Australia	90.2%	1940s
Italy	2.3%	1960s
Greece	1.3%	1970s
Fmr Yugoslavia	1.1%	2000s
New Zealand	2.4%	2010s
India	2.8%	2020s
Philippines	1.2%	2020s
Vietnam	1.1%	2020s
Other	12.5%	2020s

Table 6.1: Maximum proportion of population reporting country of birth at census, and the decade at which maximum was reached.

linear interpolation was used to produce novel annual continent-wide estimates of individuals, including before the first census taken in colonies outside of New South Wales and Victoria additional ‘zeroes’ in Queensland (1859), South Australia (1836), West Australia (1829) and Tasmania (1825). Figures are reported as proportions of the censual population, and the countries displayed are those for which greater than one per cent of the Australian population is estimated to have been born in that country in a given year.

6.2.2 IMMIGRATION, ‘RACE’ AND THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

The modern constructs of ‘race’ and nation emerged and consolidated through the nineteenth century in the metropole (Malik, 1996, p. 91), as well as in the Asia-Pacific. The colonies were “social laboratories” where “racialised grammars of difference” were rehearsed (Boucher, 2007, p. 24). Stan contests accounts that seek to explain anti-

¹⁴There are many obvious disadvantages to this measure, including most prominently that social racialisation is an invented process wherein a British statesman born in China is not racialised as Chinese, while a Chinese person born in England is not racialised as white. More detailed data exist discussing ethnicity, ‘race’, and parent’s country of birth, but measures change across the time period assessed. Moreover, ‘countries’ are shifting and contested terrain, especially exhibit changes with the parameters of countries. The former Yugoslavia presents particular problems. Indian data is not reported separately for much of the nineteenth century. And China does not include Taiwan and Hong Kong. Ireland includes Northern Ireland, while Great Britain includes England, Scotland and Wales. Aboriginal people are not counted consistently in these census.

Chinese racism as a response to mass immigration, finding rather that instances of racial stereotypes were “circulating in colonial Australia before Chinese immigrants even arrived” (Stan, 2019, p. 100), thanks in particular to British experiences of the Chinese in Singapore. Anti-Chinese stereotypes are situated rather within a “wider framework of empire building” (Stan, 2019, p. 9). Chapter 2 outlined the moral and ideological moment in the shift towards transportation, with convicts considered deviant, and free labour a moment in the restoration of a more strident British Liberalism from the 1830s (Bayly, 1989/2016; Smith, 2009).

Anti-immigration shifts in the 1850s contributed to the process of racialisation. In three months leading up to Victoria’s passage of the first anti-Chinese immigration laws in June 1855, the *Argus* newspaper based in Melbourne increasingly racialised Chinese people as an invading, dangerous horde or swarm (Martin, 2021, p. 553). Martin notes the continuities between anti-convict and anti-Chinese sentiment expressed by anti-immigration restrictions, which produced a colonial unity around the middle class “moral objections” (Martin, 2021, p. 555). Anti-Chinese agitation including the infamous Lambing Flat riots (Figure 6.6), which famously adopted a southern cross banner reading “Roll Up, No Chinese”. Ward (2015) argues that historians have failed to link these developments to the second Opium war, which raged from 1856 to 1860 and led to a sharpening of ruling class anti-Chinese sentiment.



Figure 6.6: Lambing Flat Riots (Doyle, c. 1863, f. 14)

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Such anti-immigrant movements were moments within the gradual development of

an Australian racial nationalism, but this was not achieved in the 1850s and 1860s. Chapter 2 described the relatively rapid rolling back of the legislation (McDonald, 2019, p. 88). The “alchemy of race and money” (Ngai, 2021, Introduction, para. 3) had not yet developed into its totalising form. There was a conceptual shift away from Chinese immigrants being constructed as good settlers following the experience in Singapore (cf. Choi, 1975, p. 20). The idea that Chinese people were unassimilable was constructed through the second half of the nineteenth century by colonial liberals (Curthoys, 2003).

The largest group of non-British migrants though were the Irish, who occupied a distinct and shifting racial space in the nineteenth century, according to shifts within empire and capitalism discussed above. Waves of historiography have cast and recast the position of the Irish within the Australian ‘nation’ and their position with or against Australian nationalism (Carey, 2015). Hall (2014) argues the racialisation of the Irish “serves to destabilise our understanding of the homogeneous category of ‘white settler’ in the colonial period” (Hall, 2014, p. 172), presenting a number of mid-nineteenth century racial caricatures of the Irish, and an uptick in anti-Irish stereotypes in the 1860s to 1880s. This differed across the colonies (Richards, 1991). Anderson (2003) notes that despite popular prejudice, the Irish were not prominent in “medical and scientific texts” at this time, speculating it is because they were deemed “British enough or white enough in a sparsely populated continent” (Anderson, 2003, pp. 261–2). In a process of scientific colonisation, the concepts of race had to be flexible enough for settlement.

Likewise, the racialisation of Aboriginal people changed throughout this century. In the first half under the influence of humanitarian movements in Britain, colonists advanced Aboriginal ‘improvement’ movements, but after perceived failures, and with increasing autonomy of the colonies from Britain, local racism expanded, with polygenesis and phrenology gaining acceptance. As colonial independence grew, so too did the “racial arrogance” of Australians (Gascoigne, 2002).

Concepts of race were fluid and shifting along with those of migration reinforcing the ideological move towards respectability in the Australian colonies. The end of this period sharpened the concept of White Australian as a coherent racial category (see Anderson, 2003; Markus, 1985). Boucher warns against a “teleology that tidies the incoherencies of racialisation into a process of solidification and development rather

than contingency and dynamism” (Boucher, 2007, p. 18).¹⁵ More flexible ideas that the interaction between environment and biology (“blood and soil”, Anderson, 2003, p. 256) gave way to more strict hereditary notions of sharply defined biological race, corresponding to stricter notions of biological heredity and an emphasis on decay of the “social body” (p. 62). Whiteness became “a type, mobile and standardized”, before dissolving in the 1930s into variation (Anderson, 2003, p. 2). Whiteness was therefore a “remarkably reactive subject position, a variable signifier of difference, not an assertion of fixed qualities” (Anderson, 2003, p. 255), and tropical medical thought was critical to the formation of whiteness (Bashford, 2000).

Between the middle and the end of the nineteenth century, migration came to express a complex constellation of ‘race’, empire, and nation. From the 1880s, these racial and national forms intensified and hardened as imperialism turned inwards, parallel to the dynamics discussed in chapter 3. More fluid and contingent categories were turned into totalising biological constructs, along with the category of ‘whiteness’ and the rise in ‘national feeling’. Migration negotiated these developing internal relations behind the growth of a fully fledged nationalism forged in the White Australia period.

6.3 MANUFACTURING ILLUSORY COMMUNITY

The perceived need for a homogeneous population was expressed through White Australia, alongside a process whereby Chinese people were constructed as “unassimilable” (Griffiths, 2006, p. 222).¹⁶ This liberal ideological priority consolidated towards the end of the nineteenth century in Australia, parallel to developing dynamics of imperialism and ideological and material production of nationalisms. ‘Homogeneity’, raised by theorists such as Gellner (1987), evokes a Millian conception of homogeneity which has been stressed as a key factor in understanding White Australia (Griffiths, 2015; Markus, McDonald, and Jupp, 2009, ch. 3; Mill, 1861/2009, pp. 347–9). Immigration has been central to the construction of the Australian nation. Within their legal framework, Crock and Berg argue that for “most of Australia’s history as a nation, the law governing concepts of immigration has quite literally defined who is and is

¹⁵Boucher (2007) calls for a distinction between whiteness as a retrospective ‘analytic’ designation, capable of being used as a category to understand the processes of invasion from 1788 from the *empirical* category of whiteness which emerges from 1880 (Boucher, 2007, p. 19).

¹⁶This thesis was submitted before the belated publication of the monograph of Griffiths’s (2006) ‘The making of White Australia: Ruling class agendas, 1876-1888’.

not Australian” (Crock and Berg, 2015, p. 661). Deportation as a “means of social engineering within the empire” was certainly racial, though it encompassed also other characteristics such as disability, alcoholism, and other undesirable attributes (Smith, 2018, pp. 505–8; see Kain, 2019). In the past 75 years, a more developed legal system of citizenship has emerged on this basis, but never broken free of it.

Immigration and imperialism were the most significant dynamics within the growth of Australian nationalism, though educational and linguistic shifts played important role in this development and in particular the racial questions surrounding Irish and Aboriginal people. Prior to the consolidation of White Australia though, the Irish question was brought to the fore first in the 1870s. The internality of migration, nationalism and capitalism are presented through a historical treatment of Irish education, the construction of whiteness through the border, and the crises that develop within these structures.

6.3.1 IRISH, WHITENESS, AND EDUCATION

Education acts of the 1870s onwards were a key moment in the management of migration as a moment within capitalism. The distinctive racial, imperial, and demographic forms of nationalism that immigration mobilised came along with more traditional organs of nationalism theorised by the modernist school, including in particular the use of schooling from the 1870s onward. In Eugen Weber’s account of French nationalism, schools are the mark of “civilising in earnest” (Weber, 1976, ch. 18). The extension of railways and the participation of Australians in the Boer war, also echoing Weber’s account, though in the wrong order, followed in the 1880s and 1890s.

The image of cultural and biological homogeneity of White Australia was always a fantasy. As shown in Figure 6.7, Irish immigrants were a considerable portion of Australia’s population, approximately 10 per cent in the second half of the nineteenth century, and more than 20 per cent of overseas born people. Anti-Irish prejudice had been mobilised in immigration policy especially since 1856 (Hamilton, 1979). From the 1860s, the increasing circulation of the stereotype of the Fenian terrorist (Malcolm and Hall, 2019, pp. 134–7) culminating in the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh in Sydney, which was whipped up into a Fenian plot by Parkes. By the 1870s, there was a sharpening in racial and sectarian politics aimed at Irish Catholics: a “rabid sectarian outbreak which became endemic and disfigured the Aus-

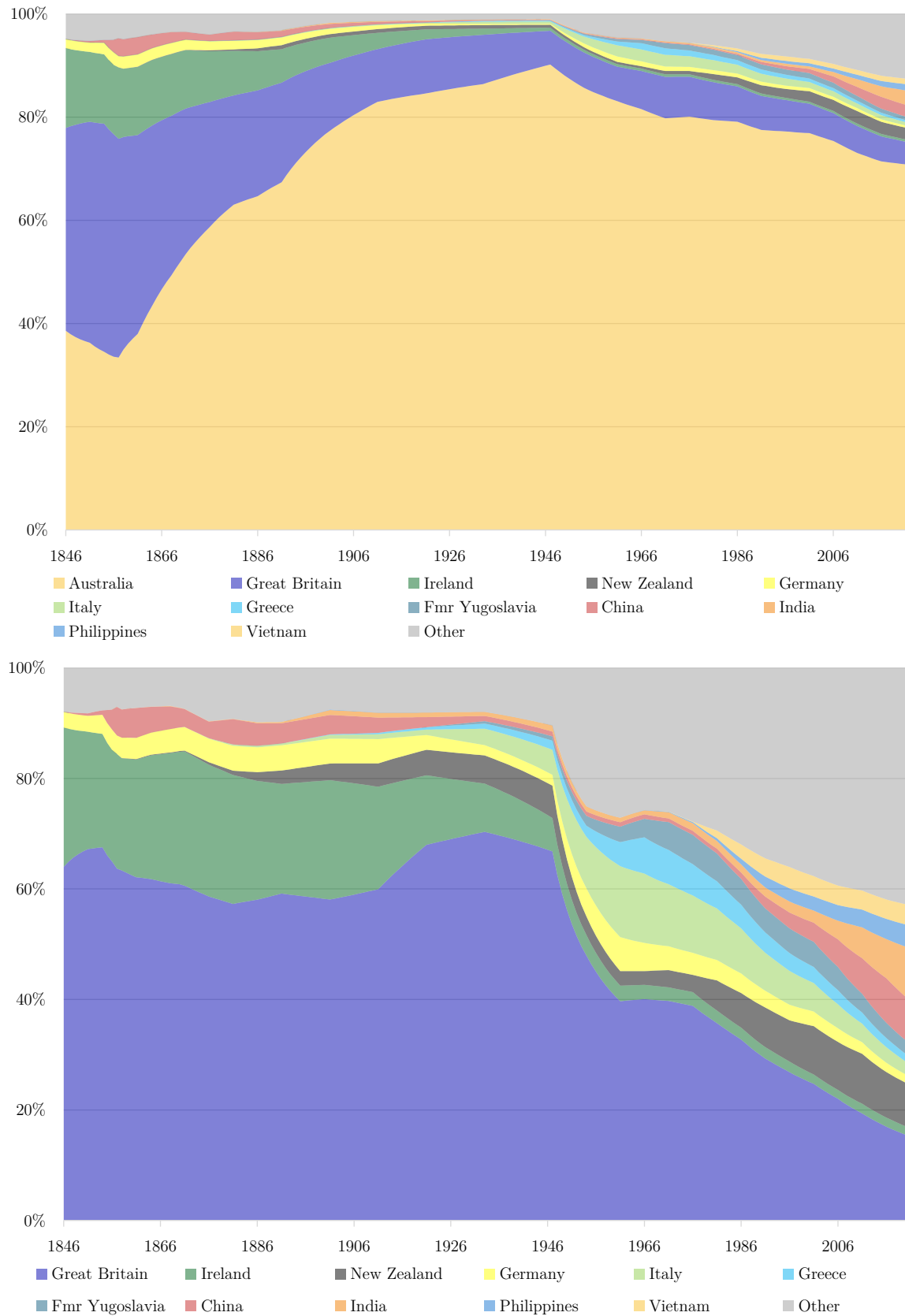


Figure 6.7: Country of birth listed in censuses between 1846 and 2021. The upper figure includes Australian-born people, while the lower figure excludes them. See p. 242

tralian community still after eighty years" (Fitzpatrick, 1956, p. 165; see Murtagh, 1946, ch. 7).¹⁷

From 1872 to 1895, the colonies passed education acts that established a standard of universal, non-sectarian public primary education, out of the ongoing need to produce "diligent workers and loyal citizens" (Hyams and Bassant, 1972, p. 66). This was to serve the notion of "a cohesive Australian society peopled by a politically enlightened and responsible citizenry" (p. 61). These acts were preceded by large increases in population and a "significant (and even revolutionary) change in public opinion" regarding education (Austin, 1972, pp. 176–7), with colonial opinion shifting towards liberal reform of criminality, the needs of democratic polity, and "national prosperity" (p. 180). Australian primary school enrolments exploded following the first of these acts (Banerjee and Wilson, 2016; Butlin, Barnard, and Pincus, 1982).

Griffiths (2006) argues that the push for secularisation of public schools was aimed at assimilating Irish Catholics into a new Australian nationalism. These acts expressed the severing of financial support to religious schooling which had been extended to help the moral reform of the colonies from early on. Contemporary scholarship has emphasised the degree to which the "Christian secularity" (Chavura, Gascoigne, and Tregenza, 2019, p. 118) contained in these acts also expressed protestant and anti-Irish bigotry (Kitching and Gholami, 2023). Although very secular by global standards, the principle of moral instruction was deeply embedded in conceptions of education (Chavura, Gascoigne, and Tregenza, 2019, pp. 100–5).¹⁸ Liberal ideals were combined with "stanching the growth of Roman Catholicism" (cited in Chavura, Gascoigne, and Tregenza, 2019, p. 120); "Britishness necessitated Christianity" (Jackson, 2024). The attempt to consciously quash the Irish problem drew resistance from the Catholic church who sought to establish "one bulwark against Protestant discrimination in most other areas of public life", by demanding parishioners send their children to catholic schools Potts (1999, p. 242). This produced parallel catholic, religious and independent schools.

The relationship between the Irish and whiteness was complex. In discussing the

¹⁷"Australia was to the liberal-minded an antediluvian monster giving out a stench of sectarian politics worse than Canada's, and of 'racist' and repressive policies vying with those of the Union of South Africa" (Fitzpatrick, 1956, p. 157).

¹⁸"The radically secular liberalism of the Benthamites and Mills was the exception, not the norm, of intellectual life, which was still very much the expression of a British Enlightenment conception of rationality and utility capacious enough to include a hefty dose of religion, albeit of a vaguely Protestant variety." (Chavura, Gascoigne, and Tregenza, 2019, p. 111).

“special relationship between the Irish and the Democratic Party” (Ignatiev, 2009, p. 88), Ignatiev portrays the racial alignments, and the relationship between Irish anti-imperial consciousness and pro-slavery and anti-black consciousness as matters of historical agency, and not automatic projection of some abstract whiteness. O’Farrell tends to stress the “substantial and decisive Australianism” of Irish in Australia, noting their admixture into Australian rather than British traditions (O’Farrell, 1986, p. 148). But ‘Australian allegiance’ was contradictory, in Ollman’s sense, to British allegiance, both mutually undermining and mutually supportive, ideological manifestation of the real geo-political relationship: Australia’s own sub-imperial needs demanding active gathering of support from the motherland. The confused ideological consequence is that ‘Australian nationalism’ can be portrayed as both British and ‘more British than British’ (that is distinct from British).

The Irish in Australia were neither the equivalent of Northern Democrats nor Fenians in the USA. In Australia, the agentic dynamics of whiteness had a particular class dynamic, with working class Catholic Irish joining the cause of the Labor party, which built a policy that was simultaneously anti-sectarian with regard to Catholic-Protestant tensions,¹⁹ as well as a working class version of White Australia ideology. As discussed below, the convergence of the Irish Easter Rising of 1916, the ongoing imperial character of Australia’s involvement in WWI, and the potent class dynamics in Australia shaped the conscription debates of 1916. Irish involvement within Labor, meant that Australian ‘whiteness’ carried a class stamp, as well as a ‘White Australian’ one. Labor Whiteness was not the same strategy as Democratic Whiteness (Hall and Malcolm, 2016).



Figure 6.8: Anarchist hands the Fenian dynamite (Bulletin, 1901).

¹⁹This drew the ire of many protestant supporters “Since its adoption in the early 1890s, the pledge had posed a serious moral and political dilemma for Protestant Labor supporters.” (Strangio and Dyrenfurth, 2009).

6.3.2 WHITE AUSTRALIA: THE NATIONAL CRUCIBLE

It is difficult to understate the degree to which White Australia was bound up in Australian nationalism. White Australia was the first major act of legislation in the Australian parliament, “a legislative declaration of our racial identity” (Lake and Reynolds, 2008), and a key moment in the construction of ‘race’ in Australia, as well as in the construction of ‘Australia’ itself as a coherent, continental, racist colonial project.

The construction of Australia as a nation, the formation of Australia’s bourgeois ruling class, and the formation of Australia’s working class were not as externally related things, but as co-produced within the dynamics of empire and nation inside totality. The act of 1901 consolidated an inter-colonial approach adopted in 1888. The politics of the 1880s and 1890s are key in the development of Australian nationalism, not just in the consolidation of the colony-based ruling classes into a federal structure, but also in the very formation of bourgeois and working classes as classes-for-themselves, rather than classes-in-themselves. This period piques the multifarious contradictions of nationalism, which expresses an internality between the ‘inside’ borders defined against class division, and those ‘outside’ the national embrace (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991).

The dynamics of White Australia policy were bound up in Australian nationalism in three ways. Firstly, the desire for a homogeneous population comprised one of the key bourgeois concerns in the construction of White Australia in the lead up to the 1888 inter-colonial conference, and throughout the early White Australia period. Secondly, White Australia became the foremost popular basis for Australian nationalism. Thirdly, the ongoing operation of immigration policy, the reproduction of White Australia, became central to the ongoing operation of Australian nationalism.

Homogeneous Population

White Australia was founded on the dual racial construction of a homogeneous nation state in which those racialised as ‘white’ were assimilable, and those who were racialised as Chinese (and later Indian, South Sea Islander, Japanese, et cetera) were *unassimilable*, ideas that reached “maturity” in the 1880s (Markus, 1985, p. 90). Australian nationalism was therefore implicated in the construction of the “local formatio[n] of whiteness” (Carey and McLisky, 2009, p. xiv). This ideological transformation was

bound up with the triumph of urban liberalism in the colonies from the 1860s to the 1890s, based itself on the political economic transformation in colonial relations of production (McMichael, 1984; Wells, 1989). It was from this ascendant class that came a coordinated set of arguments, including: (1) liberal anti-slavery arguments about the creation of “mean whites” (Griffiths, 2015, p. 126); (2) the related transnational conceptualisation of racial management practices through the experiences of the US and the Cape Colony via key federation figures such as Deakins, Higgins, and Barton (Lake, 2003); and (3) the novel idea that homogeneity required the exclusion of unassimilable races (Griffiths, 2015, p. 128; Lake and Reynolds, 2008, p. 42).²⁰ The belief that whites could not work north of the tropic of Capricorn Anderson (2003) and Reynolds (2003) produced a “uniquely ruling class dilemma”, in which settlement required ‘peopling’ of the north, but the “only profitable path to development in the tropics seemed to involve all the dangers associated with unfree, “coloured” labour” (Griffiths, 2015, p. 130).²¹

Tasmania was the one hold out to the 1888 conference (Curthoys, 2003). Parkes, writing to Tasmanian premier Philip Fysh in the lead up to the conference, who would become the sole hold out on the new inter-colonial policy, writes: “I hold it to be a question of policy of the first magnitude to cement society together in Australia by the same principles of faith and jurisprudence, the same influences of language and learning, and the same national habits of daily life” (Henry Parkes, cited in Parliament of Tasmania, 1888, p. 4).²²

The age of imperialism and the age of nationalism forged an Australian immigration policy, but reconstituted immigration into a potent moment within an Australian national identity. In 1897 at a rally in Ashfield, Edmund Barton declared “For the first time in history, we have a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation”

²⁰Vitale (2021) summarises “White Australia’s three main agendas: creating a racially homogeneous white population, securing British/Australian possession of the continent, and developing a modern industrial capitalist economy” (Vitale, 2021, p. iii).

²¹It has been speculated the John Stuart Mill was a key founder of the view that homogeneity was the critical point (Griffiths, 2006, 2015). Markus, McDonald, and Jupp (2009, ch. 3) also reflect on Australia’s distinct approach to producing a homogeneous nation state by way of immigration policy (their focus is on restriction of minorities rather than commission of ‘whites’), also implicating JS Mill. Lake and Reynolds (2008) on the other hand point to Bryce’s book of 1888 as arguing for the need for a racially homogeneous population. Although Mill was read in Australia, especially for his works on political economy, the degree of influence of Mill’s (1861/2009) ‘Representative Government’ in the lead up to 1888 is not known.

²²Fysh in response, noted that Chinese people were “law-abiding, industrious class, whose presence would not only be tolerated, but courted, were it not that they are regarded by our labouring classes as undesirable competitors in the struggle for existence” (cited in Parliament of Tasmania, 1888, p. 4).

(Dixon, 2014), resembling the phrase often associated with (though not coined by) Zionist activist Israel Zangwill: a “a land without a people for a people without a land” (Dana and Jarbawi, 2017; MacDonald, 2012; cf. Muir, 2008).

A Popular Basis

White Australia occupied the spiritual heart of Australian nationalism, not dissimilar in its emotive importance to the American and French revolutions, German unification or Risorgimento in Italy. Jack Lang writes, “White Australia must not be regarded as a mere political shibboleth. It was Australia’s Magna Carta” (Lang, 1956, p. 32). It took the form of a colonial version of British pre-Benthamite liberal philosophy emphasising the necessity of a homogeneous population. The first world war mythology, an imperialist war in Gallipoli, complemented this ideological basis. Central to the contradictory formation of nationalism is the requirement that it be adhered to by the working and ruling classes alike. It is essential that it be accepted and acceptable by workers. This makes it a particularly contradictory phenomenon. For Gollan, earlier policies against the Chinese became in the 1880s linked with “Australian national feeling—the Australian future was to be white” (Gollan, 1967, p. 116).²³ In 1880, the *Bulletin* (1880, p. 1) front page read “the conclusion which inevitably and inexorably forces itself on every reasonable white who, whether as employer or workman, practically studies the question is that where the white man and the yellow stand side by side under the same laws the former must, if he is to exist, sink to the level of the latter.”

Nationalism grew sharply one generation after that of the gold rush—a kind of secondary impact of that migration. Second generation ‘Australians’ in the 1880s, swelled by those born of the gold rush era, played an important role in the Australian nationalism of the 1880s, including several of the key figures in Australian federation: Alfred Deakin, Edmund Barton, and Andrew Inglis Clarke. Others, including Henry Parkes, were English born. This is most obvious in the Australian Natives’ Association, a key body in Australia’s federal movement inaugurated in 1871 in Victoria. Nationalism became a central issue rather than democracy from the 1880s (Blackton, 1961, p. 357). The generation after the gold-rush generation had grown up in colonial

²³Gollan’s history is the familiar radical nationalist one that reads the class conflict of the 1880s therefore as that between an Australian elite embroiled in the British finance and empire and workers struggling for white fraternal nationhood (Gollan, 1967, p. 119).

Australia, and had a particular ideological interest in differentiating themselves from the British Empire, demanding abstract respect. Deakin was a particular exemplar of this movement, a key member who refused British regalia and was critical to the political economy of Australia. Both the “term ‘native’ and the idea of a native outlook” (Blackton, 1961, p. 353) grew in frequency from the 1870s to the 1890s, and are notable in the attempt to unite various colonial Europeans using an intentional fluidity blurring the differences between Aboriginal people and those who were part of the British invasion.

Scope prevents a more thorough discussion of the complex ideological dynamics amongst Australia’s working classes in the 1880s; consider one key ideological pole, the single taxer Henry George. Henry George’s political economy of land taxation played an important role in the development of a working class nationalist tradition, famously touring Australia (Pullen, 2014). Despite George’s free trade views, he was sympathetic to anti-Chinese views, supporting the blocking of immigration of ‘cheap labour’ from China, though linked private property in land to the rise of ill-feeling against foreigners amongst the working classes (Beck, 2012).

Georgism was simultaneously involved in the shift from liberal to working class political organisation, and towards a nationalist framework for those politics. Scates (1997) calls Georgists the bearers of “a lost republican tradition” in Australia, schooled in the “political language of Paine and Jefferson, ardent admirers of Shelley and Mazzini” (Pollin, 1996, p. 9).²⁴ For Engels, the “Henry George boom” in the USA was of particular importance in the process of the “constitution of the workers as an independent political party” (MECW:47, p. 525).²⁵ Single taxers had put forward demands for a “people’s alliance” from the 1880s and succeeded in embedding George’s ideas in the NSW Labour Electoral League platform of 1891 (Scates, 1997, pp. 83–4). His ideas became popular in Australia especially towards the end of the 1880s, winning supporters like W. G. Spence (Gollan, 1967, p. 121). Although embedded in labour organisations like the Australian Services Union and the early Labor party, the radical individualist Georgists were shaky parts of the labour movement. NSW parliamentary leader of the single tax faction Frank Cotton opposed labour reforms and was rebuked by the *Workman* for “hobnobbing with Parkes and the Push” during a Free Traders

²⁴George opens ‘The Science of Political Economy’ with Algernon Charles Swinburne’s dedication to Mazzini (George, 1898, p. 9).

²⁵See O’Donnell (2015, p. xxiii). Engels goes on, George’s “confusion is a very fair expression of the present stage of development of the Anglo-American working class mind” (MECW:47, p. 525).

conference (Scates, 1997, p. 94).

Nationalism was not yet a dominant political pole. Henry Parkes for instance, key ‘father of federation’, argued persistently for a supra-class organ. In 1881 Henry Parkes proclaimed of immigration that “there can be no grander policy for a new country—for instead of being a paltry question between capital and labour, it is a large question of national policy” (Parkes, 1881, p. 3), hastening to qualify it with his strident opposition “to the bringing here of a majority of people from Ireland” (Parkes, 1881, p. 4). A later cartoon (Figure 6.9) brings to light popular ridicule of Parkes for his attempts to bridge the gap between labour and capital following the strikes of 1890. Despite the obvious absurdity of such an attempt reflected by this cartoon, Australian nationalism galloped forwards in the 1890s.



Figure 6.9: ‘Neutrality’. Hopkins’s (1890) caricature of Parkes seeking to mediate the interests of labour and capital during the 1890 strike.

COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

The last ten years of the nineteenth century produced key ideological shifts alongside the key institutions of the ‘Australian settlement discussed in chapter 5. The federation movement of the 1890s has sometimes been seen as administrative, bureaucratic, and removed from popular consciousness (Holbrook, 2020a; McMinn, 1994, ch. 9), and thus irrelevant for the construction of a popular nationalism. The federation

movement was far from a popular struggle, and although the caveat is well made that enthusiasm for federation was eclipsed by popular enthusiasm for Australia's role in the imperial armed forces in the Boer war, let alone the imperial expeditions of 1914, the fact that referenda required popular support for federation (due to the choice of colonial elites in the Corowa convention) means that it is worth considering. Hirst's (2000b) romanticised picture of the 1890s movement is a conservative but nonetheless useful corrective to the downplaying of the federation movement as an unimportant, inevitable, administrative shift. He highlights the virginal and feminised images in poems at the time, which contradict the earlier masculinist imagery of the 1880s romantic nationalists. "Always imagined as female, Australia was young, pure, virginal" (Hirst, 2000b, p. 19), see for instance "Virgin white" in the prize winning poem at the time of federation (Hirst, 2000b, p. 23; see Hirst, 2000a). Figure 6.10 shows one such cartoon of 1900, in which the two prevailing political tendencies (the free trade and protectionist parties) are seen parading the federation bride. This contrasts with the "manly independence" of the late 1880s radicalism (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 167; Gollan, 1967, p. 113). Hirst's focus on schoolmasters' poetry is in keeping with the stress on the new class of school teachers in the modernist theorists of nationalism.



Figure 6.10: 'Federation' (Cotton, 1900).
COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Federation was understood almost universally to provide for the defence of Australia against the northern approaches, and to lay the foundation for a White Australia (Irving, 1999, p. 13). Much of the debate around federation from growing political factions focused on other issues, such as inter-colonial tariffs for the bourgeois press, the insufficiently democratic constitution for the labour movement, or the tactical support

of the vote by the women's suffrage movement. If White Australia was not more of an issue, it was due to the significance of the 1888 agreement and its ongoing centrality as a national pillar of the new federated social order—the “national spirit of a “White Australia”” (Spence, 1909, p. 229).

The questions of so-called “black labour” of South Sea Islanders in Queensland and northern NSW were a motivating contentious part of the federation debates, though not really expressed clearly in the vote, with both sugar planters and the Labour party opposing the vote for respectively discouraging and encouraging South Sea Islanders (Jenkins, 1979, pp. 85–7). Race and White Australia “loomed large in the northern consciousness” (Bolton and Waterson, 1999, p. 99). The Queensland industries producing sugar, coffee and bananas utilising indentured South Sea Islander labour, and financed with metropolitan capital from England and the Southern states, faced the dual threat of a federal free trade policy exposing them to inter-colonial and international competition, and of a white Australia policy undercutting their labour source. Perhaps perversely, the very presence of “black labour” made Queensland a keener recruit for the “surge of settler sentiment” (p. 121) that won adherence to the federation because of, not in spite of, the will for a White Australia (Bolton and Waterson, 1999, pp. 98–9, 108–9).

This nationalism was an imperial and colonial ideology, reaching beyond the mainland colonies. At the time of the competition for the design of the Australian flag, one of the prize-winning designers was a New Zealander (perhaps thinking to join the federation). In 1908, an additional seventh point was added to the ‘Commonwealth’ star in the Australian flag to symbolise alongside the six states the acquisition of the territory of Papua (and any later territories), which had been transferred to Australia in 1906 from Britain. Later, the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory were subsumed into the seventh point in the star. So secondary was this flag to the Union Jack that the flag was often mis-produced in the first years, with the stars of the Southern Cross with the wrong number of points (then, five, six, seven, eight, and nine) numbers of points on stars, or the incorrect arrangements of the Southern Cross in a diamond shape. For instance, Figure 6.11 shows the old pre-1908 flag flying in 1913 at the auspicious ceremony naming Australia's characteristically invented capital Canberra, often said to be a poor transliteration of Ngambri. The Advertiser (1914, p. 8) notes that the “ignorance extant concerning the flag of Australia is quite remarkable”



Figure 6.11: Federal Capital Celebrations, Canberra, 12 March 1913.
COURTESY OF MITCHEL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

Another contemporary symbol that is a product of this era is the Australian anthem. The ambiguous meaning of the ‘fair’ in the chorus and title of that anthem—connoting justice, beauty and whiteness—are a matter of controversy and speculation (Kelen, 2003, p. 168), but the original composition invokes British empire, the British flag, the meaning-laden phrase “With all her faults we love her still; Britannia rules the wave” (McCormick, 1901), and the implicit reference to Australia’s White Australia policy. The original version, first sung in 1878 (Fletcher, 1986), proclaimed “From England, Scotia, Erin’s Isle, Who come our lot to share” (cited in Kelen, 2002), which were edited for the federation celebration to include reference of the possession of “boundless plains to share” with “those who come across the seas” (McCormick, 1901).

Brutal Borders and Social Cohesion

The policy form of the federal White Australia policy was forged in the last years of the century, following that of the South African government, in the *dictation test* (originally, education test). The agreement at the 1888 conference had been for “uniform Australian legislation” for the “limitation of the number of Chinese which any vessel may bring into any Australasian port to one passenger for every 500 tons of the ship’s burthen” as well as establishing the misdemeanour of Chinese passage between the colonies without “consent” (Welch, 2003, p. 267). This was self-consciously both within and against the British empire, explicitly calling for securing of restriction by “diplomatic action of the Imperial Government, and by uniform Australasian legislation” (Welch, 2003, p. 267). The royal assent given in December was neither enthusiastic nor sincere (Schreuder, 1988). Chinese arrivals fell rapidly, in NSW from

4,436 Chinese arrivals in 1887 to just nine in 1888 and five in 1889 (Parsons, 1904).

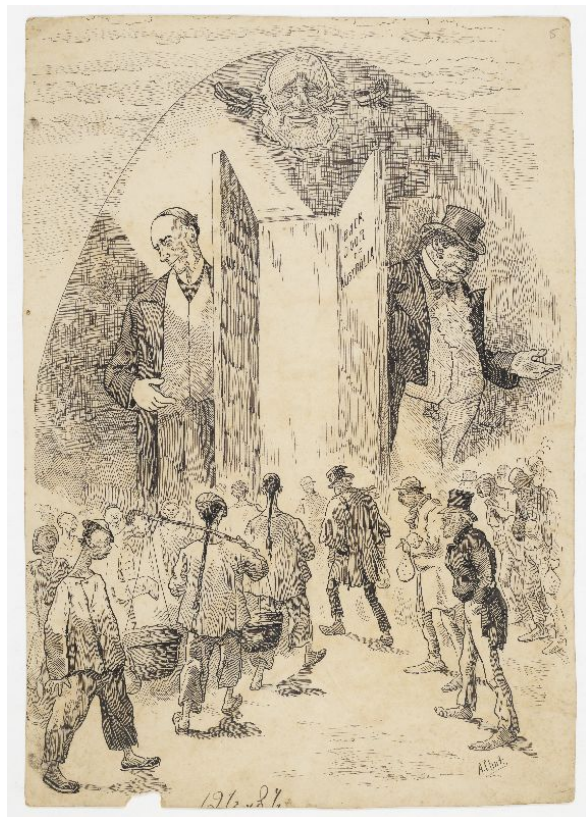


Figure 6.12: Cartoon, Alfred Clint 'Keeping the back door open' (Clint, 1895)

COURTESY OF DIXSON LIBRARY, STATE
LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

to rot in books of legislation, but were very much alive as an ongoing motivating force in the production of Australian nationalism. References in the Hansard record (Figure 6.22 on p. 282) show ongoing references to the phrase 'white Australia' in the House of Representatives. Deakin warned "You probably believe that a white Australia is secure. I hope it is, but it won't be secure unless a vigilant watch is kept upon proposals to tamper with it" (cited in Parsons, 1904, p. 220). The dynamic forces manufacturing a white nation continued, with the boundaries of that nation policed and reconstructed on a number of levels, including the ongoing activities of immigration officers enforcing the dictation test (Williams, 2021), in the criminal offences governing the movement of non-white people at the seams between the states (Piperoglou, 2018), as well as in quarantine law (Bashford, 2003, ch. 3).

Though not enthusiastic about Australia excluding Chinese people, the British empire effectively set the terms for the form the federal White Australia policy. In the late 1890s, the head of the British colonial office Joseph Chamberlain outlined that exclusion must not be based on nationality, that is, formally discriminatory, but rather aimed at "undesirable persons generally" (Parsons, 1904, p. 215). This was adopted from Natal, in the Cape Colony (Martens, 2006), which itself adapted a Mississippi law aimed at black voter suppression (Williams, 2021, p. 4). Forms of this 'dictation test' were adopted across the colonies in the late 1890s, before being enshrined as the first act of federal parliament (Williams, 2021).

The ideal of White Australia and the immigration policy that it represented were not formal policy positions allowed

This was imbued with the ongoing dynamics of imperialism. For Bashford (2003), the “the (insecure) geo-body and civic body of white Australia as part of the racialised defence response to an ‘invasion narrative’ which governed much law, literature, culture, and policy of the early twentieth century” (Bashford, 2003). Billy Hughes’ book of 1929 aptly summarises White Australia about protecting the “racial, social, and economic character” of Australia: the “remarkably homogeneous” nation with “ideals, traditions, and standards of living vastly different from those of the teeming millions of Asia” (Hughes, 1929, p. 357). It was clearly linked by an imperial and colonial anxiety about “a Western nation seated at the gateway to the East, has a population of little more than six millions thinly scattered over a great continent” (Hughes, 1929, p. 357).

‘White Australia’ was capable of mobilising this imperial, racist, colonial imaginary and reality through *brute and tangible exclusion*. Despite the fact the dictation test was used only sparingly the core of the policy was a penal, criminal symbol of Australian nationalism. Over time, administrative innovations allowed the state to evade diplomatic and court incidents, such as allowing dictation in any European language. To give an idea of the passionate application of this test, Williams gives the example in 1937 of an investigation into a single parcel of passages being exposed, despite the fact that nobody had passed the test in some thirty years (Williams, 2021, p. 113).²⁶ So critical was this visible sign of Asian exclusion that its very administration needed to be seen to be watertight, as well as harshly penalised with hard labour (Williams, 2021, p. 114).

6.3.3 IMMIGRATION AND THE INSTABILITIES IN NATIONALISM

A focus on moments of discontinuity and rupture within the project of national unity is critical to understanding the role of nationalism. The heart of its utility lies not in the fact that societies are unquestioningly loyal to state propaganda, but precisely in the fact that the divergent interests of capitalists and workers tend to produce controversy and contradiction that need to be managed and held within certain acceptable limits. Figure 6.13 shows the key primary vote of key political parties in Federal politics 1901–45. Federal election results are joined with straight lines to represent shifts in the primary vote between these parties. The rise and ongoing significance of the

²⁶Parcels of passages had been sent fortnightly until 1936.

Australian Labor Party is very clear. The figure also shows the primary vote for the key bourgeois political parties over the period, which shifted from divisions based on trade (1901–9), to the new Liberal (Fusion) party founded by Alfred Deakin (1909–17), to the Nationalist Party founded by William (Billy) Hughes (1917–31) and the United Australia Party founded by Joseph Lyons (1931–44). These are represented by shades of blue. It is notable that both the NP and UAP were results of splits within the Labor Party as well as crises within bourgeois politics. The parties of government are shaded grey (Protectionist), red (Labor), yellow (Free Trade), and blue (for each of these conservative governments). The rise of the Country Party (CP) in the late 1910s and early 1920s is represented in Green, founded by Earle Page and operating nationally from 1923 (Davey, 2010). Finally, Jack Lang's faction of Labour party, going by various names, is represented by the dark red line from the 1932 election.²⁷

Three critical political episodes stand out in Figure 6.13, which usefully describe the deeply contradictory development in Australia as the counter-narrative to the stable 'Australian settlement' discussed in chapter 5, showing its instability at the ideological level and the coimbrication of migration with that process. These moments can profitably be compared with the figures on strikes from 1913 in Figure 5.11 above (p. 191). Nationalism was not an iron embrace, stopping all possibility of class resistance, but rather an ongoing discursive partner to class struggle. In the following pages, we briefly describe the deeply contradictory dynamics of three key moments in the above figure. Firstly, the shifts in the early federal years and in particular the rise of the Labor Party and the consolidation of bourgeois political parties into a single bourgeois party. The second episode is the convergence of WWI/conscription/great strike coinciding with the Russian revolution, which deeply transformed Australian politics, leading to the first great split in Labor and the reconstitution of bourgeois parties un-

²⁷This figure seek to capture the main splits and shifts within key parties, focused on those parties with great than 10 per cent of the vote. Other significant parties excluded include the Douglas Credit movement that grew in the 1930s and won 4.7 per cent in 1934 for its populist message based on Douglas Credit's economic theories (Berzins, 1969), the State Labor party which won 2.6 per cent of the federal vote in 1940, and the Communist party which peaked at 2.0 per cent in 1943. Likewise, significant minor liberal and country parties which operated out of particular states are excluded, such as South Australia's Liberal and Country League and the anti-Labor Emergency Committee that preceded it, Victoria's country parties, West Australia's Nationalist parties, Queensland's country parties, and the Liberal Party in Victoria and South Australia formed in 1922. This tends to underestimate the strength of the non-Labor vote in the 1930s and 1940s. Another significant exclusion are the smaller ruling class country parties Victoria's. The low Labor results in 1931 and 1934 were under Federal Labor, not the ALP, the Fusion/Liberal party ran in 1906 as the Anti-Socialist party, and the Country Party (CP) formed in 1920 as a coalition of state-based parties which contested the 1919 election and collectively received a significant portion of the vote (Davey, 2010).

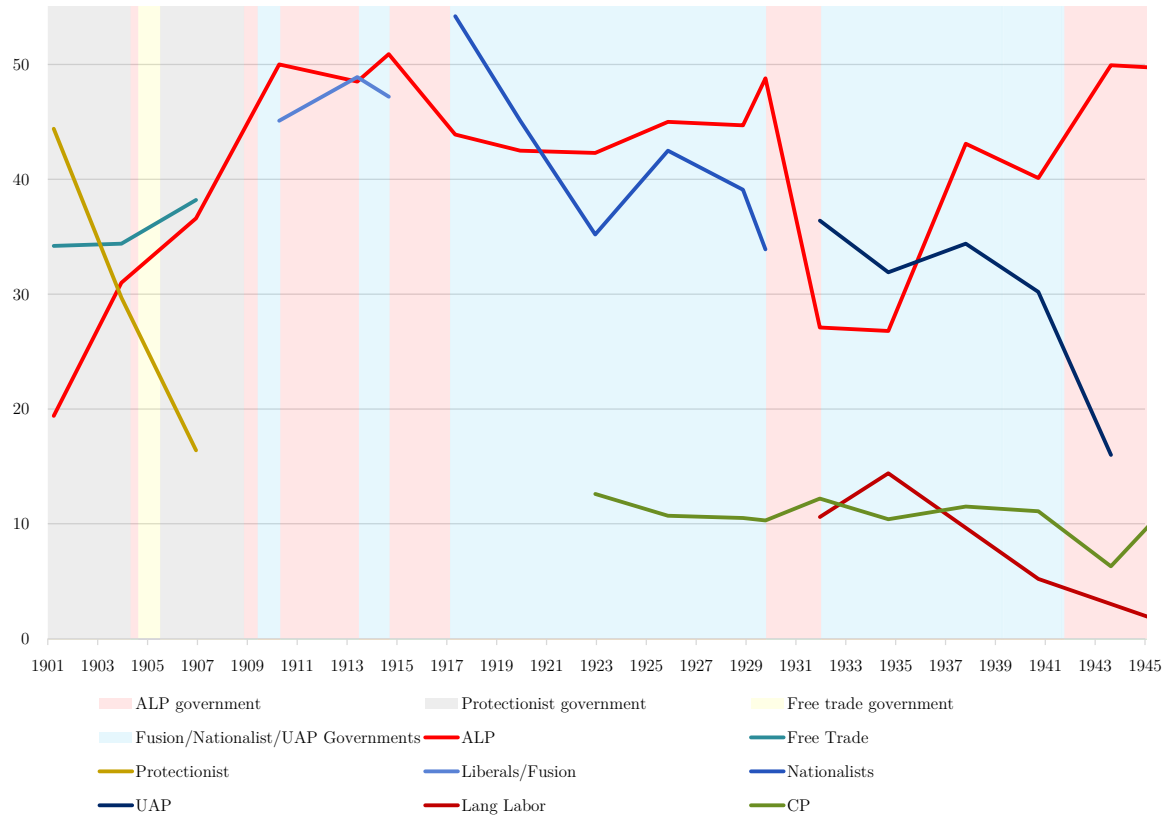


Figure 6.13: Primary votes in federal elections 1901–1945 of selected parties receiving more than 10 per cent of the vote (compiled from Barber, 2017). The time period is also shaded to represent shifts in the governing party, including those changes made outside of elections, such as the three changes of government between the 1903 and 1906 elections. Figure is continued at Figure 6.25 for the post-WWII era excluding the Country Party and Lang Labor primary votes.

der the former Labor politician, and the birth of Australia’s communist party.²⁸ The third episode is the tumultuous great depression, which led to yet another split in the Labor party, yet another reconstitution of the bourgeois parties under a former Labor leader (this time a state rather than federal leader, Lyons).

The choice of these three moments is not exhaustive, and are particularly partial in that they are derived from key shifts in official electoral politics. Fitzpatrick for instance recalls five, or really six, instances of national “reaction of many citizens in all states against a declared national policy” (Fitzpatrick, 1956, pp. 150–1): opposition to the Boer war in 1899–1901, opposition to Fisher’s compulsory military training in 1910, opposition to conscription in 1916–17, the ACTU boycott of Lyon’s national register of industrial and military manpower in 1939, the CPA flouting the ban on their newspaper in 1940, and Menzies’ attempt to de-register the CPA 1950–1 (pp. 147–51).

²⁸There was a split that history has not registered as great in the NSW Labor party more-or-less immediately on its formation, over trade and tariff policy.

Just one of these overlaps with the below. This approach also differs from Bongiorno's (2022) recent political history of Australia, which provides its own account of crisis, and the contingencies of politics.

In Australia, the Labor party has been a critical vehicle for this process, expressing in a condensed form the contradictions inherent to the development of Australia's working and ruling classes. Bramble and Kuhn (2011) outline the litany of betrayals delivered by the Labor government. This remains a useful catalogue of Labor's betrayals while in office on a variety of fronts. For instance, their long history of strike suppression, from the Queensland Labor Ryan government threatening to sack a striking group of Townsville railwaymen in 1917 (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011, pp. 40–1; Turner, 1965, p. 157), to the federal Chifley government ordering the military to break the national 1949 coal strike in August of that year (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011, p. 6), to the Hawke government's use of the RAAF to undercut the pilot's strike of 1989 (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011, p. 106).

In focusing in this way on how Labor suppresses workers' resistance however, the ways in which workers resistance impacts and are expressed within Labor are omitted. Tietze (2016, p. 178) argues against the "teleological air" in which Labor is destined to its state of permanent betrayal while workers "come across as utterly duped by Labourism" (Tietze, 2016, p. 170). Bramble and Kuhn (2011) explain that support for Labor comes out of "sense of powerlessness and class grievance generated by the material reality of working class life" (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011, p. 12)—a material reality that Bramble and Kuhn's account paradoxically argues is reinforced by the Labor party itself. The account sketched below takes an alternative route, conceiving of the ALP as a contradictory expression of working class mobilisation within the bourgeois political arena. The very number of betrayals that Bramble and Kuhn (2011) outline suggest the need to answer the question as to why Labor has been so successful in Australian political history (Tietze, 2016)—the longest lived political party in Australia and the governing party which comes second only by a whisker to the Liberal Party in having governed the Australian state for the longest period. To comprehend this requires an understanding of the appeal of reformism as an inherently contradictory expression not of despair but rather of hope for reform within capitalism. Significantly, and for the purposes of this chapter, the role of nationalism in this process is a critical part of this. The other key point to notice here is the non-totalising force of nationalism, and the propensity of Australian capitalism to produce internationalism,

its opposite. As regards Labor, almost every significant social and industrial ruptures have expressed themselves within the Labor party. The contradictions within the Labor party, especially between its rank-and-file and its leadership, have also simultaneously been a component of the process of managing that incorporation of workers into Australian nationalism.

I. The first decade

Federal Labor's rapid growth in the first decade was a result of its relationship with the organised working class, as well as its ability to capture the prevailing national zeitgeist (Strangio and Dyrenfurth, 2009, p. 74).²⁹ Their successes shocked and appalled the bourgeois parties, reaching a fever pitch in 1904 with the world's first Labor head of state. Contemporaries recognised the downfall of Deakin as a result of the sensational Victorian 1903 railway strike (see McMullin, 1991, pp. 47–8; Benham and Rickard, 1973). Figure 6.14 represents the figure of 'Labor' rescuing the 'railway man' from the federal crisis created by Victorian premier Irving, seen running into the distance on the right. This crisis refers to the defeat of the sitting Barton government over a Labor amendment to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act that it include railway workers. The same amendment was carried under Deakin after the 1903 election in which Labor gained further ground (Figure 6.13), leading to Deakin's resignation and Watson's ascension to the ranks of history (McMullin, 2004). As discussed in chapter 5, this attempt to paternalistically 'protect' workers from industrial strife represents a contradictory class politics that seeks to constrain workers' militancy whilst seeking to enable the representation of their interests within the system of arbitration and conciliation (Cockfield, 2007). This caveat, nor that the legislation was never successful, does not however diminish the significance of Labor's strong inner connection to class militancy in explaining its rise in electoral politics.

Federal Labor was from the beginning strongly committed to nationalism and what Fitzpatrick calls "Australian chauvinism" (1956). Labor conceived of itself as a party of the people, that in representing the working class, it thereby represented the whole 'nation', arguing in election adverts in 1901 that:

the Wage-Earning Class is the only Class which is not a Class. Representing the Body as a Whole while the other Classes only represent Special Organs,

²⁹Two spellings of 'Labor' were used between 1901 and 1912 (McMullin, 1991, p. ix).

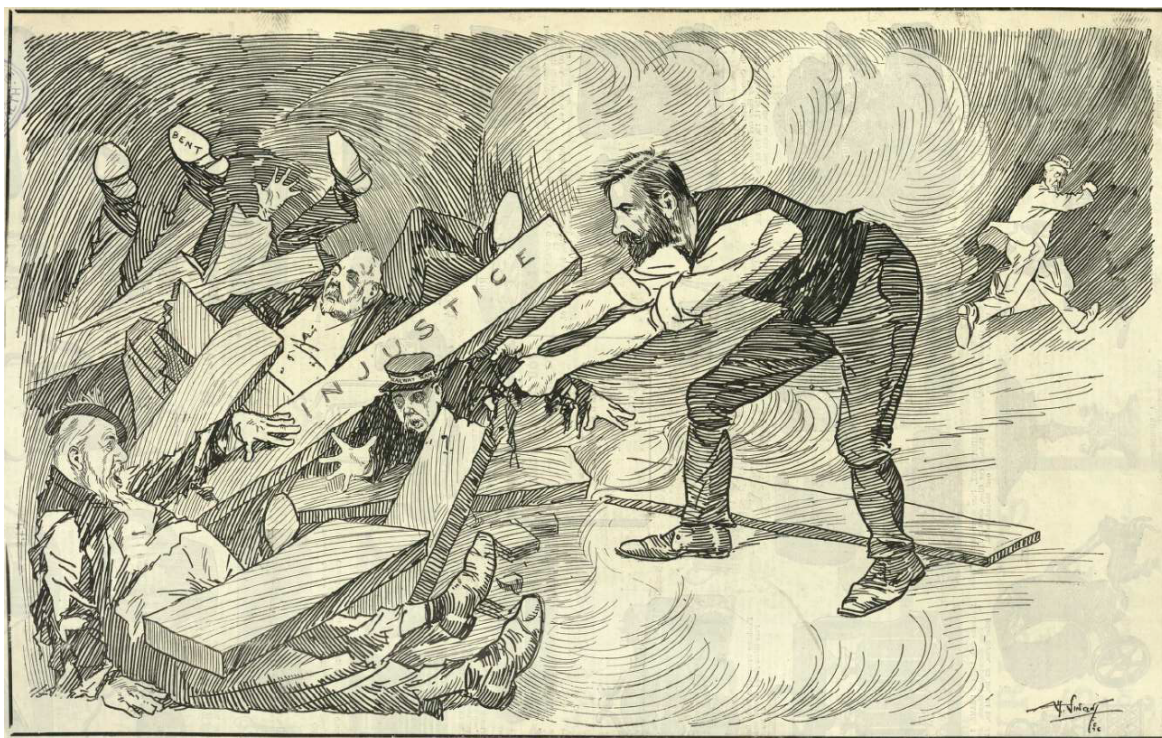


Figure 6.14: 'The legacy of Irvine'. *The Bulletin*, 28 Apr 1904, p 19
 COURTESY OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

it is the Nation. (*The Worker*, 1901)

The nationalism that was central to Labor policy was racial. Its objective outlined that “national sentiment” was premised on racial purity, a point of pride boasted about for many decades to come, as shown in their 1905 federal platform which opens:

OBJECTIVE: (a) the cultivation of an Australian national sentiment, based on the maintenance of racial purity, and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community. (b) The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies, and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and municipality. (*Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, 1905)

This racial national sentiment was of course premised on immigration policy, with the first plank of the FIGHTING and GENERAL PLATFORMS the “maintenance of White Australia” (p. 2).³⁰

This objection was not in the first instance economic but national. Chris Watson outlined that although the opposition to non-white immigrants was “to a large extent

³⁰This was the case from 1905 and not 1908.

tinged” with industrial considerations, it was in the first instance to prevent “racial contamination”, which was pitched as required for the purpose of civic “equality” and the “improvement of the race” (Hansard, HoR, 1/10/1901, see Whitlam, 1985, p. 487). Labor’s political practice included vicious attacks on other parties, especially Reid’s Free Trade party, for a failure to join the national cause with sufficient enthusiasm: for instance including as regarded South Sea Islanders in the sugar industry, non-white labour in the postal steamship service, overseas shipping tourist traffic, and Pearl Shelling.

White Australia was in reality a cross-class agreement that united the three parties, despite disagreements about implementation. Practically all parties at the beginning of the century pitched themselves as national and supra-class parties, with White Australia the most powerful glue. Immigration was the heart of almost every party policy platform. James Page argues the distinction between “protectionist, or a free-trader, or a revenue tariffist, or a fiscal atheist, or anything else of that kind” are idle compared to the overriding imperative: “We are sent here to-secure a white Australia” (Hansard, HoR 4/9/1901). Deakin similarly stressed this national unity:

Members on both sides of the House, and of all sections of all parties—those in office and those out of office—with the people behind them, are all united in the unalterable resolve that the Commonwealth of Australia shall mean a ‘white Australia’ (Deakin, Hansard, HoR 12/9/1901).

The only partial exception to this, the Free Trade party under George Reid, proves the rule. Although Reid and the leadership supported a White Australia, they did so with a number of caveats, expressed in parliamentary Hansard House of Representative debates. Firstly, they expressed frustration with its implementation via the education test (dictation test). Second, they raised concerns about its application, with Reid continuously mocking a ‘white ocean’ policy that would see the white Australia policy applied to ocean steam ships for tourism and the postal service. Thirdly, they tolerated internal criticism of the policy. Strangio and Dyrenfurth (2009) point out that Labor attacks on him were misrepresented, with Reid claiming to have coined very the phrase ‘White Australia’. Griffiths argues that the electoral failure of the Free Trade party was linked to its inability to eloquate a forceful Australian nationalism, distance itself from its ‘internationalist’ wing and supporters who viewed immigration restriction as racist and troublesome to free trading regional relations (Griffiths, 1998). The rise of Japan

plays a key role in the union for Griffiths, with the real difference between Reid and Deakin was that Reid lacked Deakin's (and Labor's) political nous in understanding the potent ability for immigration policy to express military and national sentiment (Griffiths, 1998, pp. 29–30).

This period of Labor ascension produced key parties for both the working and ruling class. Both defined themselves principally against the politics represented by the Labor party. Firstly, Deakin's Fusionist Liberal party uniting the ruling class across the trade and tariff divide was founded stressing its opposition to Labor's policy of binding caucus votes (Strangio and Dyrenfurth, 2009). This new party would support two key planks of early Australian nationalist immigration policy: White Australia and protestant sectarianism.

The second important political trend that emerged in this period was working class opposition to nationalism. Various revolutionary political currents grew in influence in Australian trade unions from 1909 (Turner, 1965, pp. 55–61). The two IWW factions formed in 1907 and 1911 were not just the most significant forward steps in revolutionary organisation based on the strident assertion that the “working class and the employing class have nothing in common” (IWW, 1912, p. 3), but also the first and most significant turn within the Australian working class against anti-immigrant racism and consistently against Labor's racial politics (Burgmann, 1995, see ch. 7), declaring in 1911 their organisation “knows no distinction of race, creed, or colour. Its policy is one of international working-class solidarity” (Sydney IWW club, 1911, cited in Burgmann, 1995, p. 80). Perhaps more significantly, they produced propaganda and attacked both Labor for anti-immigrant positions and unions like the AWU for excluding South Sea Islanders (Burgmann, 1995, p. 89). The IWW's position radicalised much of the rest of the far and revolutionary left on questions of racism and White Australia, many though not all of which reversed their position after involvement with the IWW (Burgmann, 1995, pp. 81–4). Armstrong (1990) points out that the IWW's class reductionism led to a shallow analysis of racism as emanating from narrow craft trade union consciousness, rather than a feature of capitalism that must be fought on that basis.

The politics of immigration, Australian nationalism and the contradiction between ruling and working classes were tightly bound together in the first ten years from federation. Labor's contradictory support for working class politics within the system helped to consolidate class polarisations on White Australia, with the primary

ruling class party, fusing the Free Trade and Protectionist currents, into a more sincerely nationalist adherent to White Australia, and on the other hand helping to forge revolutionary currents on the far left to the principles of anti-racism via the IWW mobilisations.

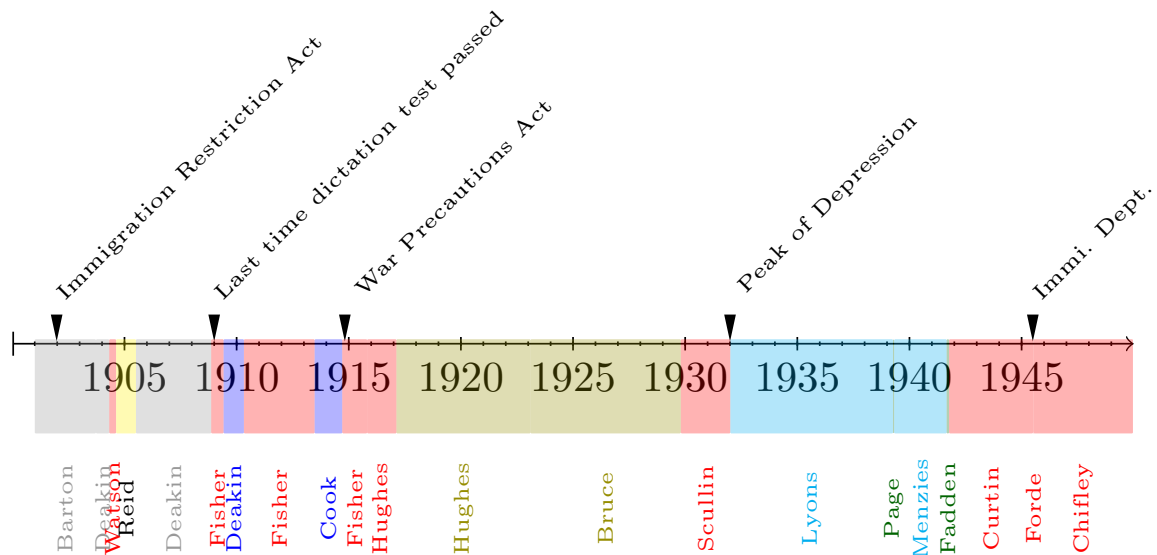


Figure 6.15: Chronology of pre-1945 migration policy against governing party in federal government (protectionist in grey, Labor in red, free trade in yellow, Liberal/Fusion in dark blue, nationalist in gold, United Australia in pale blue, and Country Party in dark green). Continued at Figure 5.12 on page 193.

II. WWI

World War I was the stage for the greatest polarisation in Australian politics since Federation, and in the years afterwards the introduction of a system of passports (Doulman and Lee, 2008). The outbreak of the war sent tremors through the global parties of social democracy in the Second International, outlined famously by Lenin (1974b, pp. 205–59), with parties that formally subscribed to socialist internationalism and anti-militarism now supporting a bourgeois imperialist war. In Australia, the outbreak of the war came during an election campaign in which both Cook and Fisher pledged to support the war. The IWW opposed the war and organised actively demonstrations against it (Bollard, 2013, p. 33-4; Burgmann, 1995, pp. 181–3).

The split over conscription was just one of the moments of political polarisation, having itself been prefigured by the campaign against compulsory military service in 1910 (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 148). Unemployment, and wartime inflation led to

a practically unparalleled upsurge in workers' strike militancy (see Figure 5.11 at page 191), "almost" breaking the hegemony of arbitration within the circles of the union officialdom (Bollard, 2013, p. 43-4). This culminated in the NSW General Strike of NSW, "arguably the biggest class conflict in Australian history" (Bollard, 2007, p. v). It was in this climate that saw mass resistance to two conscription referenda led by the union rank and file. But the struggle over conscription, which mobilised rank-and-file and popular resistance was the first mass movement of a significant enough size that it produced a split in the federal Labor party over conscription. Labor's caucus voted out Labor's leader Billy Hughes, who left with two dozen members and went on in 1917 to form a new bourgeois unity party, the Nationalist Party (Figure 6.13).

Something of the significance of White Australian nationalism can be seen by its aggressive mobilisation by both sides of the official conscription debate. J. T. Lang spoke proudly of receiving raucous cheers from "many men and women whom I knew had always supported the Liberals", when he railed against conscription since Hughes could only keep the country going by recourse to "colored labor", "Kanakas", and "Maltese" (Lang, 1956, p. 69). That was, for Lang the "first moment I realised that we had every chance of defeating Conscription": "White Australia was going to be the trump card" (Lang, 1956, p. 69). This line of argument is shown in the Australian worker cartoon (Figure 6.16), where the war is a Trojan horse for the importation of non-white labour.

Hughes had a more somewhat sophisticated position, also positioning White Australia with the issue of Australian Nationalism, arguing that White Australia required "the good opinion and the moral sympathy and support of the white races of the world", which meant a second attempt at the conscription referendum (Hansard, HoR, 08/12/1916). That is, White Australia only made sense when defended and articulated within Western Imperialism: As an imperialist policy itself, without British *imprimatur*, cautious and unwilling as it was, Australia was vulnerable. History proved Hughes exactly half right. Despite the failure to implement conscription, he was able to win the 1919 Paris Peace conference against the policy of non-discrimination despite Japan winning the vote on the conference clause. Hughes later claimed the international acceptance for the White Australia policy against the wishes of representatives from 400,000,000 Chinese, Japan, India, and partially coloured populations was perhaps the "greatest thing which we have achieved" (Hughes, 1929).

A rising workers movement built on this popular anti-conscription movement, a



Figure 6.16: The Australian worker 28th September 1916, History Repeated.
COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

growing trade union movement including the general strike of 1917. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 played a critical role separating the trade unions into a more clearly delineated left and right (Jupp, 2018, p. 66; see also Gollan, 1975; O'Farrell, 1963). The Communist Party founded in 1920 absorbed some important parts of the IWW. By 1920, there was widespread fervour for the 'One Big Union' (Dixon, 1965; Farrell, 1977). But the leftward shift went much further than the membership of these organisations, including the radical shift in the NSW Labor party towards 'socialisation units' (Martin, 2007), correlated with enshrining the objective of the socialisation of industry in the ALP constitution. In 1921, Jack Holloway, then president of the Australian Labor Party Executive described the "mental revolution which has taken place among the workers throughout the world" (AATUC, 2021). The CPA's founding secretary William Earsman reported excitedly (and naïvely) to the Communist international in 1921 that "Australia is probably the most highly developed country outside Russia" (Riddell, 2015, p. 648), a line corrected by the more sober analysis of Comrade Alf Rees from Broken Hill (pp. 735–7).

The years surrounding World War I were critical in the international construc-

tion of global regimes of migration management. WWI expressed and encouraged a sharpening of racial and imperial attitudes. The construction of a global regime of passports systematised many of the tactics improvised during WWI to control national populations.

Three examples of international debates on immigration suffice to show some of the ideological poles within the working class when it comes to immigration and nationalism: the 1907 Stuttgart conference of the Second International, the 1922 fourth congress of the Communist International, and the 1926 world labour conference on migration. Each portrays a distinct example of working class consciousness and shows the capacity of Australia's working class to produce both nationalism and internationalism in response to the conditions of Australian and international capitalism. Firstly, at the 1907 Stuttgart conference, a political schism over immigration pitted the decidedly racist delegates from the United States and Australia, who argued that Chinese and 'yellow' races were a danger impossible to organise, against internationalist delegates from Europe and Asia. The Socialist Federation of Australasia representative and printer Victor Kroemer, argued immigration was a "capitalist maneuver to wrest from the workers the advantages they have gained", rebutted by Kato Tokijiro from Japan: "The race question obviously plays a role here" (Taber, 2023, pp. 95–8). Australian delegates had not always been so backwards. Even before the rise of the IWW in Australia though, it is worth noting that it was the proxy for the Australian Socialist League, Edward Aveling, who had in 1896 successfully moved a resolution against working class support for migration restrictions to the London Congress of the Second International (Farrell, 1975, p. 18). The Stuttgart conference ended with an extremely equivocal resolution. While arguing against racial exclusion and restriction, for welcoming immigrant workers into trade unions, it couched this with a large number of racial concessions: it was the "duty of organized workers to protect themselves against the lowering of their standard of living, which frequently results from the mass import of unorganized workers" and in particular that laws should prohibit the migration of any "workers who have entered into a contract that deprives them of the liberty to dispose of their labor power and wages" (Taber, 2021, pp. 103–4). This, the first measure recommended by the congress, entailed a *key equivocation*: the injunction to campaign against foreign labour on contracts deemed exceptional.

Second, following the 1917 Russian revolution, the Australian Labor movement was faced increasingly with international criticism of its policy on immigration policy

(including and going beyond ‘white Australia’) and the production of a more radical internationalist current on immigration. In 1922, the fourth congress of the Comintern considered immigration and outlined an internationalist view, that every restriction on immigrants was a tool for capitalist division amongst the international proletariat, and that in order to oppose the war, such restrictions must be vigorously opposed. To quote at some length:

The chief method of recruiting coloured workers today on the sugar plantations in the southern Pacific is the contract system, which brings in workers from China and India. This fact has led workers of the imperialist countries to demand the passing of laws against immigration and against coloured labour, both in the United States and in Australia. These laws deepen the antagonism between coloured and white workers, fragmenting and weakening unity of the workers’ movement. The Communist parties of the United States, Canada, and Australia must wage a vigorous campaign against laws that restrict immigration, and explain to the proletarian masses of these countries that they too will suffer harm because of the race hatred stirred up by these laws. The capitalists oppose such anti-immigration laws because they favour free importation of cheap coloured labour as a means of driving down the wages of white workers. There is only one way to successfully counter the capitalists’ intention to go over to the offensive: the immigrant workers must be admitted into the existing trade unions of white workers. At the same time, the demand must be raised that the wages of coloured workers be brought up to same level as white workers’ pay. Such a step by the Communist parties will expose the capitalists’ intentions and also demonstrate clearly to the coloured workers that the international proletariat does not harbour any racial prejudice. (Riddell, 2011, p. 1189)

This resolution breaks very clearly from the position expressed by the Second International in 1907, specifically arguing that laws restricting immigration tend to produce “race hatred” which function to divide and weaken workers. The contract conditions of these workers are not an excuse for contemplating or equivocating on these racial laws, which can only be challenged by admitting the immigrants into the “existing trade unions of white workers”. Despite being a small party in the 1920s, the CPA

took some meaningful steps towards internationalism. The influence of CPA within the formation of the ACTU and their affiliation to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat outraged many, as shown in Figure 6.17. *Smith's Weekly* (1930) attacks the leadership of the CPA (Gardner and Kavanagh, pictured), asking "White Australia or Worker's Australia, which?" (*Smith's Weekly*, 1930, p. 3). The text of the article read, "India is seething with rebellion against the British Imperialist oppressors". In Frank Dunne's image, Australia is represented as a white woman being offered up to the radicalising 'East', including the Chinese revolution 1927–8, and strikes and nationalist mobilisation in India. Farrell (1977) outlines this period of labour internationalism led by the CPA and integrated into the trade union movement. CPA member Pearl Hanks argued "we must give up either our color prejudice or our hopes of Communism" (Pearl Hanks, cited in Piccini and Smith, 2018, p. 80).

Sadly though, CPA policy on migration was in many ways equivocal. Following intervention by the Comintern in 1926, the party dragged its feet on publishing a pamphlet on immigration (Macintyre, 1998/2022, p. 132). The CPA's position on immigration remained "tortuously qualified" (Macintyre, 1998/2022, p. 126). While opposing White Australia as an ideal separating the Australian labour movement from international counterparts, it pursued a policy opposing mass immigration through the 1920s, formalising the policy in 1925 (Piccini and Smith, 2018, p. 81). This was an awkward attempt to straddle an opposition to racial discrimination, while opposing immigration in general. It reflected the contradictory position of the CPA, a tiny party embedded in the leadership of the NSW trade union movement, but without a mass base capable of independently shifting trade union policy from the ground up. Resolutions on immigration did not have the same impact on the Australian far left as did the Chicago IWW on Australian anti-racism in the beginning of the century (Burgmann, 1995) or Russian revolutionary influence on CPA policy on Aboriginal liberation (Gibson, 2020a). The more positive initiatives were abandoned as a part of the CPA's 'third period' policies denouncing Labor as social fascists (Farrell, 1977; O'Lincoln, 1985), but they show the possibility of the development within Australia of immigration internationalism.

The third example is the perhaps less remarkable conclusion that the leadership of the Labor party remained stridently supportive of White Australia. The above international resolutions can be compared to the International Labour conference on migration held in June 1926. Though producing characteristically insipid resolutions

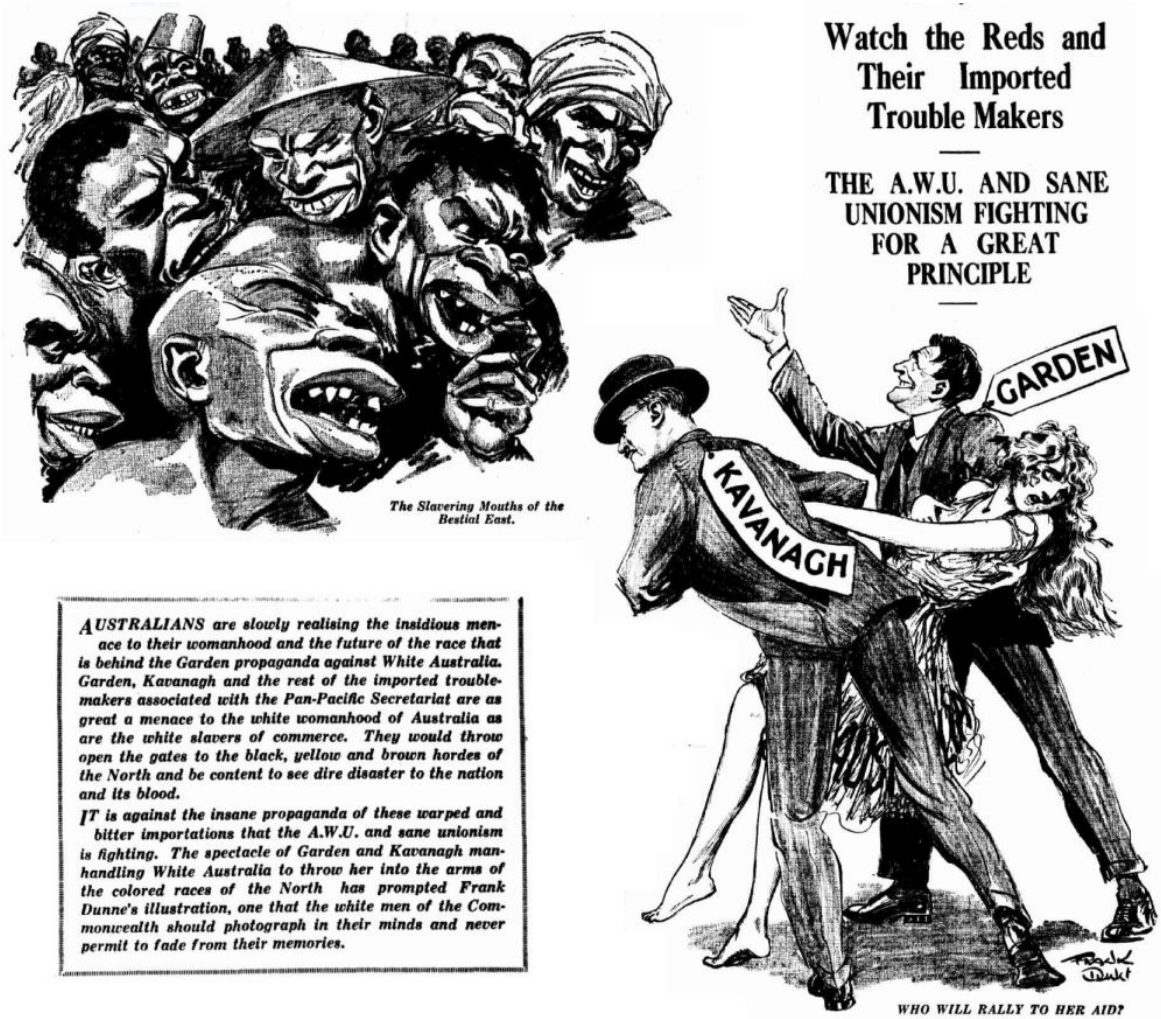


Figure 6.17: Attack on the CPA from Smith's Weekly. Illustration by Frank Dunne, in (Smith's Weekly, 1930). Composite image reconstructed from multiple sections of the original newspaper page.

COURTESY OF NLA

(see generally Poy, 2023; Brown, 1926), it provided a stage for H. V. Evatt to make representations that migration causes unemployment. H. V. Evatt (1927a; 1927b; 1927c; 1927d), the NSW MLA and later federal parliamentarian and Labor leader made representations to this conference about the right of “newer” countries to protect the “interests of their own nationals” against the “lowering of the standard of life by the influx of alien or other immigrants” and the “evils caused by an influx of people into a country not ready or able to absorb them” (Evatt, 1927b, p. 10).³¹ Evatt’s aggressive defence of White Australia outraged international social democracy, drawing criticisms (Brown, 1926, pp. 362–75) from such quarters as Jewish Bundists and Zionists, Italians, and most spectacularly the representative of the Indian National Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai, who dressed down the entire conference (see page 1) and responded indirectly to Evatt’s core argument:

We have, gentlemen, heard a great deal about civilization, standards of life, and other things. I have no desire to retort, but let me tell you that we are not prepared to accept the validity of these pleas. The poorest classes of our people have virtues of their own, which are not very common in the poorest classes of your countries. This is the same argument which your own rich and propertied classes use against our workers. The poorer classes all over the world are ignorant, dirty, and uncivilized, for which capitalism and imperialism are solely responsible. If your argument is valid against us, that of your propertied classes will be equally valid against you. (Rai, 1926, p. 332)

More widely reported in Australia was a quote colourfully attributed to him referencing the growing movements in the global South: “By your present attitude you are antagonising the colored peoples of the world . . . The whites alone will be responsible if disaster occurs” (The Sun, 1926, p. 1).³² This “bourgeois politician with no sympathy for Socialism” (Roy, 1971, p. 77) denounces, from within the bounds of social democracy, the imperial system of migration.

Despite global leadership in particular from a preponderance of Indian labour leaders, Australian labour representatives are notable in this period for their positions on

³¹“no subject is of more fundamental and vital Importance to Labor throughout the world—and especially to Labor in Australia—than the subject of migration” (Evatt, 1927b, p. 10).

³²“If Labour could protect its rights only by means of exclusion and segregation, then goodbye to the unity and solidarity of the working classes: the whole weight of the coloured races would be against white Labour.” (Lajpat Rai, paraphrased in Brown, 1926, p. 375).

immigration. Such a position is not however an automatic function of Australia's position in the world economy. The traditions of working class militancy, and the reactions against the extreme positions of the ALP, hold the potential of challenging the global racial regime of migration restrictions produced in this period. Traditions of nationalism within labour presented a large barrier to the development of such consciousness.

III. The Depression

The third break and in some ways even more dramatic breach in official politics represented in Figure 6.15 was also the result of pressure from below. This split birthed new parties, including this time significant organisation on the radical right. The years 1930–33 were some of the most tumultuous in Australian history, with splits in the ALP, the rise of the fascist New Guard (NSW) and White Army (Victoria), and the forward march of the CPA on the left. The second greatest peak in the number of strikes relative to the labour force was in the year 1929 (Figure 5.11 at page 191), following the upsurge in industrial militancy from the mid-1920s.³³ The onset of the great depression in 1929 saw the enormous and unprecedented spike in the official rate of unemployment to 20 percent (Figure 6.18).

The 1929 split in Labor was in the first instance economic rather than imperialist, dividing into three political positions defined by differing proposed fiscal responses to the great depression—the orthodox ‘Niemeyer plan’ of Lyons, the proto-Keynesian plan of treasurer Ted Theodore and the response of NSW Premier Jack Lang that the payments not be made (see Millmow, 2010). The crisis saw the defection of Labor’s ex-Tasmanian premier and ex-treasurer Joseph Lyons, whose defecting group merged into the United Australia Party, with Lyons as leader. Lloyd describes the forerunner movement to the UAP to be “adherence to imperialist sentiment and orthodox economics” (Lloyd, 1984). Labor therefore again provided the prime minister for the openly ruling class party. It produced on the other hand a short-lived left nationalist opposition party ‘Australian Labor Party (New South Wales)’ led by NSW premier Jack Lang (represented in Figure 6.13 as in the 1931 and 1937 elections Lang Labor).³⁵

³³Strike density is usually measured relative to the employed labour force only, making 1929 the highest moment by most usual methods

³⁴Unemployment rate (DFAT, 2018, financial years from 1900 to 1977) and ABS (2025a, averaged raw unemployment rate over each FY from 1978 to 2024).

³⁵The figure also includes under Lang Labor the ‘Labor Party (Non-Communist)’ in the 1940

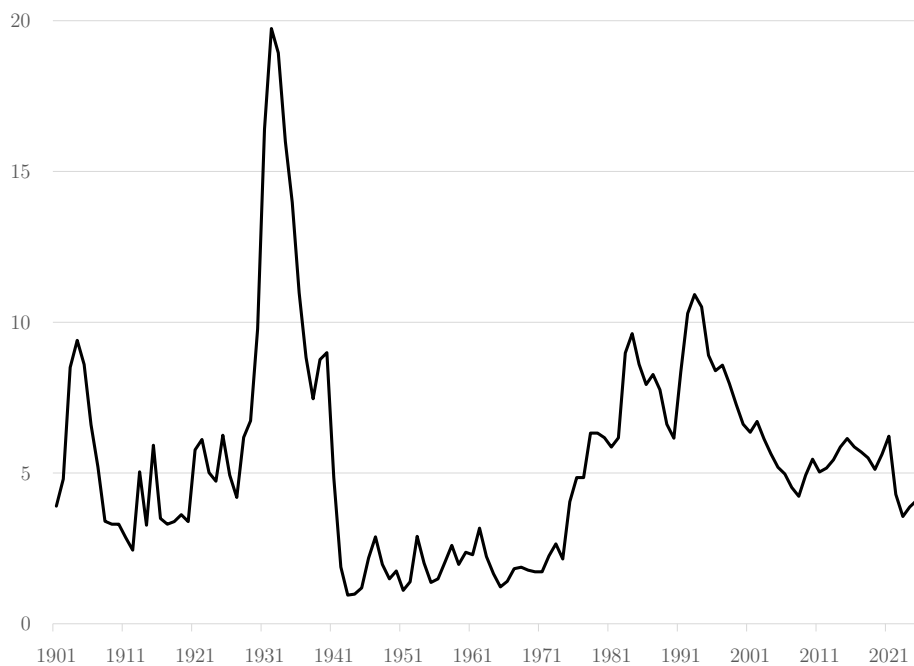


Figure 6.18: Unemployment rate 1900/01 to 2024/25.³⁴

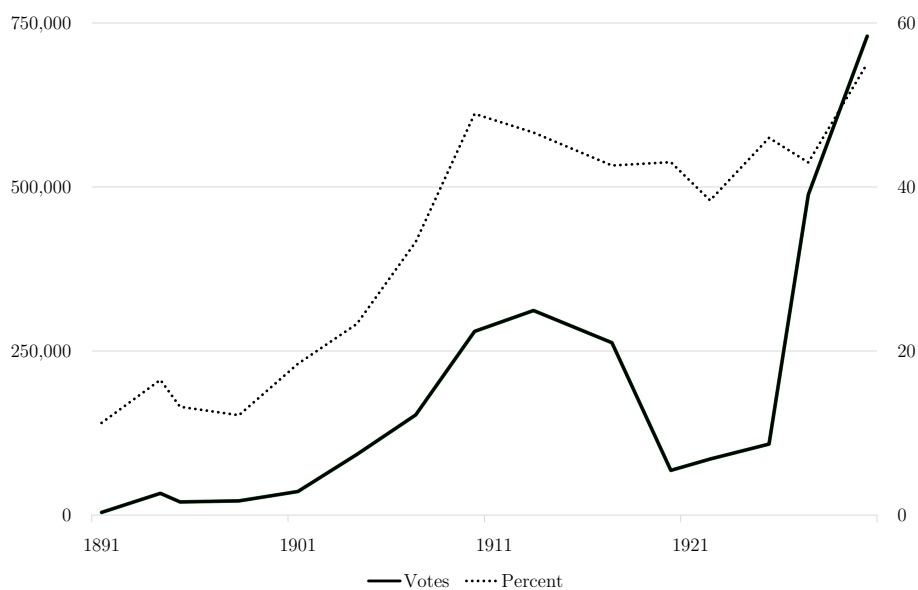


Figure 6.19: NSW Labor primary vote 1891–1930

Jack Lang's NSW Labor party had achieved unprecedented electoral success in the 1930 elections by offering voters an alternative to austerity in the wake of the great depression, achieving more than half of the vote for the first time (Figure 6.19). Lang's plan was couched in terms of Australian nationalism, and in defiance of the British election, formed by Lang in protest of NSW Labor's communist influence, and re-formed after Lang was later expelled from the party in the project of reunification of federal Labor. The results of this party in the years that followed are omitted from Figure 6.25 below: 1.6 per cent in 1946, 0.7 per cent in 1949, and 1.4 per cent in 1951.

government. His slogan of ‘men before money’ was popular in many unions, despite Lang’s lack of union experience and anti-socialist temperament. An ALP float in the six hours parade late in the 1930s continues to bear Lang’s “Australia First” slogan (Figure 6.20), which was couched in the argument that Australia should break with British ‘imperialism’ and their demands on Lang’s NSW budget ledger in repayments. He threatened banks with taxes on mortgages, promised poor relief, and refused to implement austerity.



Figure 6.20: ‘Australia First’ ALP float
(*Six Hour Day procession 1937*)

COURTESY OF MITCHEL LIBRARY

The onset of depression saw a slowing of immigration, and an increase in emigration including of assisted immigrants who came in the 1920s (Langfield, 1999, p. 12). Despite this, the category of the ‘migrant’ continued to serve as an outside agitator in particular through the construction of the Irish / Catholic / Sinn Feiner. Following the conscription debates during WWI, Irish Catholics had been increasingly linked with the extreme left. To pull just one example from a rich tradition of paranoid sectarian nationalism which spread over the 1920s and early 1930s, a Protestant Federation meeting in 1919 noted that “Sinn Feiners in Australia were working with the I.W.W. and the Bolsheviks, to revolt as soon as they get the chance” (The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, 1919). The SMH Decried the government’s failure to suppress protests: “the authorities sow to the wind by permitting persons of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Sinn Fein and Bolshevist types to organize outdoor demonstrations they must not be surprised if they have to reap the whirlwind . . . the creation of a wave of popular anger” (Doulman and Lee, 2008, p. 85).

This ideology played into the growing far right in Australia, where anti-Irish, anti-Bolshevik, and anti-Labor ideologies were expressed together as an organised middle class reaction. The New Guard for instance were furious with Lang’s criticism of empire and set about frustrating it, with active fascist organisation capable of confronting Lang, even pledging their services to the Lyons government in service of this aim.

They grew, though were thwarted after their more vigilante schemes were outed. Their motto, shown in their coat of arms, 'For God, King and Country' expressed a protestant and British pride. In Stone's (2006) dramatic journalistic rendering of the period, the middle of 1932 was "as close as [Australia] ever got to civil war" (Stone, 2006, p. 5). The New Guard having gained tens of thousands of members was ready to lay siege on Lang, while the NSW Labor Council called on its member unions to "place their organisation at the disposal of the Government either on the industrial field or on any field where it may be necessary to meet the attacks of the Fascist forces arrayed behind the Federal Government" (Stone, 2006, p. 205). In the words of one White Army soldier: "We didn't know whether it was the Irish or the communists" (Cathcart, 1985, p. 30). British Fascist leader Oswald Moseley remarked:

I always thought it remarkable that Australia, without studying the Fascist political philosophy and methods, so spontaneously developed a form of Fascism peculiarly suited to the needs of the British Empire. (Sunday Times, 1933)

The increasing interwar repression of communists was represented also in the increasingly politicised set of immigration restrictions (Dutton, 1998). Brett (1992) speaks about the "tightening of society's boundaries" (p. 92), Australian society had a "continuing preoccupation with the maintenance of its borders against outsiders and foreign influences" (Brett, 1992, p. 98). It is difficult to avoid mentioning the case of polyglot intellectual communist Egon Kisch, refused entry to Australia on the basis of failure to speak Scotch Gaelic. Borders were used to exclude others including disabled people, people with mental illness, political radicals, sex workers and those considered criminal (see for instance Bashford and Howard, 2004; Varnava, Marmo, and Smith, 2022).

The CPA's position on Australian nationalism in the 1930s became one of popular frontism, and both the CPA and the Australian Nazis sought to reclaim the spirit of Eureka. But although couching their activism in nationalist terms, they launched a number of successful initiatives including the Militant Minority Movement within Australia's union movement, tenants struggles, which bolstered their membership and established them as a credible fighting force in this 'left turn' period (O'Lincoln, 1985). The Communist party grew rapidly through the depression years, and continued through the 1930s and 1940s to become a large party, and one particularly

influential in the Australian union movement. The end of this period saw something like a quadrupling of CPA membership in the three years of its being banned to a size of more than ten thousand (Ward, 1958/1964, p. 149).

With the rise of fascism, CPA took up the fight against UAP anti-migrant policy and campaigned to support refugees, building on a sympathetic strain within the workers movement. The CPA continued to support refugees through this period, whilst on the other hand continuing to oppose the spectre of ‘mass migration’. Despite this, refugees from fascism were treated as a “special problem”, and the Lyons government were criticised on anti-fascist grounds for their suppression of these refugees (Piccini and Smith, 2018, p. 84). They write in 1939 that the “great Australian labor movement must fight for the rescue of these [refugees], our brave fellow-workers”, combining their 1930s popular front nationalism with internationalist support for migrants (cited in Piccini and Smith, 2018, p. 83).

There was nothing stable about White Australian nationalism, which was propelled by the ongoing contradiction between formal racial, political, and colonial stability and real economic, colonial and political instability. Nationalism is an insecure and contradictory process, which explains both the ongoing significance and importance of border regimes to reinforce that nation, and the ongoing contradictions that this very process reinforces. These three snapshots evoke the instability and contradictions of the administration of Australian nationalism via the vehicle of White Australia, even at its height. The very years leading to the zenith of White Australia saw serious internal convulsions and dynamism within the construct of nationalism. The period of manufacturing of an illusory community called ‘Australia’ that took place from the late nineteenth century involved the material and ideological construction and reproduction of ‘White Australia’. The dynamic definition of assimilable whiteness against unassimilable Chineseness was mediated by immigration policy. The main contradictions within this included Irish immigration, which was over time reconstructed as white, but nonetheless politically coimbricated with the Labor party’s own contradictory relationship with class, which saw it opposing conscription. The investigation of three key rocky outcrops in official electoral political sea revealed that beneath the seemingly stable construct of the nation was a dynamic capitalist system geared towards crisis, workers organisation against miseries, and capable of disrupting the very nationalism that immigration plays a role in maintaining. Shifts in migration arise from the internality of imperialism, capitalism, and nationalism.

6.4 REPRODUCING HOMOGENEITY IN INTERNATIONALISED NATIONALISM

Britain's manifest failures to serve as Australia's protector during WWII was a challenge to the nature of Australian nationalism as a contradictory combination of Australia's own sub-imperial nationality and British imperial citizenship. As a result, Australian nationalism was symbolically recast in the years between 1945 and 1973. The Australian national flag shifted from the Union Jack to the blue ensign in 1956, a reform flowing through to Navy ships in 1966. The word 'British' was finally removed from the Australian passport in 1967 (Mann, 2013, p. 51).

The change in currency of 1966 was another opportunity for symbolic transformation, within this critical expression of public imagery (Avilés and Morton, 2025, pp. 587–8). Despite Menzies' original wishes that the currency be named the 'Royal', it was the Australian dollar that ultimately displaced the Australian pound. Figure 6.21 shows the symbolic transformation of ten shilling to the one dollar note made during the decimalisation of currency. Colonial figures of Flinders and Cook (in watermark) in the ten shilling note are replaced with the Queen and appropriations of Aboriginal art.³⁶ More than ostentatious colonial incorporation of Aboriginal symbolism, quite characteristically, the artwork on the left by Yolgnu artist David Malangi Daymirringu was presumed to be made by "an anonymous and probably long dead" artist and stolen by the RBA without consultation, a "dismissive attitude . . . in step with White Australian sentiments of the time" (Mundine, 2004, p. 34).³⁷

Beneath these symbolic changes were two key shifts reconstructing Australian nationalism in response to the shaken faith in Britain as imperial protector. First, as discussed above, was the redoubled geo-political need for a white Australia population policy, resulting in the commissioning of an unprecedented influx of immigrants. Simultaneously, the overt proclamation of a white Australia, couched in British imperial terms, was rapidly shifted away from. In 1949, immigration minister Arthur Calwell explained that while his intention was to "maintain what every Australian has understood to have been the law of the land for the past 48 years" by preserving a

³⁶Despite the Bretton Woods international monetary agreement of 1944, Australian currency remained pegged to the UK as the leading country in the 'Sterling area' until 1971.

³⁷The symbolic theft of the Arnhem land rock art on the right hand side is perhaps also worth remarking.



Figure 6.21: Australian ten shilling (1954–61, left) and one dollar (1966–74, right) notes (NLA, 2016).

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homogeneous population (Calwell, 1949, p. 806), the phrase ‘White Australia’ was to be avoided due to its capacity to offend, continuing the 1941 ‘quiet diplomacy’ line (Tavan, 2005, p. 43):

The ideal which underlies our policy is the preservation of the homogeneous character of our population and the avoidance of the friction which inevitably follows an influx of peoples having different standards of living, traditions, culture and national characteristic . . . I emphasize that the term has no official basis and wherever possible I have avoided its use, not only because it describes our immigration policy inaccurately, but because it can be regarded as offensive to non-Europeans. (Calwell, 1949, p. 808)

The ideal of homogeneity continued as the heart of the policy, but while seeking to avoid the damaging global implication of Australia’s strident imperial racism. The thinness of Calwell’s aversion to offence can be grasped from his statement three months earlier: “We can have a white Australia we can have a black Australia, but a mongrel Australia is impossible” (Hansard, HoR, 09/02/1949). That such a strident racist could be capable of judging the phrase offensive gives a sense of the perceived necessity of redrafting the most central doctrine of Australian nationalism.

The average number of references to ‘White Australia’ in the House of Representatives peaked in July of that year at more than 18 references per sitting day, before dropping quickly from August, as shown in Figure 6.22. In this era of decolonisation, Australia’s proud white colonial and Imperial ideology was increasingly problematic for its leaders, who were in a period of conscious internationalisation with the region.

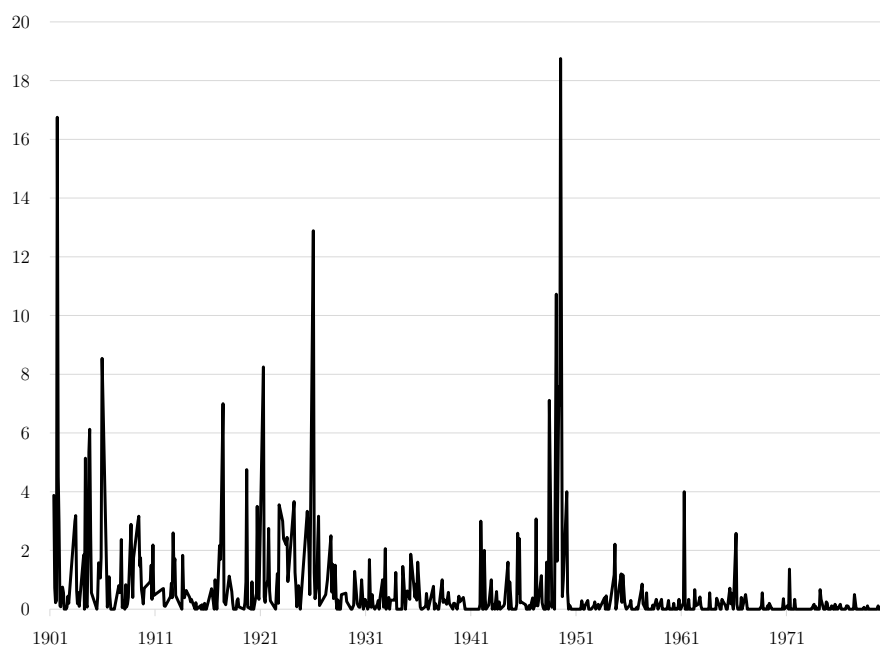


Figure 6.22: References to ‘white Australia’ per sitting day, averaged for each month involving sitting days between 1901 and 1980.

Although the language of White Australia was increasingly avoided, the policy was strongly maintained. This can be seen in several ways. Firstly, immediately after the war the Labor government had embarked on high profile deportations of African American and Asia Pacific, including in 1949 the War-time Refugees Removal Act 1949. These practices produced dissent both inside and outside Australia and were liberalised but not abolished under Menzies (Neumann, 2006).

Secondly, following the war a number of regressive steps actually increased racial content of the (now *sotto voce*) White Australia policy. Another example is the policies allowing the admission of those of a “mixed race”, which was increased from a requirement of 50 per cent to 75 per cent “European blood” in 1950 (Tavan, 2005,

pp. 74, 91).³⁸ Even when the External Affairs department complained in 1955 that this was difficult to administer since it required tracking down white grandparents and since “race” could not be ascertained from Birth Certificates, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Tasman Heyes, refused in the 1957 request, and merely changed the requirement of “documentary evidence” to judging the applicant’s 75 per cent European threshold by “appearance” (Department of Immigration, 1949).

Thirdly, shifts in the administration of border controls were administrative and systematising, rather than substantive. The immigration apparatuses were substantially thickened in the period, including several reforms that form Australia’s contemporary migration architecture: the immigration department from 1945, citizenship from 1949, and the Migration Act of 1958. But these reforms were reaffirming and reproducing White Australia, rather than breaking from it. This act was designed to be “less offensive but more effective means of control” (Tavan, 2005, p. 104). The abandoning of the dictation test in 1958 was symbolic; not a single person had actually passed the dictation test since 1909 (Williams, 2021, p. 54).

And fourthly, the underlying aim of homogeneity was continued. In Warwick Anderson’s account of the shifting biological conceptions of whiteness in Australia, he argues that the particular racial ideas that were connected to the white Australia policy as part of a biologically homogeneous body politic did not begin to be displaced until after the second world war (Anderson, 2003, pp. 256–7). Yet, even if biological homogeneity was avoided, the same fantasy of organic integrity lived on in the desire for homogeneity in “standards of living, traditions, culture and national characteristics” (Calwell, 1949, p. 808). This continued through the Menzies era. In explaining the 1966 amendments to the migration act, which further watered down those ugly perceptions of ‘white Australia’, Immigration Minister Hubert Opperman (1966, p. 4) reiterated that the “the basic aim of preserving a homogeneous population will be maintained”, by combining the principles of *integration and white predominance*. His more liberal successor Snedden repeated, “We must have a single culture. If migration implies multi-culture activities within Australian society, then it is not the type of culture Australia wants” (cited in Whitlam, 1985, p. 495).

The tactical recasting of the principle of homogeneity in the post-WWII era was a critical moment within the construction of the post-war migration policy. The search for new Australian motifs by the ruling class was just one component of an immigration

³⁸The policy wording of ‘European descent’ was often interpreted even in official memos as “blood”.

policy that was breaking, slowly, from being 'more British than British', but never from its underlying rationale: geo-strategic demography, homogeneity, and state-led developmentalism.

6.4.1 WORKING CLASS AND RESISTING WHITE AUSTRALIA

The new immigrants recruited to Australian capitalism after WWII from various sources comprised the second key lever against White Australia, after decolonial movements overseas. Returning to Figure 6.7 (page 247), the dramatic change following the 1947 are one of the most immediately apparent features. The 1947 census records the highest proportion of Australian-born in the country's history at 90 per cent, with 99.3 per cent European (Willey, 1978, p. 7). In the years that followed, numbers born in Italy and Greece grew sharply to maxima of 2.3 and 1.3 per cent of the Australian population in the 1960s and 1970s respectively (see Table 6.1). Yugoslavia was another ongoing important source country for immigrants, alongside an ongoing trickle of Chinese and Indian immigration that had gone on more or less consistently across recorded Australian colonial history. Perhaps most significantly is a sharp increase in immigration from a wider variety of sources. These shifts corresponded to a heightened migration regime, a global political economy being restructured under US hegemony, a *pax Americana* that saw an increasingly integrated internationalised economy.

Stories of the beginnings of multiculturalism often focus on elites. Politicians, academics, bureaucrats, the Immigration Reform group are the figures variously lionised or blamed for the shift (Blainey, 1984; Tavan, 2005). This is generally true too of Lopez's (2000) authoritative intellectual history. But it is critical to foreground the agency of these immigrant workers, rather than their mere presence as the catalytic factor. This agency was expressed through strike action, political expression, political organisation, and also through leaving Australia in increasing proportions in the mid-1960s, leading the Australian ruling class to improvise more effective forms of incorporation (Price, 1975).

Despite the fact 1945–70 saw sharp changes in the composition of the Australian population by country of birth, when compared with the broader scale of Australian history, it stands out as the least diverse by many measures. Table 6.2 compares the four periods assessed by this thesis (excluding 1820–1845), showing that 1945–70, on a time averaged basis, shows the lowest proportion of overseas born at 15.2

<i>Proportion of Total Population (per cent)</i>				
	1846–1870	1870–1945	1945–1970	1970–2021
Australia	39.7	76.5	84.8	76.6
Great Britain	38.6	14.4	7.0	6.2
Ireland	13.2	4.5	0.5	0.5
China	1.8	0.7	0.1	0.9
India		0.1	0.1	0.8
Germany	2.1	0.9	0.7	0.7
New Zealand		0.6	0.5	1.7
Italy		0.2	1.6	1.4
Greece		0.1	0.6	0.8
Philippines		0.0	0.0	0.5
Fmr Yugoslavia		0.0	0.4	1.0
Vietnam		0.0	0.0	0.7
Other	4.5	2.0	3.6	8.4
Proportion of total population	60.3	23.5	15.2	23.4

<i>Proportion of Overseas Born (per cent)</i>				
	1846–1870	1870–1945	1945–1970	1970–2021
Great Britain	64.0	61.1	45.8	26.6
Ireland	21.9	19.2	3.4	1.9
China	2.9	3.1	0.8	3.8
India		0.5	0.9	3.5
Germany	3.5	3.9	4.8	2.8
New Zealand	0.1	2.5	3.3	7.1
Italy		0.8	10.5	6.1
Greece		0.2	4.1	3.3
Philippines			0.0	2.2
Fmr Yugoslavia		0.1	2.6	4.1
Vietnam			0.0	2.8
Other	7.5	8.7	23.7	35.8

Table 6.2: Country of birth of Australian population according to the periodisation of immigration policy, time averaged discussed at p. 242

per cent, with Italians, Germans and Greeks comprising 10.5, 4.8 and 4.1 per cent of that respectively. This is the period with the highest Australian-born population, and the lowest proportion of Chinese-born. And as Menzies wrote, “throughout the whole period more immigrants came to us from Britain than from all of the European sources” (Menzies, 1970, p. 213). The post-war era was simultaneously the era where “Immigration policy had achieved a ‘White Australia’!” (Collins, 1988, p. 9), and the era in which it began to unwind.

The mere presence of migrants does not suffice as an explanation for policymakers to adjust. Rather, their activity is more important to stress. It is significant that the large-scale immigration was predicated on recruiting ‘new Australians’ into an industrialising political economy. As stressed by Collins (1988, pp. 42–4), migrant workers including refugees met a large proportion of Australian economy’s booming demand for labour-power, and were central to critical post-war industries including the private and public sector construction, manufacturing, and heavy industries such as steel. The inner shifts in Australian society placed migrants in a place of strength.

Migrants experiences of discrimination at work, the failures of successive ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ policy could only be transmitted into changes in policy by their own activity, including industrial, political, and other forms of agency. For instance, in Lopez’s (2000) generally elite conception of ‘The Origins of Multiculturalism’ (pp. 30–7), it is “ascendant politicians” such as Whitlam who are able to transform the ALP over the 1959–71 period (Lopez, 2000, p. 52). Whitlam’s (1985) own account however stresses the pressure from ALP constituents as a key factor:

The percentage of migrants was much greater in electorates which the ALP held or could win than in the electorates which the Liberals could not lose. I was particularly aware of issues which concerned migrants since there was always a large number in my electorate. (Whitlam, 1985, pp. 495–6)

Stressing multiculturalism’s origins in the elite ‘multiculturalists’ tends to portray the struggle as against the opinions of the popular class. This is a myth confronted by Alexandra Dellios, who concludes that “managerial discourse of social inclusion and cohesion, a feature of the civic values said to lie at the heart of Australian multiculturalism today, has the effect of masking past struggles and grassroots activism” (Dellios, 2025, p. 134). Migrant rights activism therefore “remains opaque or absent in

popular and governmental texts about the history of multiculturalism” (Dellios, 2025, p. 134). Some recent historiography has increasingly tended to locate many of these multicultural struggles as not opposed to the Australian working class but a part of it, stressing the contribution of migrant organisations such as FILEF (*Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigranti e Famiglie*), the Australian Greek Welfare Society, Migrant Workers Conference Committee, Migrant Education Action, and the Migrant Workers Conferences of the 1970s (Dellios, 2024, 2025; Lopez, 2000; Marin, 2016).

The rhetoric of assimilation and later integration did little to support migrants (Markus and Taft, 2015), and as they were brought into working class areas they faced both oppression as workers and in many cases specific discrimination (Collins, 1988). This very oppression however was turned into demands on the government by workers and communities demanding support, which turned into multiculturalism. Dellios (2024, 2025) has outlined the class logic of multicultural activists, who not only “recognised the necessity for inter-ethnic alliance and solidarity” (Dellios, 2024, p. 145) but also expressed their demands in a way that stressed a distinctively working class transformative vision.

As discussed above at section 5.4, the immediate post-war period saw a rapid rush of strikes prior to the defeat of the Coal miners’ strike of 1949, before another escalation from the mid-1960s. The first wave was heavily communist influenced. Due to the path of class struggle in the 1930s and early 1940s, many of the blue-collar industries in the post-WWII landscape had strong communist representation (for better and for worse), including stevedoring, mining, ironworking and builders labouring (Gollan, 1975; Macintyre, 1998/2022). The second and even more significant wave of worker’s strike activity happened alongside the movement against the war in Vietnam and the growth of the New Left.

The struggles against White Australia cannot be separated from these left histories. The communist party was at its strength in the period immediately after the second world war. CPA policy during the war had been to support the Soviet Union and therefore, after 1941, to suppress disruptive struggles for wages in Australia in order not to weaken the war effort. Nonetheless, they had built an organisation with a deep enough layer of activists that this continued. Dorothy Hewett, in her semi-autobiographical novel ‘Bobbin Up’, expresses the local party activists who “understood and loved and suffered and hoped with [people in Redfern], ran the Tenants’ Committee, battled for pensions and baby health centres and playgrounds with a fierce, almost maternal

jealousy" (Hewett, 1959/1985, p. 125), an attitude she later wrote was dismissive of the Party Centre as "out of touch with the realities of life in the Red Belt" (p. xii).



As shown in Figure 6.23, the CPA launched an anti White Australia push at the end of the war, decrying it as the "Monroe doctrine" of Australia (Dixon, 1945, para. 69). This pamphlet presents a thoroughly left nationalist position on immigration, on the one hand decrying its imperial character and the ruling class' conscious use of the policy to build up Australia as "junior partner to British imperialism in the Pacific" (para. 72), the pamphlet on the other accepts the gamut of nationalist rationale for migration policy: simultaneously pursuing a high population policy in order to ward off the Japanese, whilst opposing mass migration especially from "low-wage" countries (para. 16), and advocating a quota system in order to stop the "overwhelming flood of immigrants from Asia or anywhere else" (para. 17).

As discussed above, the party simultaneously launched an industrial and political offensive against the system of Arbitration, feeling that the CPA was on the ascendancy and capitalism was liable to fall. L. J. McPhillips and L. L. Sharkey were gaoled for criticisms of the arbitration court (Ross, 1970, p. 416; Round Table, 1949, p. 379). The strike wave of the mid to late 1940s was heavily dominated by coal workers, with more than two thirds of strike days lost in 1948 taken by coal miners (Ross, 1970).

This was the working class formation that immigrants became a part of, acted as a part of, influenced, and were in turn influenced by. Real tensions existed within, as would become increasingly clear after 1949 (Quinlan, 1979).

Figure 6.23: Critics of White Australia (King, 1945) COURTESY NLA

6.4.2 NATION AND MIGRATION IN THE 1950S

A major anti-communist campaign during the Labor government sought to put down the strike wave. The Murdoch papers published a scandalous set of articles about communist control of unions (Figure 6.24), including alleged ballot-rigging, resulting in a major Victorian royal commission that contributed to the anti-communist wave,

despite the unreliability of the star witness (Deery, 2012). Returned Servicemen's Leagues (RSLs) contributed to the mood through lobbying of the ALP and an "Anti-Communist Month" propaganda campaign in 1949 (Maher, 2007, p. 193). Chifley promised to respond "boots and all" (Round Table, 1949, p. 381), a promise the delivered on: rushing through legislation to ban miners' access to strike funds, which resulted in the arbitration court gaoling miners' leaders, launching a major raid on the CPA's Marx house and ordering 13,000 troops to work coal mines (see Sheridan, 1989, ch. 12). Chifley successfully broke the strike, but in doing so accepted a political terrain (opposition to communists) on which the conservatives could "claim to offer an older, stronger and more consistent brand" (Sheridan, 1989, p. 312).

The 1949 election was a major reshaping of Australian politics, with Robert Menzies' Liberal party in coalition with the Country party displacing Labor for the longest uninterrupted party rule in Commonwealth history. Menzies campaigned against the Labor government over their treatment of the coal strike, promising to implement government secret ballots for unions, to reform the system of conciliation and arbitration, and to outlaw the CPA (Lee, 1994). In 1951, Menzies implemented the Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1951, making breach of arbitral orders punishable as contempt of court, penalties billed by the CPA as the "penal powers" (McPhillips, 1958).

Menzies' had successfully welded together the remnants of the UAP with conscious middle-class base of support. His famous 'Forgotten People' address is a case to throw down the idea of class divisions between an idle rich and labouring poor, extolling the virtues of the middle class (Menzies, 1942). Menzies' spirit of individualism was not opposed to but based on a strong state, as he wrote to his sister in 1938, built on the admiration of the Germans for erecting a "State, with Hitler at its head, into the sort of religion which produces a spiritual exaltation" (cited in Cahill, 2017). During his second Prime Ministership from 1949, Menzies policies, including on housing and education were consciously aimed at cultivating this class basis for Liberal individualist, anti-socialist philosophy that the new party embodied. This involved funding the post-war rebuilding of the universities, and exploiting Labor's Catholic base to shift the bourgeois political parties' long association with protestant sectarianism. Notably, Menzies did not campaign centrally against Labor's immigration policy, ex-



Figure 6.24:
Moscow's men
(Sharpley, 1949)
COURTESY NLA

cept for mild critiques about the particularly brutal application of deportations rather than highlighting individual liberty. Figure 6.25 presents the primary vote shares in federal politics for the entire post-WWII era, showing the significance of the Liberal–Country (later Liberal–National) coalition established from 1944 as the second half of the political duopoly.

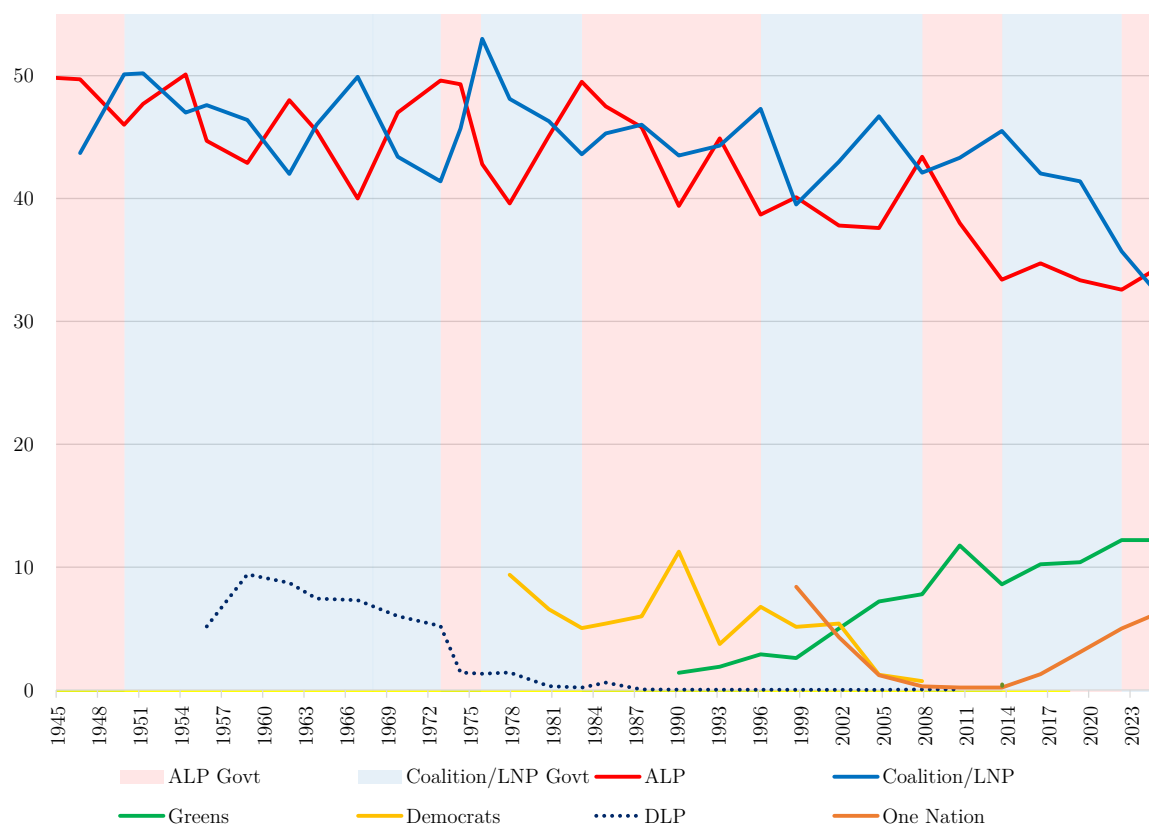


Figure 6.25: Primary votes in federal elections 1945–2025 of selected parties (Barber, 2017; and ABC News). Governing parties are shaded in pale red and blue. The Liberal–National Party Coalition primary vote is a sum of all of the votes within representative parties, including those at the state level, across the period. This figure follows chronologically from Figure 6.13, though the Liberal Country/National Coalition vote share is not comparable to the individual party results represented in that figure.

Just because immigration did not play a key role in the contest between the political duopoly did not mean it was not a significant feature of the era. In fact, the continuities on immigration between Labor and Liberal–Country party were a “major trigger” in the post-WWII production of a distinctive Australian nationality (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 35). The ‘nation building’ ethos of the post-war migration was sold as a conscious program of assimilation. Although Menzies followed the policy of silence on White Australia, he privately noted a number of “violent prejudices”

including his sincere hopes never to have to “alter the White Australia policy” (Peter Howson diary, 28 September 1965, cited in Tiffen, 2015, para. 18).

The era also saw the third and most damaging split in the Australian Labor Party, between the party centre and an Irish Catholic anti-communist section. Murray (1970, p. 3) opens his account of ‘*The Split*’ positioning the ALP as the “victim of a changing nation”. Figure 6.25 also shows the formation of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP, formed out of the state ‘Anti-Communist’ Labor parties), represented by the dotted black line, which helped secure Menzies’ rule from 1949–66.

The contradictory result of Labor’s working class base had been the development of a strong Catholic Irish base, which was increasingly mobilised from 1940 onward. B. A. Santamaria, the figure most famously associated with ‘the Movement’ in this period, explained the Catholic outlook as “one single doctrine, the primacy of the land, and of rural life, and of agriculture in Australia” (Santamaria, 1951, cited in Murray, 1970, p. 110), which combined their *religious, national and civic* mission. As a rural settlement policy, the national vision included high migration, especially of Catholics, with his paper, *News Weekly*, calling for “a million migrants a year” in 1945 (Murray, 1970, p. 108). As for the method to bring about this vision, Santamaria explained:

the unions were the weapon of social change. They could make a revolution. They could also make a Christian social order. (Santamaria, 1951, cited in Murray, 1970, p. 112)

The DLP would become the first elected parliamentary party to openly support non-European immigration (Tavan, 2005, p. 117).

These splits within Labor reflected the diversity of political opinion within the Australian working class, spanning industrial relations, politics, and attitudes to immigration. Within the union movement, attitudes to immigration differed (Quinlan, 1979). Simultaneously, Labor harboured connections with the Communist Party’s increased industrial and political base which had grown sharply in the 1930s and 1940s, especially after the third period policy. After H. V. Evatt’s famous speech denouncing the movement within Labor in 1954, Victorian unions seized control of the central branch of Labor.

Piccini and Smith (2018, p. 77) describe the “equivocal position” of the CPA. The CPA incorporated opposition to migration in a populist politics, consistent with

the “state-oriented and nationalist anti-fascist tradition developed [by the CPA] in World War II” (Fox, 2023, p. 136). They opposed the “flood of migrants” (Tribune, 1949a, p. 4) on economic grounds.³⁹ Citing BWIU leader, the Tribune outlined “the urgency of stopping all migration NOW until Australians and those migrants already here are satisfactorily housed” (Tribune, 1951, p. 3), and calling to “[i]mmediately cease all assisted immigration until Australians are housed” (Tribune, 1949c, p. 5). The *Tribune* simultaneously expressed the constant need for organisation of migrant workers. A typical example that grasps the combination of opposition to migration in the name of the migrants themselves is the following from the Tribune in 1958.

The aim of the Menzies Government in continuing mass migration could only be to build a reserve army of unemployed . . . We must demand that the £115 million spent annually on the migration program should be used to help solve the job and housing problems of those already living here . . . This will show foreign-born workers that our opposition to mass migration is directly in their interests. (Stein, 1958, p. 9)

One of the most popular points of disagreement was over the Displaced Persons Program (DPP), a major post-war refugee intake (Haines, 2025), in which the communist party pushed against ‘Baltic fascists’, as shown in the cartoons in Figure 6.26. This geo-political racism was a function of their relationship with the USSR, which saw them hurl abuse at ‘Japs’ during and after WWII (see Griffiths, 1990), and later to Vietnamese people fleeing Vietnam. Perhaps influenced also by the comparatively generous treatment that right-wing migrants and foreign language press from the state when compared to CPA groups like FILEF (Gilson and Zubrzycki, 1967), the CPA were dominated by the USSR and therefore opposed to political dissident nationalities.

The trouble was not that they were complete fabrications; a number of fascists have been found to have moved to Australia at the time (Aarons, 1990). The CPA policy was wrong in the implication that most Baltic refugees were fascists, when most were not. Treating all migrants as automatic expressions of their national origins is the problematic point. Once in Australia, migrants were pulled into the organs of workers’ lives. Nilsson and Persian (2024) describe the story of one displaced person who formed

³⁹“The country is being flooded with migrants. For every home built five migrants are coming into the country.” (Chiplin, 1949, p. 4). “Migrants by the hundred thousand are to be crowded into our country, which already faces a crisis in housing shortages, overcrowded hospitals, schools and run-down transport systems” (Tribune, 1950, p. 2). See also Worker Correspondent (1950).



Figure 6.26: *Tribune* campaigns against ‘Fascist emigres’ (*Tribune*, 1946a,b, 1949b). COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

a trade union migrants organisation. Wilton and Bosworth (1984) argue that attempts to simplify immigrants into expressions solely of their national origins ignores “the kaleidoscopic complexity of the migrants themselves.” (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 158).

This thesis seeks to integrate this kind of ‘kaleidoscopic’ political complexity within the ongoing class dynamics within Australia, which inevitably admixes with the preordained sets of political, economic, cultural ties that migrants bring with them. Wilton and Bosworth (1984) point to the editor of the Italian language newspaper *La Fiamma*, who shifted from DLP and aligned catholic-aligned conservatism to side with the Whitlam government and establish *Amici del Partito Laborista* (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 157). History is filled with such realignments, and they run in both political directions. Adela Pankhurst of the famous suffragette family moved to Australia, bitterly opposed WWI, was a founding member of the CPA in 1920 and served on its executive, before relatively quickly shifting into anti-communist activity, toured to shout down union pickets as part of the Australian Women’s Guild of Empire, and by 1941 helped found the ‘Australia First’ party including fascists (Hogan, 1990; Pugh, 2001, pp. 367–9, 461–3). As migrants are pulled into the turbulent class dynamics within Australian society, they are no more or less capable of political change than anyone else. Opposing migration based on country of origin is a totalising assumption that has afflicted most sides of politics.

For Menzies, the DLP, and the CPA, immigration policy was a key moment in the projection of national politics. Menzies’ Liberals and the ALP developed a chorus of White Australia sung in *sotto voce*, both quieter and expressing more strongly the underlying geo-politics. The DLP advanced a rural colonising ethic, breaking with a

long pattern of parliamentary politics in demanding a non-discriminatory policy with which to do it. Meanwhile the CPA produced their own ambiguous state-oriented migration politics.

6.4.3 THE RISING '60S

At the beginning of the 1960s, Labor was still dominated by an enthusiastic White Australia anti-Asian prejudice under Arthur Calwell. Keith Dowding was expelled from the ALP in 1962, only to readmitted after Labor removed white Australia from the platform (Whitlam, 1985, pp. 490–1). In 1965, the party platform was changed to reflect, in qualified terms, opposition to White Australia. By the early 1970s, Labor was positioned as the party to end the White Australia policy. Between these two positions in Australia's largest working-class party was a large-scale upsurge in working class activity (Figure 5.11).

Migrants were involved in the working class upsurges throughout the period. The 1964 mine rebellion in Mount Isa brought a “multi racial” workforce in which “many workers who had little or no English” into a militant confrontation with the bosses and the AWU (Cribb, 1983, p. 270; Sykes, 1965; Thomas, 1965), which was eventually victorious.

In another iconic union struggle of the period, Burgmann and Burgmann (1998) describes the Builders Labourers' Federation 1971 struggle for accident pay for builders-labourers, in which the SMH mocked one noisy procession of unionists to MBA offices in Newtown as the “multi-lingual March”, due to the multilingual placards (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998, p. 111). The organisation of this predominantly migrant portion of the working class required addressing various “disadvantages”, as well as interpreters in meetings and multilingual publication (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998, p. 123).

A third example, the 1973 Ford Broadmeadows strike, was another significant moment in the history of Australian multiculturalism, with a series of strikes from the 1960s to 1980s bringing in larger numbers of migrant workers (Bramble, 1993a, pp. 44–5; Tracy, 1989; York, 1996). The most famous strike, in 1973, involved a riot of assembly line workers (Bentley, 1973), described famously by Constance and Quinlan (1988).

Multiculturalism as a social movement took off in this context of the late 1960s (Jakubowicz, 2025). Many of the high points in workers struggles in the lead up to

Whitlam were driven by or involving migrants, with the combination of racism and other challenges faced by migrants leading to explosive consequences. Amongst the most critical moments in this surge was the combined resistance to the Penal Powers and the resistance to the Vietnam war. Vietnam had been identified as the key to the rise of Whitlam by his biographer (Freudenberg, 1977). Moreover there were deep changes in the economy and the composition of class.

But while for workers, multiculturalism was linked with a rising social movement making industrial, political, and anti-imperialist demands, it was for Australia's ruling class a more complex affair. Attempts to build a non-discriminatory form of the White Australia Policy were precisely as contradictory as the phrase suggests. At the heart of White Australia was the encouragement of immigration, and keeping it 'white'. Ideas such as quotas for non-white immigrants were toyed with, but rejected because in order to maintain a homogeneous population, any quotas set for particular nationalities would need to be so small that they would be scarcely less offensive than an outright ban (Tavan, 2005, p. 118). Whether or not such arguments were pure opportunism to defend the White Australia policy, there is some force of logic to the argument that slight dilution of discrimination does very little. The crux of the matter was that in order to address the discriminatory nature of the policy, Australia's policy of open borders with Britain would need to be brought into line with other countries. This was recognised by Whitlam in 1966: the "discrimination exists in the fact that we actively promote immigration at the same time as we restrict it" (Whitlam, 1985, p. 493).

While the end of WWII "inaugurated the beginning of the end of White Australia and the shift towards a genuinely multicultural society" (Balint and Simic, 2018, p. 2) in most accounts, the re-regulation and construction of the modern migration regime, particularly the state policy framework began after Whitlam put a line under the White Australia Policy. In 1971, Whitlam launched the ALP immigration policy for the 1972 election in Perth, proclaiming three planks: (1) removing population growth as a primary national objective; (2) that immigration needs should be "related to" Australia's capacity to provide housing, jobs, education and social services; and (3) "that there must be no discrimination on grounds of race or colour or nationality" (Whitlam, 1985, p. 498). In 1973, The Whitlam government broke with White Australia, and made the first stumbles towards a new regime of multiculturalism.

6.5 THE ERA OF MULTICULTURALISM

The emergence of multiculturalism represents the most dramatic ideological turn in Australian nationalism in its history. Modern Australia purports to be “the most successful multicultural society in the world” (Australian Government, 2017), combining “freedom of thought, speech, religion, enterprise and association” with “counter-terrorism, strong borders and strong national security” (pp. 7–11). This familiar reenactment of Australia as a successful capitalist, multicultural country is simultaneously representative of a dramatic ideological shift and the active reproduction of racism that underscores Australian nationalism.

Even at the most purely ideological level, the adoption of multiculturalism by the ruling class has been sputtering and uncertain. The management of multiculturalism has shifted (Curran, 2002, 2004; Curran and Ward, 2010). It has seen recurrent challenges from the political right wing, from within the LNP and later the One Nation Party. Through the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the dominance of multiculturalism was challenged, and it continued to be spoken with caution and many pauses.

Furthermore, even insofar the ruling class has effectively embraced multiculturalism as a mode of nationalism, this embrace has been a thin veneer over a richly racist society, where many migrants continue to face ongoing structural racism and exclusion from various parts of social life, including for temporary migrants the capacity to participate in Australian democratic life in the form of elections. Ghassan Hage et al. (2023), perhaps the most significant left critic of multiculturalism, highlights this issue.⁴⁰ He argues that although the particular racism of white Australia has dissipated, multiculturalism acts to reproduce a “white nation”. Similarly, Wolfe (2001) has argued that multiculturalism represents to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people an “assimilationist trivialisation” of their unique status as First Nations peoples (Wolfe, 2000, p. 140; see also Dellios, 2025, p. 134). Two moments of incorporation: multiculturalism and “our Aboriginal heritage” together attempt to weld marginalised groups interests to Australian nationalism.

Yet the binding of multiculturalism into the formation of Australian nationalism cannot be dismissed as purely cynical bourgeois ideology, any more than the awarding of a higher rate of pay plays a role in the production of bourgeois hegemony. Neither

⁴⁰Hage et al.’s (2023) ‘The Racial Politics of Australian Multiculturalism’ republishes ‘White Nation’ (Hage, 1998/2000) and ‘Against Paranoid Nationalism’ (Hage, 2003).

popular multicultural struggle nor the struggle for higher rates of pay is in and of itself an anti-capitalist struggle. Marx's critique of trade unions addresses this contradiction, their being "centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital" that are constrained to "a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it" (change the system itself, rather than reform it) (Marx, 1898/1935, p. 62). Insofar then as it is a concession to the multi-cultural working class in Australia, multiculturalism must be conceptualised in the same sense.

Multiculturalism expresses a concession to immigrant and workers' movements demands of incorporation, even as it is sutured by Australia's ruling class into Australian nationalism. This dynamic itself is indicative of the contradictory nature of nationalism as an elite project that requires mass support. Contemporary scholarship has sought to disaggregate the "multiple meanings" of multiculturalism (Kundnani, 2012, p. 156), "a slippery and fluid term" that has "accrued a vast range of associations and accents through decades of political, contextual and linguistic translation" (Lentin and Titley, 2011, p. 2).

It is these inherent tensions that result in contradictory experiences of multiculturalism as, on the one hand a set of concessions to movements struggling against racism, whilst on the other a mode of incorporation of distinct identities and peoples into a 'cohesive' national frame. This leads to a deep tension and ambivalence in official multiculturalism, where its detractors position it as representing a set of cultural, social or political entitlements of non-white people within a predominantly white society, while ruling class defenders seek to defuse any of its more radical demands.

6.5.1 NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE "FAMILY OF THE NATION"

The Australian state's first official endorsement of multiculturalism was on 11 August 1973, in a speech entitled 'A multi-cultural society for the future, delivered by immigration minister Al Grassby (1973) to a Cairnmillar Institute symposium in Melbourne. Grassby was described by Lopez (2000) as simultaneously "passionately opposed to the Anglo-conformism of hard-line assimilation ... vehemently anti-racist" and that he "regarded national unity as a supreme value" (Lopez, 2000, p. 201). Grassby set out a new national objective, attempting to bring together different 'accented' Australianisms, arguing that the "flowering of a truly national spirit in Australia is not an optional extra, but a major objective to be sought in the next few decades" (Grassby,

1973, p. 12). Grassby's preferred slogan was not multiculturalism but the "family of the nation", a phrase that exhibits not only the centrality of nationalism to his thinking but an explicit rejection of the socially exclusionary politics of White Australia:

there should not be discrimination between different groups of settlers seeking to join the family of the nation. (11/04/1973, Hansard, HoR)

That this momentous occasion in Australia's history received no major press coverage is a testament to just how deeply rooted White Australia was to Australian nationalism. The speech was drafted by a lower departmental secretary Jim Houston, and who was swiftly reshuffled from speech writing duties afterwards (Lopez, 2000, pp. 242–51).⁴¹ The actual text of the speech did not contain a single reference to multiculturalism, and dismissed the academic differences between 'pluralism', 'integration', 'assimilation' and 'homogeneous' as "probably meaningless" (Grassby, 1973, p. 5) No press releases or parliamentary notice for the major change was given. Whitlam's elected prerogative was to abolish White Australia, but not to build a multicultural nation.

In *Family Values*, Melinda Cooper (2017) outlines the connections between neo-liberalism and the family. She argues that a Polanyian interpretation of capitalism as destroying the bonds of social solidarity (compare section 5.3) fails to conceptualise conservative reaction as internal to the process of capitalism (Cooper, 2017, pp. 13–24). Such a Polanyian analysis tends to: (1) conceptualise capitalism as the extension of the free market; and (2) produce a political nostalgia that blurs the distinctions between social democratic and hard right responses to capitalist development. Cooper's suggestive reading of Marx asks:⁴²

capital transgresses all established forms of reproduction . . . is it not also compelled to reassert the reproductive institutions of race, family, and nation as a way of ensuring the unequal distribution of wealth and income across time? (Cooper, 2017, p. 16)

Cooper therefore incorporates the reactionary social politics of the family that occur under neo-liberalism as an internally related tendency to those modes of economic

⁴¹See (Houston, 2022; Jakubowicz, 2025; Moran, 2017, pp. 28–31)

⁴²"Marx's thinking must be radicalized" (Cooper, 2017, p. 17).

management. Extending Cooper's line of reasoning, if the Harvester decision systematised and articulated a racial and gendered order of social reproduction, based on a white heterosexual family unit, then no less does the new neo-liberal capitalist order that emerges at the end of the twentieth century rely on an underlying set of racial and gendered relations (Cooper, 2017, p. 24). We should conceptualise the economic crisis of the 1970s and the social conservative re-imposition of nationalism and anti-immigrant racism as coimbricated. Another apposite moment in Cooper's analysis is her suggestion that resistance can be 'progressive' when considered as a part of capitalist totality, and not merely reactive (Cooper, 2017, p. 14).

Even in 1973, the economic crisis that produced the period of neo-liberalism was beginning to unfold. After the October 1973 oil crisis, the Whitlam government held an unsuccessful referendum on government control on prices and wages in December, successfully secured the agreement of the ACTU for wage restraint in 1974 (Whitlam, 1985, pp. 204–5), and then more dramatically turned to the right following the February 1975 federal ALP conference in Terrigal, with a cost cutting budget under new treasurer Bill Hayden (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011, p. 96). For Humphrys, these years mark the start of the "proto-neoliberal stage" (Humphrys, 2019, p. 81, see pp. 81–8).

Building on Cooper's analysis, there is an inner connection behind this chronological coincidence. The same dynamic of expanded capital accumulation allowed for Australia's mass-migration program on the basis of expanded need for labour-power, simultaneously undercut the rate of profit. This led on the one hand to the organisation of an increasingly multicultural working class against racist state practice and on the other to the crisis that ended the long-boom.

The ruling class assault on Whitlam in 1975 which saw him deposed by the Governor-General saw thousands of workers mobilised and striking to defend him from attack. Moreover, for O'Lincoln (1993), Malcolm Fraser was unable to carry out any of the key reforms due to an ongoing militancy that continued through the 1970s, including major strikes to defend Medibank, and during the key Victorian State Electricity Commission dispute, as well as for land rights, abortion rights, the environment, and against Queensland's Bjelke-Petersen. Fraser continued the multicultural strategy established under Whitlam, having sensed its necessity in the internationalised economic era for Australia, which he managed to "reconcile" with conservative politics (O'Lincoln, 1993, p. 172). Fraser kept Grassby in the position of commissioner for community relations for seven years (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 34), and recalled

the creation of multicultural Australia as one of his government's key achievements (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 35).

Fraser's multiculturalism broke from its working class content. The Galbally (1978) report, reconfirmed by Malcolm Fraser in 1981, was criticised for its "culturalist" content which conflicted with the earlier "ethnic rights movement of the early 1970s" (Jupp, 2007, p. 103; Foster and Stockley, 1988, pp. 2–4; a typology Lopez, 2000 develops into four forms of multiculturalism). The failure to engage with substantive working class migrant concerns including workplace discrimination and unemployment was furthered by actively conservative policy including deportations under ministerial discretion (O'Lincoln, 1993, pp. 172–4).

Despite their advocacy of economic rationalism in the 1980s and 1990s, the Hawke and Keating governments did not advance the same social conservatism. The principles laid out in the Prices and Incomes Accord were broad and social democratic, containing a brief and general statement on migration, based on the acceptance of multiculturalism, the "importance" of population and immigration policy, the need for "careful assessment of the numbers" in order to balance "economic, social and humanitarian factors", and noting that immigration is not a substitute for labour market planning (ALP and ACTU, 1983, p. 23). The agreed priorities were family reunion and refugees, with a "review" of the skilled intake, working holiday visas, and employer nomination (ALP and ACTU, 1983, p. 23). As discussed above at page 205, this emphasis in the permanent program was short lived. The commitment to multiculturalism was further eroded by the agenda of economic rationalism which required a reduction in social spending alongside selection based on the 'skills' needed by capitalists rather than social needs (Foster and Stockley, 1988).

Their support for multiculturalism was however under-girded by recourse to the new Australian nationalism based on culture and values rather than pure 'homogeneity'. While the accords embodied a new era of national unity between the labour movement and the state, a slew of migrant sociology has upheld and debated the best forms of state management of migrants aimed at their integration, and policy choices aiming to bring immigrants in unproblematically and contradictorily (FitzGerald, 1988; Galbally, 1978). In 1984, Wilton and Bosworth (1984) could write "multiculturalism began to seem an attractive mechanism by which unity could be preserved, even if only through diversity" (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 36). In Moran's (2017) history, multiculturalism rose and was challenged. Over time, it has become less dominant,

though again nothing has risen capable of displacing it.

It was in the Liberal Party that the unity of social conservatism and neo-liberalism was forged most strongly. John Howard played an important role in advancing free market economics within the Liberal Party, combining “free market economics” with “traditional social values centred upon the primacy of the family” (Kelly, 2008, pp. 228–9). The 1980s had seen an anti-Asian political surge including most prominently Geoffrey Blainey (1984 see Jupp, 2007, ch. 6 for a more comprehensive assessment). The FitzGerald (1988) report had attacked Labor government’s family reunion focus. As Liberal Leader, John Howard, spurred on by this report, advanced a new policy.

The LNP policy direction under the title of ‘One Australia’ was based on a reassertion of social conservatism. It attacked Labor for creating “divisions” and making “apologies for the past, ” arguing that policies favouring Unions (industrial relations), Aboriginal people (treaty), and immigrants (multiculturalism) was undercutting Australian nationalism: “We want a united Australian nation proud of its distinctive identity and history” (Canberra Times, 1988, p. 10). On immigration, the policy combined a support for high levels of migration, attacks on “unfair or favoured protection and privileges”, alongside an assertion of the government’s:

right to determine both the overall and the specific content of our migrant intake . . . We believe that Australia’s migrant intake should be significantly increased, consistent with our economic needs, social cohesiveness and harmony within the Australian community. (Canberra Times, 1988, p. 10)

Howard’s popular translation of this policy brought out more strongly the racial subtext: “if it is in the eyes of some in the community, [Asian immigration is] too great, it would be in our immediate term interest and supportive of social cohesion if it were slowed down a little, so that the capacity of the community to absorb was greater” (Howard, 1988, in Kelly, 2008, p. 423). Howard’s strident racialism drew widespread criticism including from Hawke. Bradley and Minns (2015) argue that this political emphasis was defeated by a ruling class push—this ideology was too far from the centre, and risked betraying social cohesion, and the centrality of the migration intake.

The need for capitalism to reassert racism does not follow a foreordained recipe, but rather is the contingent product of ruling class deliberation. Howard’s experiments

eloquating a reactive social conservatism in the 1980s gives us an image of this process as it occurs in reality. The other discussant is the Labor government's attempt to build a progressive economic rationalism.

From Multiculturalism to Social Cohesion

Social cohesion had been a key component of the Fraser government's immigration policy and had been re-affirmed in the 1984 shadow immigration policy (Kelly, 2008, pp. 132–3; Committee of Review on Migrant Assessment, 1981; Jupp, 2007, p. 145). This phrase occurs more and more from the 1980s to the 2000s. The Scanlon foundation survey, *Mapping Social Cohesion*, was established at the end of the Howard years (Kamp, 2024, p. 34). The image of 'social cohesion' being under attack is a mutated form of homogeneity. It is typically seen as a "desirable feature" of societies, as well as "a feature that is currently deteriorating" (Schiefer and Noll, 2017, pp. 579–80). In this review, Schiefer and Noll (2017) provides a dimensional definition of social cohesion as "social relations, identification, and orientation towards the common good" (Schiefer and Noll, 2017, p. 592).

Jupp (2018) describes the evolution of social cohesion as "the continued social engineering of the origins, size and character of the Australian population and the responses forced upon governments by changing external circumstances" (Jupp, 2018, p. xiv). His history spans different attempts to bring about social harmony in Australia against the 'problems' of immigrants, Aboriginal people, fascists, and communists, all dealt with to different degrees and treated by the state with varying depth.

In a brilliant discussion of an automotive manufacturing plant in Ontario, Bernard (1999a) describes a dialectical interpretation of social cohesion that simultaneously brings to the surface "*les périls du néo-libéralisme*" (in this case, the spectre of the closure of a factory) alongside the forging of an imagined unity by managers seeking to recruit workers to the project of collaboration, trust, and productivity that would keep their factory open (Bernard, 1999a, p. 48). Although failing to reveal the repressive social dynamics that this threat entailed—the lowering of wages and conditions of these workers—social cohesion was capable of producing a felt unity. This is not merely a matter of appearances ("*faux-semblants*", Bernard, 1999a, p. 48.) but fundamental to the management of bourgeois construction of society in which capitalist individualism threatens to produce polarisation and dislocation. Social cohesion is

necessary to and simultaneously impossible within “*le dynamisme de sa totalité et de ses contradictions*” (Bernard, 1999a, p. 57). At a conceptual level, social cohesion is a “*quasi-concept*” which bridges this dialectical relation, but requires to be consciously deconstructed to comprehend these rich meanings (Bernard, 1999a, p. 55).⁴³ Later works have attempted to address the “vagueness” of the concept (Chan, To, and Chan, 2006, p. 274). But the heart of Bernard’s critique is precisely that the phrase conjures up a dialectical relationship which needs to be treated ambivalently, or really dialectically, in order to be understood. This conceptual framing usefully outlines the complex dynamic that describes contemporary cohesion, simultaneously seeking to produce a particular form of social harmony, whilst disfiguring real inequalities. Although the literature has almost universally positioned social cohesion as a social good, Bernard’s account suggests that social cohesion serves a particular set of class interests and a particular structure of society.

Although multiculturalism continues as an official framework, it has become less of a popular focus. As a proxy for changing public perceptions of social interest in these ideas, Figure 6.27 presents the Relative Search Interest (RSI) in the search terms “multiculturalism” and “social cohesion”, using Google Trends data from 2004 to 2025, trend data produced using the X13-ARIMA-SEATS package in R. This data shows the relative search volumes using Google searches, with the number 100 representing the maximum interest across the time period, searches for multiculturalism in Australia in August 2004. Recent research has strongly suggested more care be taken in presenting Google Trends data in the social sciences (Hözl, Keusch, and Sajons, 2025; Mellon, 2013), and the explanation of my methodology is included in section A.3.

As shown, public interest in multiculturalism declined rapidly through the 2000s and then continued a slower downward trajectory. Through the 2000s, the war on terror shifted public conceptions, and in particular heightened anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment. Public interest in “social cohesion” on the other hand has remained fairly stagnant, registering in the 2010s and then gradually increasing through the 2020s until finally it was searched more frequently than multiculturalism during the Gaza genocide. The context of the genocide in Gaza again continues to shift public conception of social integration of Arabs and Muslims.

The border played a critical role in this dynamic of securitisation of multicultur-

⁴³An English translation by the Department of Canadian Heritage omits this excellent title ‘*La cohésion sociale : critique dialectique d’un quasi-concept*’ (Bernard, 1999b).

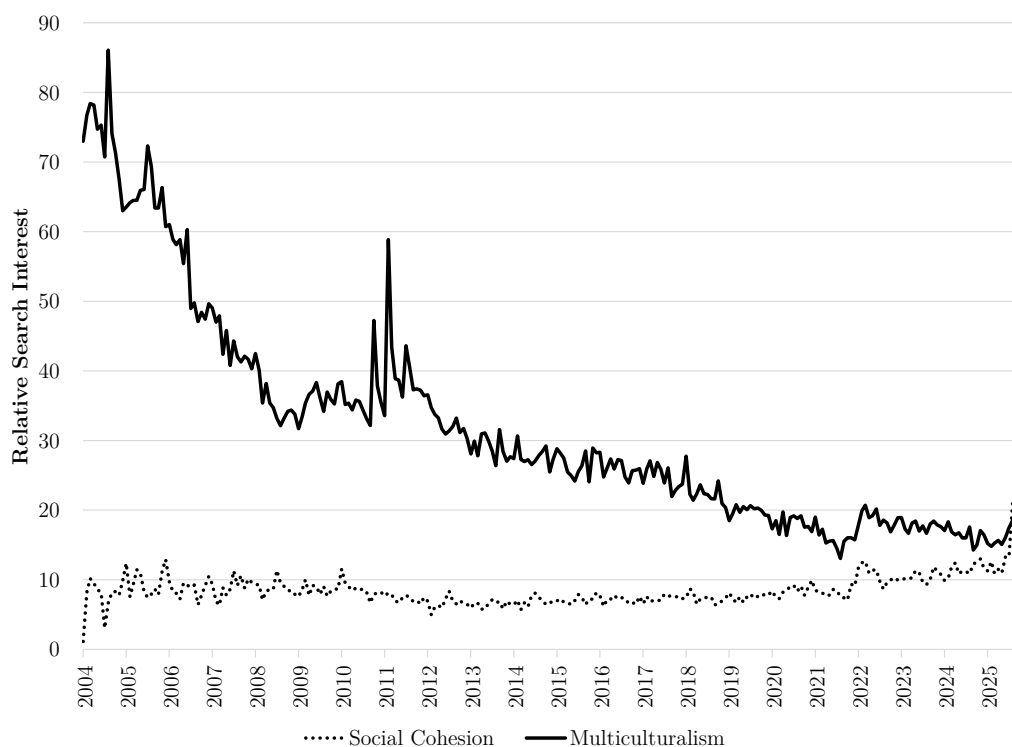


Figure 6.27: RSI for “multiculturalism” and “social cohesion”, deseasonalised, from 2004–25 in Australia, using Google Trends (2025) data.

alism. Over the years we saw an aggressive *securitisation* of multiculturalism (Dellal, Nyuon, and Castley, 2024), which will be explored further in the next section. The ideology of immigration is internally related with capitalism: the commonsense ideology of immigrants being to blame continues, due to the mystification of the real dynamics of capital competition, meaning that demographic or human shifts are seen as the cause—an external cause for capitalism’s woes. If nationalism is to be understood as the contradictory process of seeking to erase the contradictory and tumultuous relation between capital and labour, this attunes our eyes to look for the reinscription of that same hard border line. That harsh border line of nationalism has remained. New geopolitical and world economic shifts necessitated a transformation in the mode of othering the rest of the globe. It is no accident this occurred under Malcolm Fraser.

Behind these discursive and rhetorical difference lay a significant transformation in the border that accompanied the rise of neo-liberalism and multi-structuralism. The Fraser, Hawke, Keating, and Howard governments adopted increasing regimes of refugee cruelty alongside the imposition of neo-liberal forms of economic management. As outlined by Cooper (2017), the dynamics of economic rationalism on the one hand and social conservatism on borders and racism on the other, were not distinct and

separate but combined, and it is social cohesion more than multiculturalism that captures the state's appropriation of White Australia homogeneity in an increasingly securitised migration regime.

6.5.2 THE GREAT WALLS ARE RE-BUILT

The very years in which the 'great white walls' (Price, 1974) were torn down were those in which 'multicultural Australia' built its own brutal walls. The White Australia Policy was undeniably brutal. In reproducing a racial imperial hierarchy, non-white people were imprisoned, torn from their local communities and families, deprived of livelihoods, along with the "arrest and general harassment of the Chinese community" (Williams, 2021). Yet, from the 1970s onward, walls were built to even more extreme and brutal heights of concrete exclusion.

The legal genealogy of the 'prohibited immigrant' provides a window into the transformation in the social relation of the border as it relates to the constructions of Australian nationalism. The criminalisation of migrants via the dictation test has been replaced by a brutal system of refugee criminalisation. The education (or dictation) test which evolved through the federation years produced the criminal classification of the "prohibited immigrant", making it a crime punishable by deportation, fine, or prison to fail to dictate 50 or more words in a European language of the state's choice (Williams, 2021, p. 3, 45–50, 113–9; Crock and Berg, 2015, pp. 27–8). This evolved to "prohibited non-citizen" in 1983 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1983), "illegal entrant" in 1989 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1958), and "unlawful non-citizen" from 1994 through to today (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994; Crock and Berg, 2015, p. 438). Each functioned as an exclusionary metric at the nexus of criminalisation and migration, in what has been termed 'crimmigration' (Vogl, 2019).

These legal transformations trace significant shifts in the architecture through which Australia pioneered the externalisation of refugee politics and the militarisation of borders (Freedman, 2024). Subsection 2.2.4 outlined three 'waves' of refugee cruelty that correspond to Betts's (2001) account of "waves" of "boatpeople". Figure 6.28 furthermore represents an extension of the data used by Betts (2001), based on data collected by Phillips (2017). Against the waves of people arriving by boat represented in the figure can be mapped: (1) the Fraser government's response to the Vietnamese people arriving by boat between 1976 and 1981, establishing a foundation

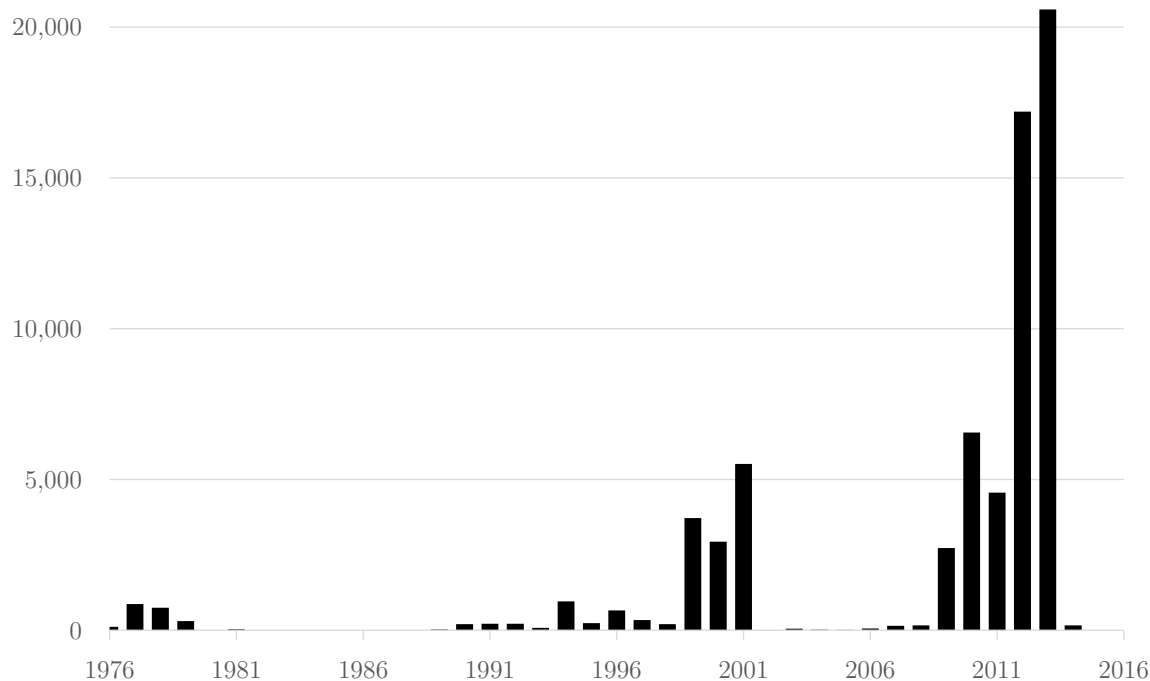


Figure 6.28: Persons arriving by boat per annum, 1976–2016, calendar year, excluding crew after 1989 (Phillips, 2017).

of offshore and regional processing which would haunt later generation; (2) the establishment of mandatory administrative onshore detention in response to Cambodians arriving by boat between November 1989 to January 1994 by the Hawke/Keating governments; and (3) the Howard government's response to Hazara refugees arriving on the MV Tampa in 2001, then the largest spike in arrivals of people by boat, which involved establishing offshore processing on Nauru and boat turnbacks.

Two points are immediately obvious about this figure, and are well established in the literature. The first is that these earlier waves were eclipsed by the later wave of 2009–13, where the politics of refugees were again brought to life vividly. The second remarkable point is, as is well known, despite their political prominence boat arrivals have never comprised a significant part of the total migration intake. To supplement this then, Figure 6.29 divides the numbers of people arriving by boat (from Figure 6.28) as a proportion of net overseas migration (section A.1). This proportion suggests of course a counterfactual situation, as refugees arriving by boat have not typically been allowed to stay in Australia as a component of the migrant intake, facing rather a cruel array of exclusionary devices. It serves rather simply to outline that boat arrivals have only in one short period, in 2012 and 2013, risen above five per cent of net overseas

migration.

Concision prevents a fuller account of these significant transformations, which are well documented elsewhere especially in the period after the 1990s (Brennan, 2007; Ghezelbash, 2018; Higgins, 2017). However, picking up the account of subsection 2.2.4 from the year 2001 suffices to show how the last 25 years refugees have become a significant feature of Australian politics in general and immigration in particular, indicating the twin tracks of this chapter: the centrality of immigration to nationalism, and the centrality of opposition to Australia's migration regime to opposing nationalism.



Figure 6.29: Persons arriving by boat per annum, proportion of net overseas migration

Howard

More than anyone else, Liberal Prime Minister John Howard expressed the binding together of openly bourgeois economic management with social conservatism. By 1995, Howard had reneged on the firmer and more overt anti-Asian racism of the 1980s, which involved calling for a reduced immigration intake. He would dis-endorse Pauline Hanson from the party in 1996 for her refusal to withdraw comments about Aboriginal people. Despite these moves, Howard continued to advocate for a distinctive Australian nationalism based on the partial rejection of multiculturalism, based on the “integration of people into the Australian family” (cited in Tate, 2009). Howard’s promise to “do everything in my power to preserve the social fabric of this nation” represented his deep commitment to social conservatism (Kelly, 2009, p. 285). Howard’s politics of the ‘nation’ were evoked alongside an agenda of pro-capitalist industrial relations reforms and the significant attacks on the Maritime Union of Australia in 1998, though it required large increases in social spending to reaffirm the nuclear family unit.

Howard’s nationalism was built upon a conservative politics of the family and a suspicion of those coming from outside with purportedly different ‘values’, but from 1999 imperialism was increasingly incorporated into his politics. It is the Australian

invasion of East Timor, behind the United Nations banner of International Force East Timor (on Australian imperialism and East Timor, see Pietsch, 2010), that transformed Howard from a “novice” to a “national security leader” (Kelly, 2009, p. 482). As has been widely acknowledged, the 2001 election campaign formed a critical moment entrenching Australia’s tradition of harsh anti-refugee traditions, both in policy and in electoral contestation. Howard successfully wrapped immigration, border security, and nationalism into an effective politics. In August, the arrival of Hazara refugees rescued by the MV Tampa had been turned into a major diplomatic incident—a moment described by the generally sober James Jupp as “conservative, assimilationist, reactionary and nationalistic” (Jupp, 2007, p. 135). Then in October, two days into the election campaign, Howard ministers Peter Reith and Philip Ruddock falsely claimed refugees arriving by boat were throwing their children overboard in order to win sympathetic rescue by the Australian navy. The Howard era saw surges in anti-Muslim racism (Cheikh Husain, 2021, pp. 223–4).

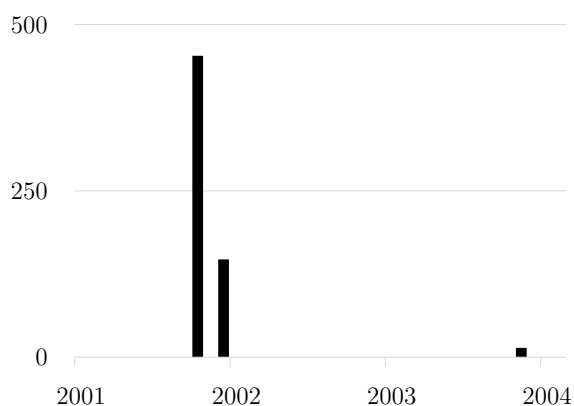


Figure 6.30: Howard government ‘turnbacks’ of refugees arriving by boat per month, 2001–04 (Phillips, 2015, p. 5).

Slattery argues that by harshly reasserting an Australian national identity against refugees, the Children Overboard incident expressed wider dynamics in the early 2000s: imperialist dynamics in the Middle East, global economic uncertainty and the politics of migration (Slattery, 2003, p. 93). A border security narrative enlivened racial fears as a strong nationalist shift. The context of the attacks on the world trade centre later that year supercharged an imperialist sentiment in the West. As well as the opening of a detention facility in the former colony of

Nauru, other key policies of concrete exclusion embarked upon by Howard include the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) proposed by Hanson and innovated by Howard from 1999 (Mansouri and Leach, 2009), and the policy of ‘boat turnbacks’. Despite the tiny number of people arriving by boat, this was a dramatic rendering of borders seemingly designed more for domestic purposes (Brennan, 2007). Kooy, Magee, and Robertson (2021) argue that discussions of “boat people”, the objectifying phrase

used in mainstream Australian politics, constitutes a form of “discursive bordering” that reinforces national identity (p. 22), but the framework of this chapter suggests an extension of this argument to a deeper material construction of the ideology of nationalism.

Two minor parties rose to prominence in the Howard era. Following the expulsion of Pauline Hanson from the Liberals and her victory in a safe Labor seat in 1996, Pauline Hanson founded the One Nation party. As well as the title ‘One Nation’ resembling Howard’s ‘One Australia’ policy platform, the politics of “immigration, population and social cohesion” also built on the political groundwork Howard had established, (One Nation, 1998). Hanson was harangued by large ‘Unite against Racism’ rallies and her vote fell rapidly from 1998 (for a variety of reasons, McSwiney, 2023) only to rise again in the second half of the 2010s on the back of anti-immigrant discontent with mainstream politics, particularly from the far right (McSwiney, 2017). The other was another significant working class minor party, the Australian Green party, the most significant minor electoral party since Lang Labor. The Greens grew between the 1999 election and the 2011 election. The Greens are a break in the Labor’s working class base on social issues, reflecting the changed nature of class in this time. The primary vote is shown in Figure 6.25.

To explain the rise of the Green party, requires turning to the political dynamism within the Australian political economy, and the fact that the politics of nationalism are not total and complete. These potent politics of nation, imperialism, and migration were not simply electoral superpowers. For one, this chapter situates these dynamics within longstanding features of Australia’s political economy of migration. But more importantly, these politics were contested. Through the 2000s, Howard faced real resistance on three key fronts. Firstly, a major transnational protest movement contested the war in Iraq (Gillan and Pickerill, 2008). Secondly, the trade union ‘Your Rights at Work’ campaign against Howard’s proposed industrial relations legislation, WorkChoices (Muir, 2010; Muir and Peetz, 2010). Third were the struggles against against refugee imprisonment, which included on the one hand a stream of riots and demonstrations by refugees within immigration detention (Browning, 2007; Fiske, 2014), including in particular the dramatic break out of around 50 refugees from the Woomera detention facility in the South Australia desert in to the community (Grewcock, 2010), and a movement encompassing Australian civil society and

unions.⁴⁴

Stopping the Boats, Again

Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's victory against Howard was a faint echo of Whitlam in 1972: a moderate from the right-wing of the party who aspired to 'modernise' Labor by distancing it from trade union movement, and who expressed a socially progressive popular current of opinion. Social movements and the struggles of refugees in immigration centres like Woomera had turned Howard's refugee politics into a liability, such that the Rudd government closed down the Nauru detention centre, resettled the refugees remaining there and ended TPVs upon its election (Grewcock, 2009, pp. 278–80).

Also like Whitlam, Rudd administered a major capitalist crisis, known in Australia as the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007–9 (Parker, 2013), resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate from a low of 4.2 per cent in 2007/08 (Figure 6.18). This "crisis of global capitalism" was across the world "morphed into a bordered crisis of national scale" (Carastathis and Tsilimpounidi, 2020, p. 1), an effect in Australia felt most strongly in refugee policy, 'social cohesion', and Islamophobia. Borders played a role in the reassertion of nationalism in the Rudd-Gillard era in two key ways. Firstly, the Labor governments embarked upon the ongoing militarisation of refugee policy, reversing their earlier reforms, including building a new detention centre in Christmas Island and attempting to set up regional processing centres in Malaysia and East Timor (Huynh, 2023, p. 8-9). In response to the Houston (2012) Report, Prime Minister Julia Gillard re-opened the detention centres in Australia's former colonies: Nauru and PNG. Australia was a moment within the securitisation of migration generally (Bibeau et al., 2025, cited in; Humphrey, 2013).

Secondly, the Gillard linked economic anxiety to population policy. In the 2010 election campaign, in response to a firmer conservative opposition, Gillard proposed adapting to a purportedly more conservative working class base (Johnson, 2012), publicly rejecting "the idea that Australia should hurtle down the track towards a big population" (Gillard, 2010, para. 9). After some ambiguity and unsurety under the Labor governments, however, multiculturalism was re-affirmed in February 2011, al-

⁴⁴There are limited systemic analyses of the grassroots resistance to the Howard government's refugee policy, including Refugee Action Committee/Coalition/Collectives, Rural Australians for Refugees, Labor for Refugees, Unions for Refugees, inter alia.

beit with a focus shifted from “‘celebrating’ cultural pluralism to the instrumental approach of ‘managing’ it” (Tavan, 2012b, p. 559).

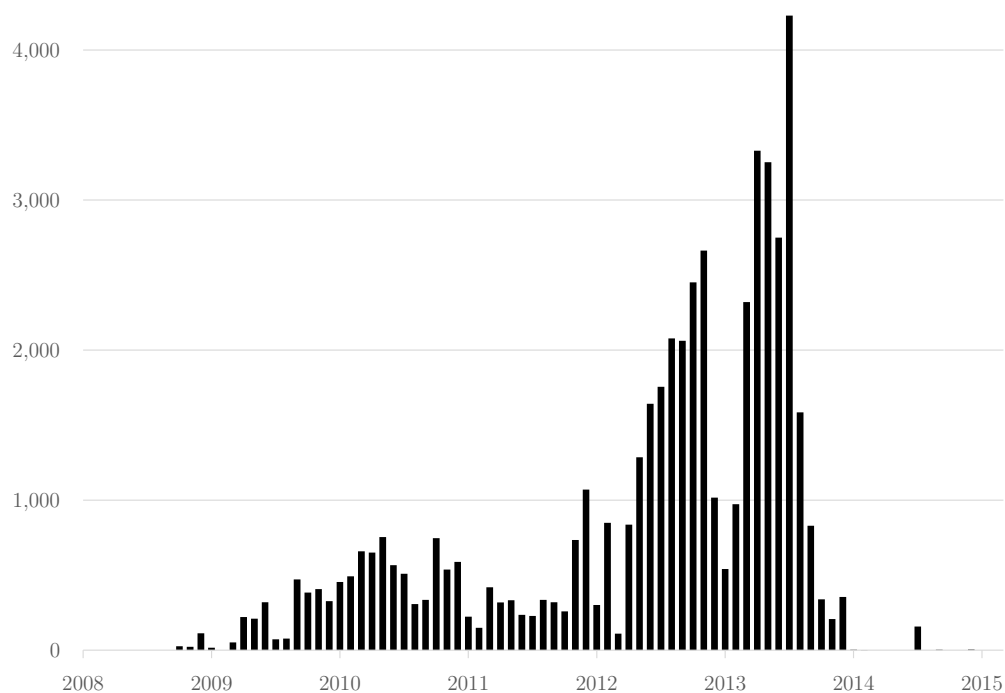


Figure 6.31: Persons arriving by boat, monthly 2008–15 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015, pp. 174–6)

Another significant ‘wave’ of refugee arrivals between 2008 and 2014 is shown in Figure 6.31. The arrivals of ‘boats’ again brought to life in Australia imperialist dynamics, the majority being from Afghanistan (Houston, 2012, p. 25). In an attempt to see off criticism, Rudd made the promise that nobody who arrived in Australia after 19 July 2013 would be allowed to stay in Australia, resulting in a large spike in arrivals that month Gleeson (2016, p. 102).⁴⁵ This set the stage for the reboot of Australia’s brutal refugee policy. By ceding ground to the Liberals, Rudd opened himself up to further attacks on refugee policy, where the spike of 4,230 people arriving in July 2013 was used to justify scaremongering about arrivals of 50,000 refugees in what was widely called the ‘stop the boats’ election (Huynh, 2023, pp. 6–9). The Labor government’s innovation of focusing its political attacks on people smugglers was no match (Cameron, 2013).

In the Liberal governments that followed from 2013–22, securitised refugee policy was taken to new heights of absurdity, with reporting about refugees consigned to the secrecy of ‘on water matters’ (Dickson, 2018). To keep boat numbers down, the

⁴⁵A day that coincided with significant protests in Nauru (Gleeson, 2016, pp. 93–103).

Coalition embarked upon a regime of turnbacks that eclipsed that of Howard in 2001–03, shown in Figure 6.32. The turnback of refugees seeking asylum has been utile and cruel innovation. In the 2022 election, a campaigning text proclaimed “BREAKING - Aust Border Force has intercepted an illegal boat trying to reach Aus. Keep our borders secure today by voting Liberal today” (Karp, 2022). It is hard to take with credulity the claim made that year by Scott Morrison that “strong borders are fundamental to the Australian way of life” (Foley and Dib, 2022).

It is tempting to dismiss these as crass electoral ploys, but they are founded on the themes of nationalism outlined in this chapter. McKinnon argues that to “see contemporary practices of incarceration and detention of asylum seekers as exceptional removes them from the historical and contemporary context of global systems of imperialism and racial capital, which have made people refugees and asylum seekers and forced people to flee their homes” (McKinnon, 2020, p. 691). For Banerjee and Lingen (2025), the refugee is the obverse to the citizen, produced in these years. In Australia, the production of Australian citizenship came alongside the regime of Displaced Persons (Haines, 2025; Markus, 1984b; Stats, 2014a) after WWII, which was transformed further in the neo-liberal period. “Building the nation” continues to be central to the departmental treatments of immigration (DHA, 2025a). In a recent review of multiculturalism, launched 50 years after the Grassby speech, the authors concluded:

strategic policy direction to realise the social and economic benefits of multiculturalism for Australia has been consistently overshadowed by a singular security focus, mainly on border security, foreign interference, and countering violent extremism. (Dellal, Nyuon, and Castley, 2024, p. 60)

This chapter has consistently made reference to primary votes in elections, but a significant and often unacknowledged caveat to this method is the consequence of the removal of rights to migrants. One consequence of the regime of temporary migration is the increase in workers living in Australia without full residency rights, including lack of access to social benefits, medicare, and voting rights. To give a sense of the scale of this, Figure 6.33 presents the number of votes as a proportion of the voting age. Although Australia’s official statistics typically record high levels of turnout when compared to enrolment, Figure 6.33 presents ballots cast in federal elections as a

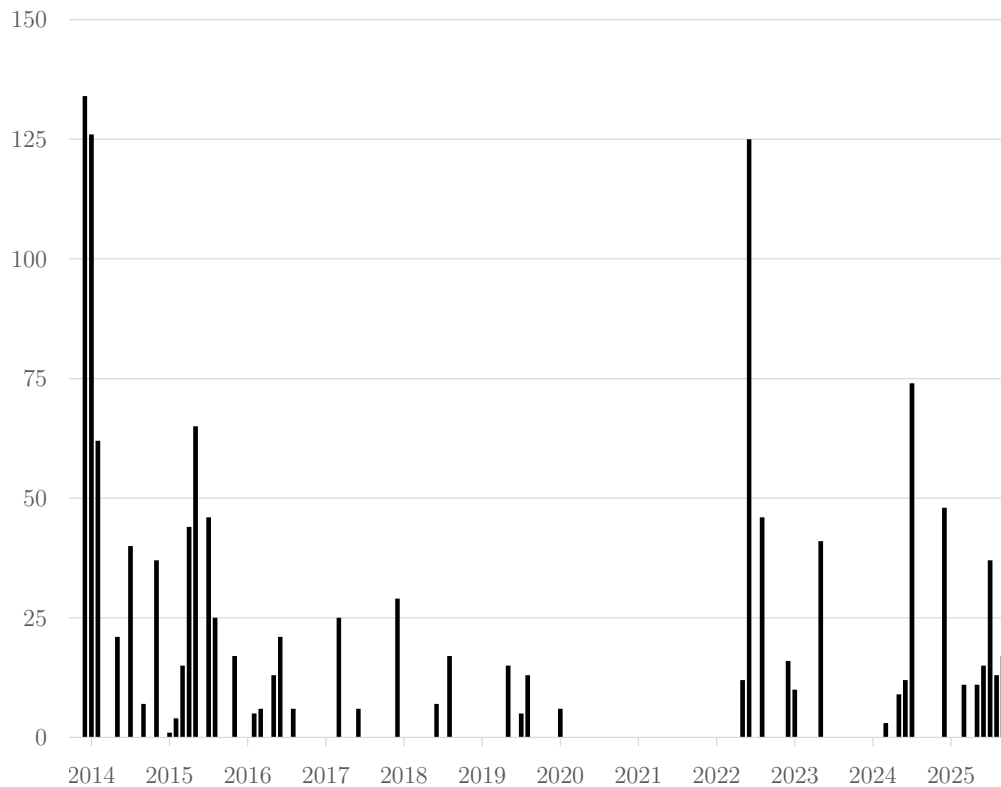


Figure 6.32: People ‘turned back’ per month 2014–25 (compiled from Refugee Council of Australia, 2025). Data releases limited for purported security reasons.

proportion of the estimated voting age population at each election.⁴⁶ The inclusion of women and compulsory voting increased participation in the first half of the twentieth century, but the end of WWII marked a high level of turnout amongst Australia’s non-Indigenous population that the country has never returned to. After the second world war, large numbers of immigrants came to Australia, resulting in a rapid downturn in voter turnout, but as they were able to be naturalised after five years, this reduction was reversed. With temporary migration, a large proportion of Australia’s voting age population is now unable to vote without going through the citizenship (Mares, 2016; Oke, 2012).

Yet temporary workers have found ways to resist that are not based on elections. Berg (2016) intersperses an account of temporary migrant work with migrant resistance, alongside accounts of abject oppression. Undocumented migrant workers in the agriculture industry in the United Workers Union have launched a campaign for visa amnesty, as shown in Figure 6.34.

⁴⁶Estimated voter data was obtained by taking histogram data in ABS (2024c) to estimate the number of people aged 21 and over, and after 1973 18 years and over. Linear interpolation was used to provide estimates of population at finer intervals.

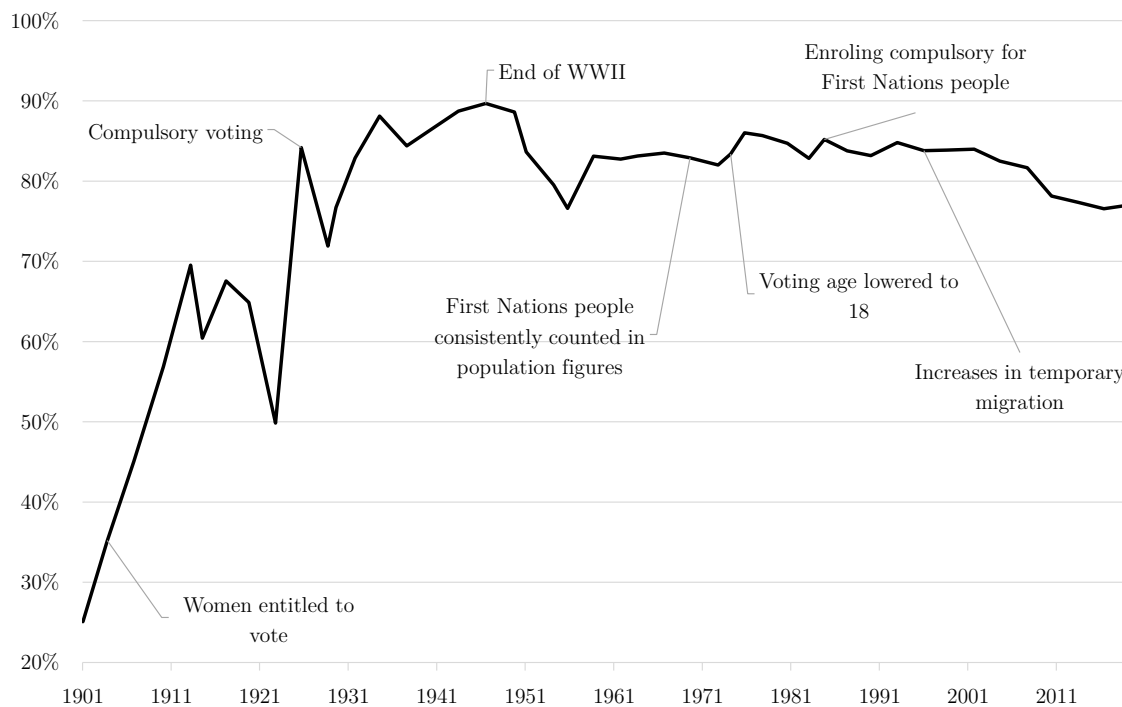


Figure 6.33: Federal ballots returned as proportion of voting population against major events in Australian history (Sharman, 2018, AEC and ABS).

Resisting Nationalism

Struggles against this exclusion and experiences of racism including immigration racism have been critical in transforming the face of Australian nationalism: immigration has not only produced racism, but anti-racism.⁴⁷ It has not only produced the torture of refugees, but the possibility of resisting the system that produce them. Immigration has peopled not only a colonial project, but anti-colonial ones. This emphatic point should not be taken as a reification of all immigrants as being of a particular political persuasion, but rather to normalise immigrants as a part of a working class that exists in contradiction with the ruling class. Indeed, the same move repositions racism and conservatism as reproduced within and throughout that same class.

The Kurdish poet imprisoned by Australia, Behrouz Boochani, wrote about the 2017 Manus siege, where for twenty-three days, refugees imprisoned on Manus Island detention centre democratically organised daily protest siege against the Australian government (Boochani, 2018). Resistance that Boochani and other refugees have organised are not fires in far off lands, but sparks of inner resistance within Australia.

⁴⁷Migrants continue to face discrimination across a slew of social life: “the labour market, racism and discrimination, the language barrier, social connections and housing and accommodation” (Rezaei, Adibi, and Banham, 2023, p. 1).



Figure 6.34: Hand-written ‘Amnesty Now: Freedom for Migrant Farm Workers’ Placard, taken by author, Melbourne 23 October 2018, ‘Change The Rules’ Rally

Far beyond Manus Island, working class immigration has fed into protests against imperialism, for Palestine, for workers’ rights, against the Iraq war. Just as unions have been caught up in the politics of nationalism calling to abolish visa classes, others have found themselves struggling for radical incorporation of migrant workers. Australia’s working class today is more multiracial than ever before, a fact that has fundamentally changed Australia’s organised working class, although the leaders of those unions remain disproportionately white.

Returning finally to Figure 6.27 on page 304, it is notable that in the context of the movement against the Israeli genocide in Gaza, ‘social cohesion’ has finally eclipsed ‘multiculturalism’ as a popular search entry. Social cohesion is a highly racialised and evocative term. This represents an important landmark in the securitisation of borders, and the internalisation of imperialism in Australia. Indeed, both Jenny Marx and the press at the time made note of the placards relating “resistance to tyrants” being pleasing or a duty to God in the Irish Fenian rallies in London in 1869–72 (Figure 6.1). More than 150 years later in 2025, the Australian newspaper published shocked articles about a demonstration held in Bankstown, Sydney, titled “Glory to our Martyrs” (Yim, 2025). Questions of global imperialism were again brought to life through the dynamic ideology of nationalism in a speech by an Associate Professor of

Literature, delivered to an anti-immigration march one month after a major protest by supporters of Palestine across the Sydney Harbour Bridge:

we will [n]ever accept the unacceptable and radical transformation of our suburbs and cities, our towns and our regions—let alone the nation itself—into something other than places that we recognise as ours, stamped by our character, populated by our people (McInerny, 2025)

McInerny conjures up much of the history presented above in this chapter, claiming Australian soldiers were “a people bound together by the crimson thread of blood”. This presentation of White Australia as a success unfortunately disturbed by outside agitators traces the logical obverse to this chapter’s argument. Where McInerny sees multicultural transformation as a betrayal of Australian nationalism, this chapter has traced in the ‘multicultural era’ an entrenched neo-liberal economic management alongside social conservative backlash. The shift from overt White Australia to securitised multiculturalism represents not the abandonment of nationalist exclusion, but the reconstitution of a capitalist need for homogeneity cum social cohesion.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The thesis investigated how migration is constituted within processes of capital accumulation. Marx’s account of the “Process of the Accumulation of Capital” in *Capital* Volume I culminates in a remarkable depiction of migration, synthesising accumulation, resistance, and imperialism. It ends with an illustration of the combined result of accumulation, depopulation, and emigration:

Like all good things in the world, this profitable mode of proceeding has its drawbacks. The accumulation of the Irish in America keeps pace with the accumulation of rents in Ireland. The Irishman, banished by the sheep and the ox, re-appears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian. And there a young but gigantic republic rises, more and more threateningly, to face the old queen of the waves: *Acerba fata Romanos agunt, Scelusque fraternae necis*. (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 870)

Migration is represented through the Fenian resistance, through the growth of the United States, and through the Latin reference to the killing of Remus by Romulus that hangs like a curse over Rome's descendants, just as the accumulation of capital reincarnates the victims of imperialism across the seas (Horace, 1760), a story long associated with the punishment for crossing borders (Valditara, 2018, pp. 176, 181). This chapter uncovered in Australian migration the contradictions that migration reveals at this juncture of *Capital*: inner connections between accumulation, resistance, nationalist prejudice (p. 865) and the forerunner to imperialism.

This chapter provided an ideological, subjective, and political moment within migration that expresses and brings to the surface the contradictions developed through the preceding chapters, including in particular that between incorporation and exclusion, expressed through nationalism. It provided a re-reading of Marx's 1870 letter to Meyer and Vogt and the mistaken political economies of racism sometimes ascribed to it, and uncovered two dynamics within Australian migration in the *longue durée*. The transformations within the exclusionary moment were revealed as critical to reproducing and 'manufacturing' a national illusory community, while, conversely central to the subjective contestation of capitalism. Reproducing nationalism and contesting capitalism are two poles through which the contradictory imperial, colonial and class relational processes established in chapters 2 through 5 are *expressed* through migration—forming the ideological moment through which migration is constituted in processes of capital accumulation.

The focus on these ideologies of nation and 'race' as they emerged and consolidated in the nineteenth century, revealed an important ideological manifestation of the subsumption of capitalism by imperialism, with migration expressing the sharp contradictions within and without 'the nation': in particular, the capital-labour relation and within and between many capitals. This was developed as a significant undercurrent surging through the periodisation discussed in chapter 2, and within the institutions discussed in chapter 5, as they shifted through the post-war and neo-liberal realignments. Migration figured as a critical moment in the reimposition of nationalism, in particular through the forms of criminal exclusion. For this reason, the ideological turbulence surrounding this exclusion, from the questions about White Australia and mass migration in the early to middle of the twentieth century, to the refugee regime in the neo-liberal era, was in a dialectical manner also made central. The critical step was to situate this incorporation/exclusion dynamic of migration as

internal to underlying contradictions of capital accumulation, linking these dynamic ideological forms to the principle shifts in chapter 5. In developing this subjective and ideological figure of racism, nationalism, imperialism, and the possibility of their opposites, his chapter provided the final movement in the dialectical reconstruction of migration within capital accumulation.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The ghost of Malthus

The refugees have been able to reconfigure the images of themselves as passive actors and weak subjects into active agents and fierce resistors . . . Our resistance is the spirit that haunts Australia.

— BEHROUZ BOOCHANI, 2017

The history of this country and its development has been, and must inevitably be, largely the story of its policy with respect to population from abroad

— ISAACS J, IN R V MACFARLANE, 1923, P. 557

Thomas Malthus' theory of population, discussed in chapter 1, was produced in part through a colonial encounter with Australian invasion (Bashford, 2012; Newman, 1998; Spriggs, 1997). Malthus wrote in 1830 that his "object" in writing his famous 1798 essay was to generalise the study by Australian colonisers of how Aboriginal people maintained their population level at levels compatible with ongoing subsistence (Malthus, 1830, p. 44). His answers, developed in the second expanded edition (Malthus, 1803, p. 18), reflected the common colonial practice of projecting assumptions about his own society onto Aboriginal societies. He suggests Aboriginal women bore only one child rather than many due to the "drudgery" (p. 22) inflicted on them by Aboriginal men (he provided no self-reflection on inflicting upon his wife the drudgery of *three* children), that war was endemic, and that observations of life during conditions

of invasion, warfare, and pandemic were generaliseable (Malthus, 1803, pp. 17–23; cf. Leacock, 1981; Sullivan, 2017). Malthus' error about Aboriginal peoples is representative of the wider mystification of social processes represented by the population fetish.

Australian radio shock jock Ben Fordham's summary, "Australia is bringing in migrants faster than we can build houses" (Fordham, 2025), represents this same population fetishism: an obvious, immediate, and trivial statement that mistakes surface appearance for reality. The housing crisis becomes a question of too many people and not enough houses, rather than too many middle managers and not enough construction workers. The crisis in the public health sector is too many refugees, rather than low pay for nurses (Chan, 2013). Studies are commissioned on whether lowering migration could raise wages, rather than the proposition of granting workers the right to strike. Protests for Palestine are a result of Arab migration and not imperialist war. And on it goes. Such ideas do not fall from the sky. The appearance of migration as a numerical lever capable of managing change has a real basis, in the capitalist state.

A ghost of Malthus can be found in the nexus of state and society in the late 1960s. Lubbock (2025) outlines the revival of neo-Malthusian ideas by organic intellectuals involved in international development in the post-WWII era, not as the transhistoric impact of ideas, but through processes of managing social pressures for land reform within the bounds of accumulation, drawing on Gramsci's (1996, p. 181) concept of "politico-economic neo-Malthusianism". Gramsci suggests that the Piedmont state avoided "even to hint" at either agrarian reform or the convocation of the constituent assembly in order to avoid any "conditions or limitations generated by the people" (Gramsci, 1996, p. 181). There is a parallel between the neo-Malthusian foreclosure of popular demands identified by Gramsci (focused on land) and the imagined scarcity in social reform generated in the neo-Malthusian representation of migration (focused on the other side of the Malthusian equation, population), occupying different places on the spectrum of hegemony and passive revolution identified by Morton (2013). At a similar time as the US Secretary of Agriculture expressed global Malthusian fears (Lubbock, 2025, pp. 363–4), Garrett Hardin wrote his famous and widely cited neo-Malthusian essay, the 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Hardin, 1968; see Ostrom, 2008; Senatore, Bimonte, and Gatto, 2025). In an inverted form, as Follett, Daniels, and Petersen (2021) point out, Hardin mobilised Malthus against reproductive freedom and migration (Hardin, 1991), identifying in the process his frustration with the "Marxist-

Hegelian dialectic” (para. 22).

These two modes of thought, the Malthusian dissolution of social relations into the abstract category of population, and the Marxist dialectical approach to social reality as comprised of social relations, correspond in an important sense to the working class and ruling class political economies of migration outlined in chapter 1. It is this alternative, dialectical account of migration as part of capital accumulation through Australian migration in the *longue durée*, that this thesis developed.

7.1 SYNTHESIS

This thesis provided a fresh theoretical elaboration of migration as a social relation in the tradition of classical Marxism, setting out to understand how migration is constituted within processes of capital accumulation, and what explains the shifts in Australian migration in the *longue durée*.

Through a historical materialist analysis of shifts in migration in Australian history, it investigated the *internal relations* within four key categories of analysis in the processes of migration: imperialism, settler colonialism, labour, and nationalism. The qualitative transformations in Australian migration unveiled through a four part periodisation developed an understanding of migration as process internally mediated by those categories. This investigation delivered a comprehensive *intellectual reconstruction* of these four categories of analysis within Marxist theories of migration, through the critique of key theorists (Callinicos, 2009; Castles, 1988; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Harvey, 2005b; Kelly, 2008; Wolfe, 1999), and thereby developed a reevaluation of the inner connections and “order and sequence” of the categories (Marx, 1939/1993, p. 106). This process of intellectual reconstruction in conversation with empirical analysis delivered a provocative and original theorisation of migration within the dialectic of base and superstructure, locating ‘labour’s migration’ as comprising and contradicting ‘capital’s empire’.

The following three *analytical premises* synthesise the conceptual apparatus developed through these chapters, and summarise the conceptual contribution of the thesis to how migration is constituted in processes of capital accumulation.

First, migration comprises a moment within the circulation, concentration and accumulation of capital. The centralisation of population is a necessary moment within

the centralisation of capital, though its transformation into a productive force presupposes entry into relations of production. Following the generalisation of a world market and world economy, these migrations comprise not a relation with the 'outside' of capitalism (Luxemburg, 1913/2003), nor unequal international exchange (Emmanuel, 1972), but processes within accumulation, including in particular ongoing dynamics of uneven and combined development, and accumulation as expressed in and through the inter-state system.

As population and migration are subsumed along with imperialism into the dynamics of accumulation, migration is internalised within labour market regimes (chapter 5). Migrants *qua* migrants are increasingly commodified. Labour market regimes are internally contradictory, reflecting conflict over the rate of exploitation, capitalist crisis periodically producing the possibility of immiseration and unemployment, and with class oppression and alienation reproducing the conditions for ideological and political reaction. These processes of class formation can be contrasted with 'cheap labour' theory (chapter 4), in which migration acts an external check on labour (typically engineered by the capitalist class), and elastic 'accumulation by dispossession' (chapter 2) or world systems schemas in which migration primarily comprises flight from underdevelopment.

Second, migration comprises a moment within the reproduction of imperialism and colonisation. As well as comprising a flow within the internationalisation of capital, migration expresses dynamics of competition and accumulation within global *fabrica mundi* (world making, Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) through borders, flows, circular and transmigration, in circuits that reproduce the dynamics of empire. This premise is driven by, reanimates, and fetters the first premise, expressing the destruction of value and flight from imperialist war as well as the constructive flows of empire.

Class formation, migration, and invasion are part of the dynamics of 'primitive accumulation' that capitalist social relations presuppose. The subsumption of imperialism into the dynamics of capital accumulation unifies uneven centrifugal forces of capital accumulation and the geo-strategic (geo-political and geo-economic) reproduction of space (Harvey, 1982/1999; Smith, 2003). 'Population' in Australia entered into this dynamic at the end of the nineteenth century: the development of the continent and reconstruction of world economy, dynamics of internal and external warfare, and the class relation. Migration internally constitutes further internal shifts within the process of capitalist imperialism, such as towards skilled and educational integration

after WWII. This can be differentiated from settler colonial contest over land (chapter 3), where the structural account of opposition to Aboriginal people for instance inheres to the person of the migrant rather than to processes of capital.

Third, migration comprises an ideological, subjective process mediating class formation and nationalism. As migration expresses capital accumulation and imperialism, the formation and reproduction of class as a relation, it is woven into the ideological fabric of class development. Migration is a moment within ruling class formation—with the state relation arising to negotiate the contradictions within the first and second premises—and within the deliberation and ideology of the Australian ruling class—corresponding to the appearance of migration as a lever of national control. Migration is a moment too within working class formation, woven into the constitution, subjectivity, and ideological reproduction of the working class. The process of nationalism arises in mediation of, and expresses, these contradictions.

The ideological moment of migration reproduces and naturalises the dynamics of nationalism, labour market regimes, and accumulation. Migration simultaneously undermines nationalism, through the reproduction of and resistance to racism, imperialism and exploitation. The contradiction between multiculturalism and neo-conservatism, and between brutality towards refugees and the importation of almost 2.5 million temporary migrants, are results of these underlying dynamics. The contradiction between capital and labour, between imperialism and anti-imperialism, nationalism and internationalism are reproduced materially and ideologically through migration. This can be contrasted to institutional theories of the ‘Australian settlement’ as class compromises of labour protection (chapter 5), or the suggestion that racism arises from working class competition (chapter 6).

These three premises of migration, this thesis demonstrated, are internally constituted rather than ontologically exterior (Morton, 2013). Labour market regimes express colonial development and imperial dynamics. Those in turn express competitive capital accumulation. That accumulation is premised on regimes of ideological reproduction that secure the ongoing exploitation of labour. Those ideologies are undercut as well as reproduced through imperialism. These premises evoke, but are clearly not identical to, Marx’s famous schema that the legal, political and ideological superstructure is determined by, conditioned by and corresponds to an economic base, within which relations of production correspond to, as well as fetter, developments within the productive forces (MECW:29, p. 263; Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 175). The

internality of these levels of analysis makes it nonsensical to separate the three elements of this precis of social transformation into a deterministic and externally related formula (Bieler and Morton, 2018, p. 53; Harman, 1998; Ollman, 1977, pp. 3–11).

A second conclusion of the thesis is in the asymmetries of these premises. Within this explanation of migration as a social relation, the thesis established an ordering in its explanation of Australian migration in the *longue durée*. Migration, delivering population to the colonies in the nineteenth century, played an important and internal role transforming relations of production—an example of the first dominating over the second and third premises. Elements of the first and third premises also challenged White Australia in 1945–1973. Overall however, this thesis identified the second premise, and to a secondary extent the third, as dominant from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Any such ‘dominance’ or ‘determination’ is, to reiterate, partial, temporally bounded and above all internally contradicted and contested. Marx’s provocative assessment is that it is the first premise that holds the potential to revolutionise much more than the second and third premises:

the industrial proletariat, by the very working of modern production, finds itself gathered in mighty centers, around the great productive forces, whose history of creation has hitherto been the martyrology of the laborers. Who will prevent them from going a step further and appropriating these forces, to which they have been appropriated before? (MECW:11, p. 531)

SUMMARY

This thesis delivered its conceptual account of the constitution of migration in capital accumulation, and explanation of Australian migration in the *longue durée*, through six chapters.

Chapter 1 laid out the ontology, philosophy and methodology for this investigation. In outlining inadequacies within the field of migration studies of representations of the social world through external separations into discrete ‘things’ (rather than relations and processes), this chapter established groundwork for an *internal relations* account of migration, and the approach of non-deductive incorporation of new determinations.

Chapter 2 introduced the first such determination, imperialism. It established the internality of shifts in Australian migration (through a four part periodisation:

1830–1888, 1888–1945, 1945–1973, and 1973–2025) with shifts in the imperialist world economy (classical imperialism, post-war boom, and neo-liberalism linked to the final three periods). Second, it outlined a theoretical reformulation of migration as constitutive of capitalist imperialism as a contradictory unit.

Chapter 3 extended these implications in a settler colonial context, advancing the framework of migration internal to capital accumulation, which come to drive settler colonialism as a process. It developed an account of settler colonialism in the periodisation of migration through Wolfe's (1999) historical work.

Chapter 4 rendered a critique of 'cheap labour', a common answer to migration's part in accumulation. It established the conceptual framework for the internality of migration with capital accumulation, situated within class struggle, labour market processes, and uneven and combined development within the imperialist world economy.

Chapter 5 delivered an important synthesis of the theoretical and historical framework in the preceding chapters: an internal relations account of migration in Australian labour market regimes. It empirically substantiated the internality of migration to the formation of free labour, the regime of arbitration and conciliation, and the neo-liberal flexibilisation of the labour regime. This revealed how migration was constituted in capital accumulation via class formation.

Chapter 6 outlined the internality of the ideological moment of migration to processes of capital accumulation (its role reproducing the national form), and the internality of migration itself to the class processes of contestation (industrial, political, ideological). This final move revealed how these foregoing contradictory determinations were expressed ideologically through migration.

This chapter synthesised these determinations into a new way conceptualising Australian migration in the *longue durée*, and theoretical tools to explain migration within processes of capital accumulation.

7.2 CONTRIBUTION

This thesis operationalised Ollman's (2003) internal relations philosophy and Callinicos's (2001) method of non-deductive incorporation, in service of a novel classical Marxist explanation of migration and a *longue durée* explanation of Australian history

in migration. This can be summarised through three internally related dimensions that together explain migration as a moment within: (1) the circulation, concentration and accumulation of capital; (2) the reproduction of imperialism and colonialism; and (3) the ideological mediation of class formation by nationalism.

This thesis made a fourfold contribution to knowledge. First, it contributed a critical synthesis of Australian history, migration studies and Marxist political economy, via the philosophy of internal relations. Its methodological and philosophical approach advanced calls for a “spatially and temporally relational approach” to migration studies, against the tendency towards skewed binaries (Cohen and Fogelman, 2025, p. 1). It answered Mayblin and Turner’s (2021) call to incorporate colonialism in studies of migration. Conversely, it responded to the “striking and curious” neglect of global migration within political economy (Phillips, 2011, p. 1), and the “deflecting [of] serious study” of migration within the field of settler colonialism (Davies, 2023, p. 221).

Second, this thesis advanced the research agenda of ‘new’ histories of Australian capitalism (Huf and Sluga, 2019) by integrating studies of racism and capitalism through a novel periodisation of Australian migration in the *longue durée*. It develops Melleuish’s (2015) call (or perhaps longing) for a revival of “*longue durée*” analysis, including in particular its critique of Kelly’s (2008) Australian settlement concept (Melleuish, 2015, p. 732). This contribution was less about uncovering particular new facts, but rather in developing understandings of migration within the long stretch of transformations in Australian history, contributing to the ongoing challenge to situate migration within Australian capitalism (Piperoglou, 2021, p. 179; Balint and Simic, 2018). The form of that analysis—materialist and non-determinist—reflected the need to resist structural “colonial fatalism” (Macoun and Strakosch, 2013, p. 435) and the generative framework of the intermingling of the cultural and the economic (Forsyth and Loy-Wilson, 2022).

Third, the thesis advances a Marxist political economy approach to migration. It brought to life inchoate debates within global Marxist strains of migration theory, stressing the exciting potential of this under-recognised body of theory within the wide field of migration studies, while outlining and drawing out inconsistencies and differences that if more systematically unpacked could consolidate and further develop this sub-field (Cross, 2020; Hanieh and Ziadah, 2023; Ritchie, Carpenter, and Mojab, 2022b; Walia, 2021). It developed a conceptual framework building within classical Marxist political economy, by clarifying the inner connections and conceptualisation

of terms applied inconsistently and often undertheorised, including settler colonialism, and so-called ‘cheap labour’.

Finally, across these layers, it developed a systematic and internally dynamic theorisation of migration capable of grasping the contradiction between structure and agency by integrating frameworks reflexively: a classical Marxist approach to migration, markedly absent from theoretical overviews of migration (Arango, 2018; Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2020; Kolbe, 2021; Massey, 2001; Massey et al., 1993; O’Reilly, 2023; Passaris, 1989; Phillips, 2011; Scholten, Pisarevskaya, and Levy, 2022). This addressed the “lack of systematic theorising” that Haas (2021, p. 2) has identified within migration studies, by forging a path to integrate frameworks without recourse to the “one-sided, biased understandings of migration” (p. 3) or eclectic, interdisciplinary and pluralist approaches. Returning to the structure/agency dynamic identified in chapter 1 helps to explain the contribution that crosses each of these aspects, highlighting the novelty of this account of theory and history in Australian migration, and its contribution to the addressing the “central challenge in advancing migration theory”: conceptual tools that account for “structure and agency” (Haas, 2021, p. 9).

Migrant *agency* is much more than that of forging and reproducing patterns of migration, but is rather internal with the class relations and struggles that comprise the entire history of all societies stratified by class (Marx and Engels, 1848/2002, p. 219). The struggles of migrants, would-be migrants, and non-migrants from outside of Australia are internal to Australian class struggle. From refugees resisting on Manus Island, to anti-colonial protests against Australia in Malaysia after WWII, through to the combined and uneven subjective development of the Australian working class in the nineteenth century, Australian history in the *longue durée* is riven with not merely population transformed into productive forces but humans as agentic forces in the world economy; the historical process does not respect the illusory boundaries of the nation-state.

The *structures* of migration are more entrenched, more violent and more obdurate than those of labour market competition, demagogic exclusion, or unequal exchange on the world market. Migration expresses with “iron necessity” the laws of motion of capitalist society, in and through imperialism, colonialism and racism (Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 91). It was structural compulsion that imported migrants to support a spreading pastoral economy and military-colonial invasion, that unified the colonies against Chinese migrants in 1888 and deported South Sea Islanders at the turn of

the twentieth century, and that built and supported prison camps to torture refugees in the modern era. But these laws of motion were carried out by and through the historic contingency of ruling class agency. This thesis outlined the waves of industrial, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist class struggle that contained the possibility, not fully realised but inherent, of sweeping away these fixed and fast-frozen relations and melting into air the structures of empire and capital (Marx and Engels, 1848/2002, p. 223; Marx, 1867/1976a, p. 617).

The synthesis of a distinctive framework within classical marxist migration studies, and a dynamic class account of Australian migration in the *longue durée*, through the internal and asymmetric relations of imperialism, settler colonialism, labour, and nationalism within migration as a social relation is a wholly original contribution to knowledge.

7.3 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The wide scope and synthetic quality that contribute to the novelty and utility of this thesis forms a simultaneous limitation. Analysis in the *longue durée* has a cumbersome, complicated and sometimes novel character—“*personnage encombrant, compliqué, souvent inédit*” (Braudel, 1958, p. 733). The novelty of this approach brings a wide array of awkwardnesses, glancing treatments of profound episodes and elision of critical processes that are too numerous to list. Gender is implicitly tangled through this thesis but not systematically addressed: there is a wealth of material that extends and complicates the dialectical interplay of empire, colonialism, and capitalism in Australian migration (Bagnall and Martínez, 2021; Hughes, 2017; Steven, 2000; Summers, 2002; Wolfe, 1994). It centred immigration over emigration and labour rather than ruling class migration (Brownlee, 2020). Although inspired by historical work and methodology, this thesis did not undertake the careful and necessary process of seeking the most elaborate immediate “causes” (Bloch, 1954, p. 197) of the large historical processes it sketched, nor of the “cross examination” of the witnesses of history (Bloch, 1954, p. 64).

Within global migration studies, this thesis contributed to but certainly did not close the research gap in systematically theorising the internal relations within imperialism, accumulation, colonialism, and nationalism, the dialectical unity of structure

and agency, and the treatments of migration within classical Marxist theory in general, including particularly at the world economic scale. Chapter 2 established the need for a sharper theorisation within classical Marxism of imperialism within the world economy, proposing provisional and unsystematic steps in this direction when considering the world economy. The neo-Malthusian representations of migration discussed in this chapter outline the partial treatment of ideology in this thesis (in chapter 6), and the failure to provide an internal critique of Australian studies of migration as material practices rather than abstract ideas. This reflection raises a host of research questions about how such ideas were developed and systematised through the course of intellectual history in Australia and globally, and how alienation conditions its widespread acceptance. Finally, the internal relations account of migration in the labour market, discussed in chapter 4 and chapter 5, made important steps, but were not brought into conversation with the question of the equalisation of profit rates and value transfer (Moseley, 2016), or fully historicised on the global scale.

There is a dearth of *longue durée* analysis of Australian political economy. A number of works have suggested rediscovering, reviving and critiquing histories of Australian capitalism (Beilharz and Cox, 2007; Flanagan and Huf, 2021; Paternoster, 2017; Williams-Brooks, 2019), including particularly Marxist theories of the 1980s (Connell and Irving, 1980; Denoon, 1983; McMichael, 1984; McQueen, 1986; Wells, 1989), discussions of which “dropped off fairly abruptly at some point in the 1980s” (Huf, Rees, et al., 2020, p. 101). Within this valuable intellectual project, there is a significant gap linking the historical transformations in social relations of the nineteenth century to debates in the so-called ‘Australian Settlement’ (Fenna, 2012; Melleuish, 2015), to accounts of Australian neo-liberalism (Humphrys, 2019; Pusey, 1991; Watson et al., 2003).

This material project cannot be separated from the subjective, racial, and gendered histories of oppression and resistance (Irving and Connell, 2016)—a project that this thesis has contributed to in only a small way. Australia does not have a ‘Making of the Australian working class’ (Thompson, 1964/2013), and there is a need to advance histories of class as a social relation, not a discrete identity or category. This requires in Australia a serious and systematic approach to theorising the Labor Party and trade unions as expressing and containing class dissent (Bramble and Kuhn, 2011; Crowe, 2018; Tietze, 2016).

Spatially, the framework and histories of settler colonialism are an area in need of

further development (Ajl, 2023; Davies, 2023; Foster, 2025; Gibson, 2020b; Scanlan, 2023). The suggestion of analysing “two Australias—North and South” (Huf, Rees, et al., 2020, p. 111) is an important aspect of the relational conception of settler colonialism, in which the internal dialectics of class and imperialism need to be centred in order to move away from fatalistic, deterministic accounts of this central feature of Australian capitalism.¹ There is also a need to more systematically integrate Australia’s colonial dynamics within this complex development and imperial geography vis-à-vis the Torres Strait (Peel, 1947), Papua New Guinea (McNamee, 2023), and Nauru, as well as neo-colonial relationships in the region (Kemish, 2023).

This thesis leaves a fair share of unfinished business.

7.4 DIALECTICAL CHAINS

This thesis was born of a political era steeped in that polarity of “identity politics” versus “class reductionism” (Haider, 2018). Engagement in real struggles tend to challenge the stability of both the stale middle-class liberalism that typifies the first pole and the union bureaucrat’s hand-waving economism that typifies the second. Analysis of the struggles over racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or capitalism and the workplace that operate at the level of so-called ‘identity’ tend to underestimate the materiality of the processes that so powerfully mediate our subjectivity. Identity is a fraught term on which to hinge social theory, and can be “actively misleading” (Connell, 2014, p. 173). Attempts to transcend identity using intersectionality have also been criticised for furthering the framework of standing in bourgeois law (Ali, 2014; Grabham, 2008), in which the framework for recognition is a set of wounded attachments that implicitly reify a “white masculine middle-class ideal” (Brown, 1995/2025, p. 61). The alternative suggested by Wendy Brown is not an ahistorical, utopian rejection of these political struggles but a search for political modes that “destabilize the formulation of identity as fixed position” by outlining emancipatory collectivity (Brown, 1995/2025, p. 75).

This thesis provided a conceptual and historical response, developing a distinctive account of the inner relations within ‘race’ and capital. Calls for social theory beyond intersectionality are not new and steps have been taken towards a unitary

¹Really, the South-East of the mainland and ‘the rest’.

methodological and conceptual apparatus that furthers the understanding of the materiality of oppression and the agency of class beyond additive, aggregative, or dual systems approaches to social oppression (Bannerji, 2005; Bhattacharya, 2017a; Bieler and Morton, 2025; Callinicos, 2014b; Vogel, 2018). This thesis contributed distinctively to this project of unitary dialectical social theory through its methodological approach to internal and asymmetric relations and the method of non-deductive incorporation. Recent contributors have suggested a parallel dialectical approach. This includes Johnston and Meger's (2025, p. 515) "feminist dialectics" to analyse "patriarchal relations" within totality, which utilises parallel epistemology for ontological totality, and Bieler and Morton's (2025, p. 303) "dialectical matrix". Yet a matrix refers to a "rectangular array" (Sebree, 2022), used to represent linear relationships, a representation that risks conceiving of internal relations like "numbers in a row" (Ste. Croix, 1981, p. 90). This thesis advanced, rather, a *unitary* dialectical conception of the relations within oppression and exploitation. The political and methodological import of this method can be understood via the dialectical metaphor of the chain (see Rees, 1998, ch. 4):

"Every question runs in a vicious circle" because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain (Lenin, 1977b, p. 502).²

This chapter's epigraph from Behrouz Boochani exemplifies the *dialectics of resistance* that migration realises through capital's empire, between border securitisation and resistance (Turam, 2024). Moreover though, the internalisation of this dialectic within the class relation is implicitly suggested by Behrouz Boochani (2017) in his defining *Letter from Manus Island*: if "Australians were to reflect deeply on our resistance and sympathise with us", they would come to "realise something about how they imagined themselves to be until now". That is, this dialectic of resistance to racism expresses a deeper relation within Australian society. For internal and asymmetric dialectics, the *chains of empire*, however, are forged through a particular mode

²Lenin goes on to suggest alternatives in the context of deeper political organisation, relevant to Callinicos's (2004, p. 264) definition of classical Marxism.

of production, placing workers in a unique historical position at the base of the global social order:

Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created. (Luxemburg, 1918/1971, p. 397)

Yet there is an echo, through Boochani's *Letter*, Lenin's chain, and Trotsky's (1930/1962) *Permanent Revolution*, recognising that resistance of many forms, by various classes or groups, through countries outside the centre of empire, can both spur on, and be further realised, deepened and revolutionised through, their relation with the global working class. This thesis was a development of the perspective that struggles surrounding racial, imperial, and colonial relations are of the foremost importance when assessing the relations of the dialectical chain.

The contradictions of migration are not abstract and curious, but real, devastating, and urgent. The final stages of this thesis have supplied a constant stream of such suggestions: the "Marches for Australia" calling to stop mass migration, a Nazi organisation creating a "White Australia" political party proclaiming "Australia was built as the White working man's paradise, and we wish to continue this legacy", daily reports of the deportations and raids in the United States, and accounts of hijabi women targeted on trains in the context of backlash to the Palestine movement. The process of writing itself, in cafés, libraries, parks, has introduced repeated contact with this political reality, in which migrants are blamed for housing, 'culture', terrorism, and much else. The secret of challenging such neo-Malthusian representations lies in the living struggles in which this thesis was born, and that will lay the foundation for new knowledge.

End Matter

Appendices

A.1 ADJUSTED NET OVERSEAS MIGRATION

The data for long run net overseas migration are extremely messy, as described by Phillips, Klapdor, and Simon-Davies (2010), involving a plethora of substantial shifts in definition. The WWI figures are particularly problematic, leading Pope (1981) to omit them altogether. The table on the following page adjusts ABS Net Overseas Migration by removing their count of expeditionary forces during WWI (presented below), using CBCS Shipping and Overseas Migration of the Commonwealth of Australia for 1914–18 and an estimate of troops remaining for 1919. This is presented as Adjusted Net Overseas Migration (ANOM) and divided by the population to produce Relative ANOM (RANOM), as a percentage.

<i>Adjustments</i>	
Year	Adjustment
1914	-34,541
1915	-87,187
1916	-128,096
1917	-18,017
1918	8,190
1919	131,000

Year	RANOM	ANOM	Year	RANOM	ANOM	Year	RANOM	ANOM
1860	23,949	2.09	1890	24,644	0.78	1920	27,606	0.51
1861	-5,958	-0.51	1891	26,873	0.83	1921	17,525	0.32
1862	8,299	0.69	1892	-3,122	-0.09	1922	40,157	0.71
1863	22,321	1.77	1893	-7,379	-0.22	1923	39,714	0.69
1864	31,550	2.38	1894	3,163	0.09	1924	46,069	0.78
1865	30,259	2.18	1895	2,857	0.08	1925	39,801	0.66
1866	23,945	1.66	1896	6,545	0.18	1926	44,783	0.73
1867	7,552	0.51	1897	6,995	0.19	1927	51,580	0.83
1868	17,962	1.17	1898	-507	-0.01	1928	30,054	0.47
1869	15,044	0.94	1899	-1,736	-0.05	1929	11,820	0.18
1870	15,916	0.97	1900	-8,810	-0.23	1930	-8,530	-0.13
1871	11,682	0.69	1901	2,959	0.08	1931	-10,094	-0.15
1872	3,037	0.17	1902	-4,293	-0.11	1932	-2,997	-0.05
1873	11,368	0.63	1903	-9,876	-0.25	1933	758	0.01
1874	17,121	0.93	1904	-2,983	-0.08	1934	3,306	0.05
1875	18,454	0.97	1905	-2,600	-0.06	1935	689	0.01
1876	25,082	1.28	1906	-5,049	-0.12	1936	2,610	0.04
1877	34,384	1.69	1907	5,195	0.12	1937	6,444	0.09
1878	21,602	1.03	1908	5,437	0.13	1938	10,453	0.15
1879	25,300	1.17	1909	21,783	0.50	1939	15,290	0.22
1880	23,774	1.07	1910	29,912	0.68	1940	15,142	0.21
1881	28,528	1.24	1911	74,379	1.63	1941	6,936	0.10
1882	37,856	1.59	1912	91,892	1.94	1942	7,311	0.10
1883	69,865	2.79	1913	63,277	1.29	1943	2,653	0.04
1884	51,067	1.96	1914	26,315	0.53	1944	-615	-0.01
1885	36,724	1.36	1915	2,777	0.06	1945	-934	-0.01
1886	38,702	1.39	1916	-641	-0.01	1946	-13,344	-0.18
1887	33,822	1.17	1917	195	0.00	1947	11,205	0.15
1888	38,927	1.31	1918	15,169	0.30	1948	53,365	0.68
1889	22,606	0.74	1919	35,303	0.67	1949	147,104	1.83

Year	RANOM	ANOM	Year	RANOM	ANOM	Year	RANOM	ANOM
1950	149,507	1.80	1980	100,940	0.68	2010	172,038	0.78
1951	108,916	1.28	1981	123,076	0.82	2011	206,240	0.92
1952	91,609	1.05	1982	102,708	0.67	2012	240,248	1.05
1953	41,070	0.46	1983	54,995	0.36	2013	208,379	0.89
1954	66,799	0.73	1984	59,823	0.38	2014	182,345	0.77
1955	96,248	1.03	1985	89,321	0.56	2015	186,730	0.78
1956	93,001	0.98	1986	110,663	0.69	2016	243,830	1.00
1957	77,811	0.80	1987	136,060	0.83	2017	241,660	0.98
1958	64,490	0.65	1988	172,794	1.04	2018	252,220	1.00
1959	75,846	0.75	1989	129,478	0.76	2019	247,620	0.97
1960	89,090	0.86	1990	97,131	0.57	2020	-4,970	-0.02
1961	58,658	0.55	1991	81,669	0.47	2021	6,870	0.03
1962	58,992	0.54	1992	51,358	0.29	2022	433,150	1.65
1963	68,117	0.62	1993	34,822	0.20	2023	534,990	
1964	95,816	0.85	1994	55,506	0.31			
1965	101,329	0.88	1995	106,864	0.59			
1966	80,225	0.69	1996	97,444	0.53			
1967	80,817	0.68	1997	72,402	0.39			
1968	101,970	0.84	1998	88,781	0.47			
1969	117,955	0.95	1999	104,210	0.55			
1970	111,784	0.88	2000	111,441	0.58			
1971	79,060	0.60	2001	136,076	0.70			
1972	56,320	0.42	2002	110,475	0.56			
1973	67,494	0.50	2003	110,104	0.56			
1974	87,248	0.63	2004	106,425	0.53			
1975	13,513	0.10	2005	137,009	0.67			
1976	34,030	0.24	2006	182,196	0.88			
1977	68,027	0.48	2007	244,030	1.16			
1978	47,397	0.33	2008	315,687	1.47			
1979	68,611	0.47	2009	246,900	1.13			

A.2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT LABOUR MARKET MODEL

Below I reproduce the R code that replicates the Hippel, Hunter, and Drown (2017) method for estimating the mean income of histogram data using a pseudo-midpoint. From income histogram buckets defined by `Income_1_149` . . . `Income_3500_or_more` representing the number of people in that histogram bucket in that category, and a variable `TotalStated`, the sum of those variables, I construct a dummy variable `hM` representing the harmonic mean and an average income variable using the midpoint method `histMean`, which is the histogram-midpoint-mean used in the calculations.

```

1  hM = ifelse(Income_3500_or_more == 0, 0, ifelse(Income_3000_
      3499 == 0, 3500*1.5, 3500 * (1 + log(3500 / 3000) / log((
      Income_3500_or_more + Income_3000_3499) / Income_3500_or_
      more))))),
2  histMean = (
3  (Income_1_149 * 75) +
4  (Income_150_299 * 224.5) +
5  (Income_300_399 * 349.5) +
6  (Income_400_499 * 449.5) +
7  (Income_500_649 * 574.5) +
8  (Income_650_799 * 724.5) +
9  (Income_800_999 * 899.5) +
10 (Income_1000_1249 * 1124.5) +
11 (Income_1250_1499 * 1374.5) +
12 (Income_1500_1749 * 1624.5) +
13 (Income_1750_1999 * 1874.5) +
14 (Income_2000_2999 * 2499.5) +
15 (Income_3000_3499 * 3249.5) +
16 (Income_3500_or_more * hM)
17 ) / TotalStated

```

Below I provide the following descriptive statistics for the calculations performed in section 4.3 by the three key variables: the number of employed nonmanagers in the dataset, the per cent of those living below the PL (60% of the median wage, \$483 per

week), and the average income in dollars (calculated according to the above harmonic mean histogram method). Average incomes are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Sex	<i>n</i>	Per cent below PL	Average Income (dollars)
Female	4,530,581	15.0	1,202
Male	4,540,267	8.7	1,584

Country of Birth	<i>n</i>	Per cent below PL	Average Income (dollars)
Africa	212,205	9.7	1,585
Australia	6,075,845	12.8	1,371
East Asia	337,597	12.8	1,335
Europe	302,215	8.5	1,532
Middle East	101,704	12.3	1,424
New Zealand	252,164	7.9	1,464
North America	66,574	10.5	1,725
Other	43,627	12.6	1,234
Other Americas	96,740	8.6	1,286
Pacific	72,593	6.8	1,342
South and Central Asia	610,408	9.0	1,388
South-East Asia	483,470	11.9	1,300
UK	415,706	9.1	1,636

Industry	<i>n</i>	Per cent below PL	Average Income (dollars)
Accommodation and Food Services	544,597	45.6	619
Administrative and Support Services	313,468	16.5	1,077
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	129,105	13.4	1,079
Arts and Recreation Services	125,980	23.8	1,080
Construction	833,956	5.3	1,448
Education and Training	903,641	10.3	1,399
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	105,971	2.1	1,902
Financial and Insurance Services	350,524	2.3	2,093
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,521,223	7.9	1,417
Information Media and Telecommunications	127,696	6.6	1,759
Manufacturing	557,532	7.2	1,316
Mining	168,726	0.9	2,441
Other Services	344,233	15.1	1,082
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	774,527	5.8	1,915
Public Administration and Safety	623,171	2.6	1,694
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	148,671	5.9	1,675
Retail Trade	825,148	30.1	841
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	444,498	6.9	1,373
Wholesale Trade	228,181	5.6	1,446

A.3 GOOGLE TRENDS

The RSI is a growing, powerful, though potentially problematic measure of search interest as a proxy for issue salience (Hözl, Keusch, and Sajons, 2025; Mellon, 2013). My key interest was in determining popular uptake and search interest in key terms associated with the integration of immigrants in Australia over the longest accessible time period, meaning I used data from 2004 to 2025.

I generated a list of potential terms: ‘multiculturalism’, ‘pluralism’, ‘multicultural’, ‘social cohesion’, ‘social cohesiveness’. ‘Multicultural’ was widely used, but had many other search associations with accessing services, events and festivals (‘sydwest multicultural services’, ‘multicultural hub’, ‘afl multicultural round’). ‘Pluralism’ was both less widely used and more related to other forms of pluralism (cultural, social, religious ...). ‘Multiculturalism’ was highly seasonal, and was often searched alongside terms that may indicate usage by students to meet Australian curriculum (‘essay’ or ‘at school’ or ‘for kids’), but this was not regarded as problematic for the purposes of measuring popular interest in the term. Social cohesion did not exhibit problematic co-search terms in the top 25 results. Social cohesion and multiculturalism were thus chosen as two similar terms with different connotations which closely relate to shifts in Australian official discourse. ‘Social cohesiveness’ although used in prior policy debates did not register highly in the RSI.

On November 17 2025, monthly data were downloaded from Google Trends for January 2004 to November 2025, for the region *Australia*, for all categories, in web searches. Due to social cohesion’s relatively lower RSI, a separate sample of was taken, and then scaled according to RSI in ‘multiculturalism’ in August 2004 = 100. Monthly trend data was then produced using the X-13ARIMA-SEATS package in R (see Time Series Research Staff, 2025), producing a SARIMA $(101) \times (011)_{12}$ model for “social cohesion” and a $(202) \times (111)_{12}$ model for “multiculturalism”. The residuals appeared to be stationary, although there were significant peaks in the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions for the residuals of ‘social cohesion’ at 15 months’ lag. A Ljung and Box (1978) test with lag $2s = 24$ was used to conclude that the respective residuals for “social cohesion” ($\chi^2 = 28.964, df = 21, p = 0.1149$) and “multiculturalism” ($\chi^2 = 21.982, df = 18, p = 0.2328$) were not autocorrelated, using the `Box.test` function.

As another final comparison for the general methodology, Google Trends results were produced for a number of similar advanced western countries: US, UK, Canada, and Germany cases (“*multikulti*”/“*zusammenhalt*”), as well as a worldwide dataset. These alternative cases were illustrative of the general trend suggested by my argument in chapter 6. The results in the United States, a similar settler colony, were similar to in Australia. The United Kingdom exhibited similar results, but showing an earlier peak in ‘social cohesion’ in the mid to late 2000s (coinciding with the period following the bombings of London’s transport system in 2005). Canada on the other hand showed more consistent interest in multiculturalism, and less evidence of an increasing interest in social cohesion, with the result ‘bottoming out’ at 0 throughout the sampled period. German results show a more exaggerated shift from “*multikulti*” to the imperfect parallel to social cohesion “*zusammenhalt*”, which became more prominent from the 2010s. This suggests that there may be utility carrying out research and analysis on the shifts in popular uptake of terms for ‘integration’ of immigrants according to shifting geo- and domestic politics using Google Trends data.

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