

“A TEST OF LOYALTY”:

A HISTORY OF THE FEDERAL AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY AND THE UNITED STATES ALLIANCE 1960 – 1967



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– ABSTRACT –

During the 1950s and 1960s Australian foreign policy was focused on ensuring the presence of the United States in South East Asia and the consequent protection of Australia under the ANZUS Treaty. For the Australian Labor Party between 1960 and 1967 the fundamental test of its readiness for government was the positions it took on issues relating to the Alliance. This thesis sheds light on the ALP's vision for the Alliance during the period.

Support for the American Alliance, formalised by the ANZUS treaty, became a loyalty test; loyalty to the US became the test of loyalty to Australia itself, as for many previous generations loyalty to Britain and the British Empire had been. All important issues were debated through the focus of communism (which meant in practice Chinese communism) and the US as Australia's protector against the threat. The focus was doubly distorted, the preoccupation with communism obscured the truth that almost all the problems with which Australia, as well as the US and Britain had to deal, particularly in our region, were not the fruit of communism but the legacy of colonialism.

Gough Whitlam¹

¹ Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government: 1972 – 1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), pp. 28 – 9.

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- INTRODUCTION -

“A TEST OF LOYALTY”:

A History of the Australian Labor Party and the United States Alliance
1960 – 1967

In November 2011 President Barack Obama addressed a joint sitting of the Federal Parliament of Australia. Speaking in the chamber of Australia’s lower house, he outlined his vision for the United States - Australian Alliance (hereafter the Alliance) in the twenty first century. In doing so, he drew on a set of powerful and symbolic events that have reinforced Australia’s partnership with what Robert Menzies famously referred to as Australia’s ‘great and powerful friend’ across the past seventy years.¹ Obama’s rollcall of shared sacrifice in the theatres of the Asia Pacific – from the ‘bombing of Darwin’, and the ‘liberation of the Pacific Islands’, to the ‘rice paddies of South East Asia’ – traversed well-worn terrain in the public memory of the Alliance’s fraternity.² It was a familiar story that drew not only on the shared sacrifices in war, but also promoted ‘core principles’ in which ‘the rights and responsibilities of all nations and all people are upheld.’³ The President’s invocation of freedoms ‘for all people’ – despite its grounding in the contemporary realities of the Asia Pacific – echoed similar entreaties of President Lyndon Johnson, who had

¹ A.W. Martin, *Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (Bob) (1894 – 1978)*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 15, 2000), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University < <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/menzies-sir-robert-gordon-bob-11111/text19783>>, viewed 4 February 2012.

² Barack Obama, *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates House of Representatives Official Hansard* [hereafter *CPD*, H. of R.], 17 Nov 2011, (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 2011) p. 12847.

³ *Ibid*, p. 12848.

addressed a Parliamentary luncheon some forty five years prior to Obama's speech. In his remarks to the luncheon gathering, Johnson grounded America's determination to 'build a world in which both peace and freedom can flourish' in the context of the 'Aussie who stands there in the rice paddies'.⁴ By unifying the symbolic with the reality of military action, past and present, President Johnson gave voice to the American view of the Alliance: one forged in war, bound together by cultural synergies and supported by a growing economic relationship. It is a view, from the height of the Cold War to the ongoing twenty first century 'war on terror' in the Middle East that has been continually reinforced by Australia's enthusiastic invocation of the Alliance's traditions and historical totems.

In welcoming President Obama to Australia for the first time, Prime Minister Julia Gillard also drew on a familiar rhetorical toolkit. She spoke in glowing terms of an Alliance that 'since its founding in 1951' had 'always been more'.⁵ It was a 'friendship dedicated to the values we share in the life of the world'.⁶ Like Presidents Obama and Johnson, Prime Minister Gillard anchored her concept of the Alliance in a shared history. Australia's successful negotiation of the ANZUS treaty was the culmination of 'the judgments of an Australian Labor Prime Minister and the resolve

⁴ Lyndon Baines Johnson, *542- Remarks at the Parliamentary Luncheon*, (Canberra: October 21, 1966) created 1999, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project – a collaboration at the University of California Santa Barbara, USA, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27951>>, viewed 1 April, 2012.

⁵ Julia Gillard, *CPD*, H. of R., 17 November 2011, (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 2011), p. 12843.

⁶ *Ibid.*

of an American President a decade earlier' during the Pacific War.⁷ Her homage to the Labor Prime Minister, John Curtin was not in and of itself a novel act. Indeed, it clung closely to an existing Australian Labor Party (hereafter ALP or Labor) tradition of sustaining contemporary political objectives through the utilisation of powerful, historically anchored, mythologies.⁸ Yet, there is a divergence between the two conceptions of the Alliance. It is a difference of worldviews, one that invokes different histories and canonises contrasting events to frame the contemporary relationship. In both Obama and Johnson's formulation of the Alliance, the war in Vietnam and the clash of ideology during the Cold War were at the core of their conceptions of the formal and informal relationship. Contrastingly, the ALP has elevated the Second World War as the baptismal font for the Alliance, rendering the historical terrain of the Cold War period more problematic.

The Labor Party's vision of the Alliance between 1960 and 1967 under the Leader of the Federal Opposition Arthur Calwell has largely been overlooked, not only in the way the ALP recounts its history of the Alliance, but more broadly in the political and diplomatic histories of Australia's relationship with the US. This thesis attempts to shed light on this omission by exploring the Labor Party's approach to and vision for the Alliance at the height of the Cold War. Labor's path through the political

⁷ For Julia Gillard speech, see *Ibid.* Representatives of Australia, New Zealand and the United States signed the ANZUS Treaty in San Francisco on 1 September 1951. The crucial operative clause was Article IV: 'Each Party recognises that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.' For further reading on the creation of ANZUS see W. David McIntyre, *Background to ANZUS Pact: Policymaking, Strategy and Diplomacy, 1945 - 1955* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995).

⁸ The nomenclature for this thesis refers alternately to the Labor Party, the ALP, the Party and the parliamentary leadership. They all refer to the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP). If broader reference is made to the extra-parliamentary party, including Executive officeholders, or members of the broader Labour movement, then the relevant terminology has been used.

minefield created by the foreign policy challenges of this period deserves new consideration.

An Alliance for a changing world

Labor's approach to the Alliance between 1960 and 1967 was deeply grounded in a long held Australian desire to draw the United States into Australia's security arrangements.⁹ With this in mind, the increasing intimacy between Washington and Canberra in the post-war era is better understood by briefly revisiting the continuities in Australian foreign policy between federation and the period under investigation.

The peace of the post-World War II years had done nothing to alter the anxiety of geographic vulnerability that Australian Governments of all political persuasions had held since federation. For Herbert Vere Evatt (Labor's External Affairs Minister in both the Curtin and Chifley Governments and the Leader of the Parliamentary Party between 1951 and 1960) the declaration by Prime Minister Billy Hughes at London's Savoy in 1921 that 'out of the Pacific comes for us life or death' held just as true in the decade following 1945.¹⁰ Evatt's enthusiastic attempt to create a security pact with Washington bore testimony not only to his appraisal of the new global order, but also to a long standing assessment by Australian foreign policy makers of the need to secure the United States as a guarantor of Australian security, a point which the realities of World War II had underlined.¹¹ Indeed, the progenitors of Evatt's failed attempts and the eventual success of the ANZUS treaty dated back to Pacific pact

⁹ David McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52, no. 1 (2006), p. 68.

¹⁰ "Billy Hughes in London", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 August 1921, p.1.

¹¹ David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia And The End of Britain's Empire* (Melbourne, MUP, 2002), p. 16; Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 116 (April 2001), p. 87.

proposals of Prime Ministers Alfred Deakin in 1909 and Joseph Lyons in 1937.¹² Although Evatt had vigorously pursued a security pact with the United States, Australia had to wait until 1951, when the evolution of the Cold War shaped Washington's resolve to develop a NATO style security arrangement in the South Pacific. The transformation in US thinking provided the Coalition Government and Minister for External Affairs Sir Percy Spender with the capacity to establish the ANZUS Treaty as the formal basis for a long held national ambition.¹³ Critically, this mirrored broader geopolitical transformations.

On 5 March 1946 when Winston Churchill declared that an 'Iron Curtain' had 'descended' across the European continent, the opening act of the Cold War, the tensions between the former Allied powers were still being played out on the European continent.¹⁴ By the fall of the Chifley Government in December 1949, the Chinese Communist Party was in power in Peking.¹⁵ Moreover, the increasing economic stability of the post-war European settlement would shift the theatre of the Cold War's second act to the tumultuous and fast evolving Asia Pacific region. Eric Hobsbawm notes that after 1945, the 'future orientation of the new post-colonial states was by no means clear'. The advent of substantial decolonisation in Asia created a 'zone in which the two superpowers continued, throughout the Cold War, to compete for support and influence'.¹⁶ Consequently, Asia became 'the major zone of

¹² McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite?', p. 68.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 13 – 32.

¹⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 110; see also Winston Churchill, *The Iron Curtain* (Fulton, Missouri: 5 March 1946) contained in, *The Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches* (London: Penguin, 3, 1999), p. 232.

¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 2004), p. 227.

¹⁶ Ibid.

friction' between Washington, Moscow and Peking.¹⁷ The stage had been set. Asia was to be the new frontier of friction between two competing super powers. Neither America, nor the Communist bloc could be assured of influence in a rapidly changing global order.

Consequently, the establishment of ANZUS must be seen in the light of the correlating transformation in Washington's East Asian policy between 1949 and 1950.¹⁸ The Truman doctrine in 1947 advanced the theory that Communism was monolithic, insidious and required an aggressive and universal response to combat its influence.¹⁹ Yet, between 1947 and 1950, America balanced rhetorical condemnation of Soviet influence with reduced aid for the Nationalist regime in China and a cautious approach to any military involvement in South East Asia.²⁰ But between 1949 and 1950 the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), the development of an atomic weapon by the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Korean War forced the United States into a reassessment of its East Asian strategy.²¹ As McLean notes, by the northern spring of 1950, Formosa, Indochina and the stability of the East Asia 'came to enjoy new levels of American commitment'.²² This commitment remained steadfast in Washington's appraisal of the Cold War through to

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ For an analysis of how the transformation in Washington's East Asian policy affected the ANZUS negotiations, see David McLean, 'ANZUS Origins: A Reassessment', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24, 94 (April, 1990), pp. 66 – 67.

¹⁹ John L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 56 – 7.

²⁰ McLean, 'ANZUS Origins: A Reassessment', pp. 66 – 67.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, p. 66.

the Guam Doctrine of 1969.²³ Not only was this the fundamental readjustment that led to the creation of ANZUS, but it was also the foundation of America's willingness to accommodate Australia's interests in the pursuit of its own goals within the region.

Though the establishment of ANZUS essentially had bipartisan support, it occurred against a background of changing circumstances for Australia.²⁴ The diminution of the United Kingdom's status as a Great Power, and Australia's protector, required the Government of the day to pursue arrangements for the protection of Australian interests by the United States.²⁵ In addition, the rapidly changing political landscape of the Asia Pacific between 1949 and 1950 prompted a sharp appraisal of Australia's immediate defence priorities. Moreover, this appraisal of Australia's security requirements altered the underlying cultural assumptions that informed Australian foreign policy. While the racial overtones of the White Australia policy remained into the 1960s, the slow decay of British race patriotism and the fervent anti-Communism of the post-war years lent itself to an increasing alignment between Australian and American assessments of the world during the Cold War.²⁶

Political unanimity existed on ANZUS as the cornerstone of Australia's defence arrangements. Yet, it is important to note that the ALP in particular was disposed to approaching issues of external relations through the prism of liberal internationalism.

²³ The Guam Doctrine was announced by US President Nixon in a press conference on 25 July 1969 see Richard M. Nixon, 279 – *Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen*, (Guam: 25 July 1969) created 1999, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project – a collaboration at the University of California Santa Barbara, USA, < <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140>>, viewed 5 September, 2012.

²⁴ Evatt had wanted Britain to be included in the ANZUS Pact see Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 21 April 1964 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 1274.

²⁵ Glen St Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian-American diplomatic relations since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 1-13.

²⁶ McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite?', pp. 67 – 68.

The party's recognition of Australia's status as a small to middle power, geographically isolated in an evolving Asian region, created two discernible traditions in Australian foreign policy. Evatt, who had been intimately involved in the formation of the United Nations in 1945, saw the body as heralding a new world order 'on which must rest...the hopes of men of goodwill throughout the world'.²⁷ This view of both the United Nations and the principles underpinning it was remarkably resilient in the context of increasing Cold War animosity. The commitment to the principles of liberal internationalism existed in Opposition as a preference towards international dispute resolution through the United Nations or the creation of new multilateral frameworks. This was reflected consistently by Labor's calls to refer the French Indochina dispute to the United Nations, the Indonesian claim to West Papua, and the proposal during the 1960s for a Southern Hemisphere nuclear free zone.²⁸

Contrastingly, the Coalition parties' philosophical perspective could be more aptly categorised as realist.²⁹ This led to the assessment of the issues facing Australia increasingly being defined through the prism of the balance of power engendered by the Cold War. Though there were discontinuities in this approach, the overall condition of Government policy was shaped by an increasing alignment with America and a commensurate contraction of Canberra's willingness to demur from Washington's view. For the ALP, the divergence of approaches to foreign policy did

²⁷ H.V. Evatt, *CPD*, H. of R., 13 March 1946 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1946), p. 192.

²⁸ For the ALP suggestion that the Indochina dispute be referred to the United Nations, see E.G. Whitlam, *CPD*, H. of R., 15 September 1953 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1953), p. 211; on West Papua see: A.L. Burns 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1961', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 7, no. 2 (November 1961), p. 156; on Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone see: Resolution of Federal Executive on Disarmament and Nuclear Tests, 4 July 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1224, Box 270, MS4738, NLA.

²⁹ The Coalition parties comprised of the Australian Liberal Party and the Australian Country Party. Though two separate political entities, they united to form the Government between 1949 and 1972.

not dim its attachment to the Alliance as the core of Australia's security relationship. Their view was always pragmatism tinged with idealism. The problem, in an increasingly unstable region was how to oppose US policy, without opposing the Alliance itself; especially when there was a genuine belief that Australia's interests were not in alignment with those of Washington.

Labor in the 1960s

In 1960, Evatt was persuaded to retire as Leader of the Opposition.³⁰ In his place, the caucus elected the, Melbourne Catholic and former Deputy Leader, Arthur Augustus Calwell.³¹ Calwell was both an avid amateur historian, with a particular interest in American revolutionary and civil war history and a paternal descendant of an American who had migrated to Victoria during the Gold Rush.³² He was unexpectedly replaced as Deputy by the forty three year old Sydney barrister Edward Gough Whitlam.³³ Calwell's election as Leader came during a tumultuous time for the Australian Labour movement. Rent asunder by the ideological split of 1955, the ALP had by that stage been out of Federal Government for 11 years.³⁴ Having lost office in 1949, they would have to wait until 1972 before they again had control of the nation's foreign policy.³⁵ Calwell's leadership traversed an evolution in the firmament of the Alliance; a period that coincided with extensive foreign policy challenges, invited or

³⁰ Graham Freudenberg, *Calwell, Arthur Augustus (1896 - 1973)*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/calwell-arthur-augustus-9667>>, viewed 2 February 2012.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 279.

³⁵ E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), p. 1.

unexpected, for Australia. It is possible to trace the decline in Calwell's electability along the contours of Australia's foreign policy ventures during the 1960s.

When Calwell ascended to the parliamentary leadership of the ALP, the implications of a Cold War focused on Asia were evident.³⁶ American intervention in Vietnam in 1954 gradually escalated until 1965 when open conflict, including the commitment of Australian troops led to the second hot war of the Cold War.³⁷ In addition, Indonesian claims to West Papua had led to the incorporation of the territory by Indonesia following mediation between the Netherlands (the departing colonial power) and the United States. It was against this backdrop of rapidly evolving and complex regional events that the development of the Alliance with the Coalition Government grew to a state of unprecedented intimacy.

Furthermore, with the Government unlikely to depart from a traditional conception of Australia's status as a 'white nation' in the Pacific, and embrace the otherness of Asia, there was little alternative to increasingly seeking security through the development of a closer Alliance. Moreover, the urgency of the situation had been underlined by Britain's obvious reluctance to remain as a power in the Asia Pacific; a direction which first became apparent with Britain's decision to seek membership of the European Economic Community.³⁸ The eventual departure of Britain, which announced its decision in 1965 to withdraw 'East of Suez', altered Australia's sense

³⁶ McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite?', pp. 76 – 77.

³⁷ For 1965 Australian troop commitment to Vietnam see Paul Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 118-31; P.G. Edwards & Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 351-75; Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1977), pp. 46-54.

³⁸ Although Britain announced its intention to join the European Economic Community in 1961, it was not formally admitted until 1973, see Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the British Ideal* (Melbourne: MUP, 2001), pp. 247 – 48.

of regional security; a concern that was starkly illustrated by Indonesia's Confrontation of the new Malaysian Federation between 1963 and 1965.³⁹ The Government's appraisal of this new state of affairs qualified its assertiveness in seeking greater integration with Washington and particularly with US global defence strategy.

The decision to allow the United States to build a communications station at North West Cape in 1962 and its ratification by parliament in 1963 reflected the Government's determination to place the Alliance at the centre of Australian foreign policy.⁴⁰ Though the Government evidently desired greater integration with America militarily, it also sent a clear signal that Australia was prepared to pay a high premium, including the sacrifice of sovereignty, for a more intimate Alliance relationship.⁴¹

Labor provided conditional support for the establishment of the base, but because of its opposition to the relinquishment of Australian territorial and military sovereignty, was accused by the Government of being anti-American.⁴² Yet, its ambivalence was not towards the United States, but towards the kind of Alliance

³⁹ Britain did not withdraw its strategic reserves from the far east until 1971, though it had been mooted in 1965, the policy was publicly formalised by the 1967 Defence Whitepaper. For Britain's retreat from empire, see James Curran & Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation Australia After Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010), p. 45; David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and Britain's Retreat from Empire* (Melbourne, MUP, 2002); John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The retreat from empire in the post-war world* (London: Macmillan, 1988). For Confrontation see John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000); Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, pp. 253 – 56; T.B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968), pp. 44 – 73.

⁴⁰ Graham Freudenberg, *a figure of speech* (Brisbane: Wiley, 2005), pp. 49 – 53.

⁴¹ Garfield Barwick, *AMEMBASSY Canberra to Garfield Barwick* (7 May 1963), quoted in St Barclay, *Friends in High Places*, p. 129.

⁴² Harold Holt, *CPD*, H. of R., 10 March 1964 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 409.

relationship the Government was creating. Labor was opposed to a relationship in which the junior partner, Australia, was willing to diminish the rights of an independent sovereign nation in order to enhance the American commitment to Australian security. While this charge was particular to the issue of North West Cape, it was not unprecedented in Labor's response to foreign affairs. Throughout the 1920s, the visceral hangover of the 1916 – 17 conscription debates was used to impugn Labor's 'loyalty' to Britain and its commitment to the post-war imperial defence scheme.⁴³ During the late 1930s, under the leadership of John Curtin, Labor had to develop an alternate foreign policy that met the strategic imperative of a rapidly changing international environment.⁴⁴ In an echo of the later events of 1963, Labor's earlier trials exhibited the conviction that Australia must at all times be the decider of its involvement in affairs directly affecting the national interest.

Historiographical Traditions and the Alliance

The intention of this thesis is to investigate Labor's vision for the Alliance between 1960 and 1967. Furthermore, this thesis aims to provide a broader contribution to the scholarly understanding of the Alliance during the Cold War. By shedding light on the way in which Labor understood the Alliance, this thesis cuts against the conventional wisdom which holds that this era was one of unprecedented domestic consensus on the Alliance and the commensurate support for US foreign policy.

By refocusing analysis on the Opposition's vision for the Alliance during the 1960s this thesis has the capacity to illuminate an overlooked dimension of Australian foreign policy during the period. Admittedly, there are some lone voices discussing, in at least cursory detail, the response of the Labor Party to the foreign policy of the

⁴³ See for example James Curran, *Curtin's Empire* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 29; D.W. Rawson, *Labor in Vain?* (Melbourne: Longmans, 1966), p. 38.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 94 – 100.

1960s. But it is almost universally a secondary corollary to an analysis of the ideas and actions of the conservative Governments in power between 1949 and 1972.⁴⁵ This is not unusual. Conservative hegemony had been well established through the political mastery of the Menzies years and the Governments he led continued to hold sway after his retirement. Labor was in disarray, both electorally and internally. Yet, despite the party's electoral incapacity, treatments of the Coalition Governments' conduct in external affairs do not explore in satisfactory depth the connection between domestic politics and the creation of Australian foreign policy during the period.

There are three schools of thought within the historiographical tradition of the Alliance. The first perspective reflects the influence of the 'radical nationalist' strand of Australian historiography.⁴⁶ In this rendering of Australia's foreign policy the Labor administration of Curtin, and Chifley had forged a distinctive, sovereign and independent foreign policy in the tumult of the Second World War and the years immediately following it. The Labor Party is cast as the party of virulent Australian nationalism. It is a nationalism that is thwarted by the ascension and dominance of the conservative Governments that held office for over two decades.

In place of this assertive nationalism, the conservative Governments' foreign policy actively and enthusiastically replaced the absent protection of the United Kingdom with that of the United States. As Humphrey McQueen has forcefully

⁴⁵McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 338.

⁴⁶ Works typical of the radical nationalist school include Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism* (Sydney, 1988); Philip Bell & Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); L.G. Churchward, *Australia and America 1788-1972: An Alternative History* (Sydney: Alternative Publisher Cooperative, 1979); Noel McLachlan, *Waiting for the Revolution: A History of Australian Nationalism* (Melbourne: Ringwood, 1989); Humphrey McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov: Arguing with Australian History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

argued, Australia ‘switched from British sycophant to American lickspittle’.⁴⁷ In a similar vein, L.G. Churchward has argued that the equality and independence exuded by the Chifley Labor Government was transformed under Menzies to the point where Australia became an ‘American satellite’.⁴⁸ McLean has noted that the radical nationalist interpretation has ‘exerted a profound influence’, and further that it still ‘pervades much of the scholarly literature’.⁴⁹ However, the narrative of thwarted nationalism places too great an emphasis on the Curtin and Chifley Labor Governments as a watershed in Labor’s departure from the desire to attain protection in the form of American and British security.⁵⁰ They had actively sought after the war, and throughout the 1960s continued to rely upon, the protection afforded by treaty arrangements with Washington. Therefore, the claim that Australia’s nascent independent assertiveness gave way to a subordinating national status constrained by the Alliance throughout the 1950s and 1960s overlooks the basic fact that both sides of politics viewed the Alliance as essential to the conduct of Australia’s foreign policy.⁵¹ In part, the radical nationalist school of thought is a product of its time. Conditioned by the Cold War, the scholarship of the period exhibited the broadly drawn divisions of public opinion on the matter of the Alliance, and the related vision for Australia and her place in the world.

⁴⁷ McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ Churchward, *Australia and America*, p. 165.

⁴⁹ McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite’, p. 66.

⁵⁰ St Barclay, *Friends in High Places*, pp. 1 – 13.

⁵¹ For a discussion of Australia’s desire for great power alliances see James Curran, *Curtin’s Empire* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011); McLean, ‘From British Colony to American Satellite’; David McLean, ‘Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review’, *The International History Review*, 23, 2 (June 2001), pp. 299 – 321.

This conditioning is equally visible in the other discernible tradition of Alliance historiography. The alternate conception of the Alliance is one in which Australia had to pay an insurance premium for the assurance of American aid in the event of a defence requirement.⁵² The examples of Norman Harper and T.B. Millar in particular demonstrate the tendency of this interpretation to remain in orbit of the officially held Government position. Harper wrote in the 1980s, on the opposite side of the Cold War cultural divide to the radical nationalists, after the emergence of archival material that made scholarly re-evaluation possible.⁵³ He concluded in relation to the Vietnam insurance premium paid on the Alliance, that it was ‘important for Australia to stand up and be counted’.⁵⁴ Millar, perhaps reluctantly, acknowledged the cost to Australia, stating that, ‘Australia has contributed more to ANZUS than she received from it’.⁵⁵ However, he also asserted that Australia had received an ‘intangible benefit’ from the Alliance, which provided a ‘sense of assurance of help in future danger’.⁵⁶ Millar and Harper typify a particular vision of the Alliance, one that like its radical nationalist counterpart has had a remarkable longevity in popular and scholarly conceptions of the Alliance.

Though currently less prominent than either the radical nationalist or orthodox schools of Alliance historiography, the persuasive work of Neville Meaney and David McLean is increasingly plotting a revisionist course in scholarly conceptions of the Australia and America’s relationship between federation and the 1970s. Meaney

⁵² McLean, ‘Australia in the Cold War’, p. 302.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 304.

⁵⁴ Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian American Relations between 1900 and 1975* (St Lucia: QUP, 1987), p. 324.

⁵⁵ T.B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations, 1788-1977* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1978), pp. 221 – 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

primarily focuses on the idea of a ‘community of interest’ and its conflict with a ‘community of culture’ to explain the bipartisan search for collective security arrangements with the United States and the increasing intimacy of the Alliance during the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁷ In Meaney’s conception, the culture of interest was derived from Australia’s practical assessment of its remoteness from Britain and the consequent conflict that this realisation generated.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Meaney argues that the underlying nationalist construct of British race patriotism or the ‘community of culture’ was often diminished when Australian policymakers thought it did not serve the national interest.⁵⁹ McLean, though largely within the orbit of Meaney’s two constructs, has advanced the idea that interest rather than sentiment shaped Australian desires for American protection.⁶⁰ He notes that the increasing intimacy of the Alliance, rather than reflecting a satellite status or a contraction of action, reflects the determination of Australian policymakers to use the American Alliance to further the protection of the national interest, which was crucially derived from Australian rather than American assessments.⁶¹ That this appeared to contract Australian freedom of action, he argues, is largely because the Governments of the period formulated foreign policy on the basis of a ‘flawed understanding of the limitations of the US alliance as a vehicle for Australian interests’.⁶² Meaney and McLean’s approach offers a far more balanced analysis of the impulses that informed Australia’s thinking on the Alliance.

⁵⁷ See in particular Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, pp. 76 – 90; Neville Meaney, ‘The United States’, in W.J. Hudson, eds., *Australia In World Affairs 1971 – 75* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 163 – 209.

⁵⁸ ‘Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, p. 87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ McLean, ‘Australia in the Cold War’, pp. 299 – 321.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Interestingly, there is also an existing and rich vein of historiography occupied with discerning a ‘Labor tradition’ in Australian foreign policy which is characterised by a commitment to liberal internationalist principles, primarily through an engagement with multilateralism and advocacy for economic and institutional development. Proponents of this history, such as Gareth Evans, David Lee and Christopher Waters, have relied heavily on comparing the continuities between the Labor Governments of the 1940s and the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating Governments.⁶³ These contributions are valuable in illustrating some of the principles that shaped Labor’s approach to foreign relations in the 1960s. However, absent from their conceptions of a ‘Labor tradition’ is the primacy of bilateral relationships, primarily with America and an analysis of how the long period in opposition shaped Labor’s later approach to Australian foreign policy.

None of these historiographical outlooks provides an adequate explanation of the Labor Party’s vision for the Alliance. They largely omit the domestic political impulses that influenced the conservative Governments’ approach to the Alliance during the height of the Cold War. Therefore, this thesis offers a challenge to the prevailing views that have long held sway over popular and scholarly conceptions of the Labor Party’s vision for the Alliance in Australian foreign policy.

The primary research for this thesis is derived from a number of sources both in Australia and overseas. The Australian sources are predominantly drawn from the

⁶³ The most prominent examples of this vein of historiography are the essays by Gareth Evans, ‘The Labor Tradition: A View from the 1990s’; Christopher Waters, ‘Creating a Tradition: The Foreign Policy of the Curtin and Chifley Governments’; David Lee, ‘The Curtin and Chifley Governments: Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation’; and Gregory Pemberton ‘Whitlam and the Labor Tradition’, all from David Lee and Christopher Waters, eds., *Evatt to Evans – The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997).

extensive collection of Arthur Calwell's private papers, held by the National Library of Australia (NLA). I have also conducted research into the official Government records, held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington D.C. and The National Archives (TNA), London. Using Arthur Calwell's private papers, I have incorporated material ranging from speeches, public statements and press releases, to private correspondence and press clippings. I have supplemented my research at the NLA with material gathered from London and Washington, the majority of which comprise memoranda of visits by ALP leaders, official embassy cables between Canberra and Washington and personal correspondence between politicians. Much of this material has not yet been used by Australian historians.

This thesis follows a predominantly chronological structure examining the significant foreign policy issues encountered by the ALP between 1960 and 1967. However, it should be noted that many of these events occurred concurrently, and so while each case that is explored may deal with one or two particular intellectual or structural issues, it is likely that all of the cases examined exhibited similar pressures and features. Taken together, each chapter is written to provide an insight into the forces that shaped Labor's approach to and vision for the Alliance.

Chapter One explores the ideological and structural constraints of the Labor Party's foreign policy-making process through the connected issues of Australia's role in the international nuclear debate, and the establishment of the North West Cape naval communications base. It highlights the way in which ideological divisions, formed by the split of 1955, inhibited Labor's capacity to manage the Alliance during a period in which nuclear testing and disarmament transfixed the geopolitical environment. Furthermore, I use the case of North West Cape to explore how an

extra-parliamentary policy-making process constrained the parliamentary leadership from advancing a coherent Labor narrative on an issue that attracted significant public attention. These forces remained unchanged past 1967.

The second chapter explores how Labor dealt with the challenges presented by the end of European colonialism in Asia and the consequent rise of Asian nationalism in the post-war period. Situating Labor's responses to the case of West Papua and Confrontation in the broader international political environment of the early 1960s, I examine both Labor's opposition to Indonesia's annexation of West Papua, and its concern that with Britain's retreat from empire, America would not fill the void.

The third chapter focuses on Labor's opposition to Australian and American commitments to the Vietnam War. It firstly assesses the implications of a flawed Cold War intellectual framework that shaped Australian and American responses to the conflict in Indochina. Similarly, I contrast this assessment against the opposing appraisal held by the Labor Party. My analysis of the ideology that dictated policy during the period provides a foundation for exploring the alternative policy Labor outlined, looking particularly at the importance of economic and institutional development as the basis for any solution of the conflict. This chapter also evaluates Arthur Calwell's personal perspectives on how Vietnam inhibited America's moral force as the leader of the free world.

This thesis will argue that between 1960 and 1967 Labor's fortunes followed the contours of their management of the Alliance and that while they were ardently committed to the principles of liberal internationalism, they were far more pragmatic in adopting ANZUS as the fundamental component of Australian foreign policy. This thesis will also explore how Labor came to terms with the rapid changes forced on a

predominantly white nation by the retreat of empire and the advent of decolonisation. Finally, this thesis will highlight how Labor conceived of America's role in the world and the tension this created when it was compelled to oppose American policy in South East Asia without seeking to abandon the Alliance itself.

“WE DO NOT SAY WE ARE UNITED”:

The Labor Party: An Independent Ally?

During the early 1960s Labor was confronted by the reality of American nuclear power in the Cold War. The policy debates over North West Cape (hereafter NWC), nuclear testing and disarmament reflected Labor’s vision of the Alliance and its role in an independent Australian foreign policy. Moreover, these debates illustrated the central tension in Labor’s approach to the Alliance. As McLean notes, ‘by the end of the 1950s, the US Alliance had acquired pre-eminence in Australian defence policy’.¹ In a hostile and uncertain international environment, Labor’s determination to hold views independent from the United States seemed reckless. While there can be no doubt that the Labor Party, and Calwell, wholeheartedly supported ANZUS and the security provided by an increasingly intimate Alliance, sometimes the measures required to maintain it were a ‘grim and awful necessity’.²

This chapter will highlight how the ideological composition of the party influenced the debate on nuclear disarmament and testing. Placing the ideological tension in context, this chapter will examine the implications of the 1955 party split. Arguably, it is impossible to understand the disagreements over disarmament and NWC without exploring how and why such a state of affairs existed. Moreover, the split, and the subsequent formation of the Democratic Labor Party (hereafter DLP) eroded Labor’s

¹ David McLean, *From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52, no. 1 (2006), p. 66.

² Gough Whitlam on the North West Cape Agreement (1963) quoted in R.G. Neale, ‘Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1963’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 9, no. 2 (November 1963), p. 139.

electability in Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland.³ Without this electoral albatross, Labor may have been far more capable of providing a unified political narrative on the crucial issues of foreign policy confronting Australia during the 1960s.

Using the NWC debate, this chapter will explore the policy-making structure of the party and the impact it had on the parliamentary leadership's ability to direct Labor foreign policy. Understanding the internal factors shaping Labor's vision of the Alliance sheds light not only on these two cases, but more broadly, on the pressures that inhibited Labor's capacity to respond to all of the foreign policy issues that confronted Australia in the 1960s. Consequently, this chapter is designed to provide two separate components that taken together illustrate the nature of the Labor Party, and the forces behind the various foreign policy responses that the ALP grappled with during the period.

A very foreign schism

On May 30 1964, *The Economist* summed up the damage the split of 1955 had wrought on the Labor Party lamenting that, 'When Dr. Evatt destroyed the Labor Party, he did so for a generation'.⁴ In October 1954, Evatt had infamously distributed a press statement accusing 'a small minority of...members' of creating an 'almost intolerable situation – calculated to deflect... the pursuit of established Labor

³ Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 256 – 90.

⁴ "Australian Politics", *The Economist*, 30 May 1964, p. 969; This article was referenced in The Labour Split: Present Realities from Robert L. Walkinshaw to Department of State, 3 September 1964, RG 84, General Records US Embassy Canberra, 1962 – 67, Box 1, NARA.

objectives and ideals'.⁵ It was the breaking point in what had been a spiraling internecine conflict between Catholic right wing industrial groups and largely Protestant left wing members who had cooperated with Communist controlled unions.⁶ Seven members of caucus, who were linked to the groups, were expelled.⁷ Those who left formed the political and social basis, alongside B.A. Santamaria's National Civic Council, for the Labor Party (anti-Communist), later to become the DLP.⁸ The provision of DLP preferences to the Coalition was, arguably, one of the primary reasons for the longevity of conservative rule.⁹

Critical to the split's permanence was its profound connection to Labor's broader response to the ideological struggle of the Cold War. Notably, Whitlam recalls a conversation with John Michael Mullens, one of the parliamentarians expelled from caucus, which epitomizes the emotionally charged atmosphere of the 1950s. After a debate on Indochina, Mullens said, 'I can't forget that there are two million of my fellow-Catholics there who are going to be massacred'.¹⁰ This emotive appraisal illustrated a prevailing set of assumptions amongst the groups; first, that membership of an international Catholic identity placed pressure on a Labor political identity that, especially in Victoria, flirted with the Communist Party of Australia; and second, that the growing strength of the Communist Party in Asia represented not only an attack

⁵ Herbert V. Evatt, *Press Statement on The Movement* (1954) quoted in Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire Publishing, 1970), p. 180; see also Alan Reid, "Evatt's Hydrogen Bomb", *Sun*, 5 October 1954, p. 1.

⁶ Murray, *The Split*, pp. 13 – 26.

⁷ McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 276 – 77.

⁸ Murray, *The Split*, p. 249.

⁹ Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1977), p. 7.

¹⁰ E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), p. 32.

upon the Catholic faithful, but also the emergence of a monolithic and aggressive bloc that stood against the preservation of Western civilization.¹¹ In these circumstances, the way the party dealt with domestic and international Communism became an emblem for a conflict that would pit friends, families and colleagues against each other in one of the most bitter and enduring scenes of political division Australia has ever witnessed.¹²

Importantly, the split affected individual states differently. Although the epicenter of the split was in Victoria, there were also significant ramifications for Western Australia and Queensland.¹³ In New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania, the split was largely mitigated through cooperation between the party and the Catholic dioceses.¹⁴ Critically, the overall impact on the Federal Party was a weakened centre and right faction, destroying Labor's ideological equilibrium and increasing the left faction's power. Consequently, the Alliance and its role in Australian foreign policy was significant in determining, and in turn influenced by, factional alignments in the Federal ALP.¹⁵ Greenwood notes that 'vital differences' between the factions were on public display throughout the early 1960s.¹⁶ During the debate on nuclear disarmament these vital differences were starkly illustrated.

¹¹ Murray, *The Split*, pp. 5 – 7.

¹² For examples of the manifestations of conflict during the period, see McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 256 – 90; Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart* (Sydney: Knopf, 2002), pp. 4 – 11.

¹³ For a history of the split in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, see Murray, *The Split*, pp. 221 – 329.

¹⁴ For a history of the split in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania, see *Ibid*, pp. 281 – 307, 329 – 351.

¹⁵ Kim C. Beazley, 'Federal labor and the American installations: Prelude to government', *Australian Outlook*, 33, no. 2 (1979), p. 167.

¹⁶ Gordon Greenwood, 'Australian Foreign Policy in Action', in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper, eds., *Australia in World Affairs 1961 – 1965* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968), p. 15.

The dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki condemned the world to the horrible truth of nuclear war. Emperor Hirohito, in his public acceptance of Japan’s surrender, announced that the world had seen at first hand a ‘new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives’.¹⁷ Sadly, Hirohito’s message was left unheeded. As tensions between East and West settled into a Cold War, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and later France conducted tests that fostered the build-up of increasingly advanced atomic arsenals capable of obliterating human civilization. In May 1955, the UN Disarmament Commission began negotiations ‘to bring to an end the escalation of nuclear weapons development’.¹⁸ By 1958, the Eisenhower administration had agreed to join with the British and Russians to discuss the ‘discontinuance of nuclear tests’.¹⁹ It seemed that a determination existed on all sides to take tentative steps towards the ultimate objective of universal disarmament. Although American reluctance ensured that the 1958 Geneva conference did not provide a formal moratorium, or a Test Ban Treaty, an informal moratorium lasted until August 1961.²⁰

Operating in an uneasy truce, the new Democratic Kennedy administration was quixotic about the potential for a nuclear test ban. During talks with Premier Khrushchev in June 1961, two months before the resumption of Soviet testing,

¹⁷ Shōwa Hirohito, *The surrender of Japan* (15 August 1945) contained in, *speeches that changed the world: the stories and transcripts that made history* (Sydney: Murdoch Books, 2005), p. 116.

¹⁸ Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, *JFK In History – The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*, The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, USA, <<http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty.aspx#>>, viewed 1 September 2012.

¹⁹ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the Whitehouse* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), p. 451.

²⁰ A Test Ban Treaty had been considered as early as 1952 see Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 450.

Kennedy still hoped to ‘try again in Geneva’.²¹ However, by August the USSR resumed atmospheric and underground testing.²² Dismayed by the truculence of the Soviet decision to increase ‘the danger of a thermo-nuclear holocaust’, Washington announced the resumption of atmospheric nuclear testing.²³ The dangerously volatile state of affairs, compounded by the intractability of situations in Berlin and South East Asia, threatened to explode in October 1962. Soviet placement of missiles in Cuba edged the world out onto a nuclear precipice. Only painstaking diplomacy and concessions from each side halted the spiral towards a third world war.²⁴ It was against this complex and fast evolving international scene that the ALP disagreed on how best to end the perpetual ‘twilight of death’ in a world dominated by the bomb.²⁵

Less than three weeks after the United States resumed atmospheric nuclear tests over the Pacific Ocean, Calwell told the House of Representatives that the ALP was committed to the ‘permanent banning of nuclear weapons tests by all nations’.²⁶

Furthermore, he urged the House to endorse Labor’s 1961 election campaign promise

²¹ President John F. Kennedy met Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the United States Embassy in Vienna on 3 June 1961. Kennedy’s offer of a resumption of the Geneva talks, broken off by the Eisenhower administration in 1959, was based on his desire to establish the basis for a formal moratorium on nuclear testing, see Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days*, pp. 358 – 74.

²² Statement by President John F. Kennedy – Nuclear Testing and Disarmament, 2 March 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1224, Box 270, MS4738, NLA.

²³ John F. Kennedy, *Remarks on the resumption of Soviet nuclear testing* (30 August 1961) quoted in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the Whitehouse* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), p. 448.

²⁴ The Soviet leader placed missiles in Cuba to offset the American missiles in Turkey, a country that shared a similar geographical boundary with the Soviet Union. President Kennedy was informed during the crisis that the strategic balance of power had not shifted. However, the implications for the President’s public relations and the public reaction to the Soviet decision added to the tension. Kennedy agreed to remove obsolete missiles from Turkey. In return the U.S.S.R would remove all missiles from Cuba. For a history of Khrushchev’s motives see Fedor Burlatskiy, ‘The Lessons of Personal Diplomacy’ *Problems of Communism*, 41, no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 8 – 14; for an account of Kennedy’s approach to the crisis see Ernest R. May & Philip D. Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997); George W. Ball, “JFK’s Big Moment” *New York Review of Books*, 13 February 1992, pp. 16 – 20.

²⁵ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R, 15 May 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2323.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

to pursue ‘through the United Nations’, the ‘realisation of ‘universal disarmament’.²⁷ Calwell knew that such a statement was anathema to the Government, whose attitude, as Grimshaw lamented, was to ‘once again adopt, virtually without criticism, US policy’.²⁸ Despite supporting the principle of both disarmament and a test ban, the Government was incapable of supporting Calwell because of two issues.²⁹ First, the Government was highly aware that Communist China was attempting to develop a nuclear weapon. Sir Garfield Barwick asserted that any Australian participation in disarmament must remain aware that Communist China was a ‘power...convinced of the inevitability of war and consciously working for elimination of the type of society of which Australia is a part’.³⁰ This fear was prominent in the Government’s justification for opposing the centerpiece of Labor’s anti-nuclear policy, a Southern Hemisphere nuclear free zone.

Second, throughout the early 1960s, Australia had become acutely aware that its freedom of independent action in the realm of foreign affairs was contracting. Australia’s original great power protector, Britain was gradually leaving the region, seeking its future in Europe.³¹ This withdrawal from Australia’s direct sphere of interest led to a diminution of Canberra’s capacity to take an independent stand on issues not supported by Washington. In a changing region where Australia’s historically derived status was being quickly eroded, subordination to the United States was the easier course in the conduct of Australia’s foreign affairs. To advocate,

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 2322 – 23.

²⁸ Charles Grimshaw, ‘Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1962’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 8, no. 2 (November 1962), p. 143.

²⁹ Garfield Barwick, *CPD*, H. of R, 5 April 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 1367.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 1369.

³¹ Grimshaw, ‘Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1962’, p. 145.

as Calwell did, that Australia should maintain the Alliance as the basis for Australian security, but also to seek an independent stance on issues where Australia's national interest diverged from Washington was always going to raise the ire of the Government and, significantly, their main ally.

Disarmament and nuclear testing were connected issues where Labor's views were simply incompatible with the actions of Washington. At the ANZUS council meeting, a fortnight prior to Calwell's speech, American Secretary of State Dean Rusk had publicly mused that the futures of Australia and the US were 'inextricably intertwined'.³² He hammered home this message in the context of the nuclear question at the Parliamentary dinner held at the meeting's conclusion, asserting that 'the President...will not accept people who want their kind of world order to move ahead of the free world in this nuclear field'.³³ This was an explicit reminder: that Australian acquiescence in US nuclear policy was expected; and, moreover, that America's assessments of Asian Communism ought to worry Canberra as much as it concerned Washington. Yet Calwell was simply not in a position to publicly demur towards United States' actions.

Between 1960 and 1967 Labor's policy-making process was essentially the same as it had been at Federation.³⁴ Because the ALP was founded as the political wing of a broader Labour movement, trade unions had disproportionate control of state conferences, the peak state policy bodies. These state conferences in turn elected delegates to the Federal Executive and Conference. The policy statements of Federal

³² Public Remarks by U.S Secretary of State Dean Rusk on 1962 ANZUS meeting, May 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 716, Box 212, MS4738, NLA.

³³ Dean Rusk's comments at the Parliamentary Dinner were incorporated in Hansard by Prime Minister Menzies see Robert Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 15 May 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2325.

³⁴ Arthur Calwell, *Labor's Role in Modern Society* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1963), p. 52.

Conference became decided party policy. Moreover, all Labor members, especially parliamentarians, were required to uphold the platform. Effectively, this subordinated the parliamentary leadership to the Federal Conference.³⁵

Following the split, Conference and the Federal Executive mirrored the ideological composition of the state conferences. The strength of the Left faction, while not in the absolute majority, manifested itself in the Executive, while the parliamentary wing remained the bastion of the Right faction.³⁶ It was therefore possible for the parliamentary wing to carry a minority view, which the public took for the party position, while the formal party position was decided by the Conference. Though the Left would often soften its stance in light of overwhelming public opposition, this trend of ideological division, supported by a policy-making process that was both anachronistic and had been captured by the Left, undermined the party's capacity to express unanimity on the significant foreign policy questions of the period.

On 5 May 1962, Labor's Federal Executive met in what was the first of two attempts to decide the party's position on nuclear disarmament and testing. They declared that the party was opposed 'to nuclear tests at any time by any nation'.³⁷ Furthermore, they asserted that Australia ought to 'declare that it would agree not to manufacture, acquire or receive nuclear weapons'.³⁸ It was a position that Calwell and Whitlam – who were not delegates to the Federal Executive - could not tolerate. Yet, the only victory for the parliamentary leadership, in this meeting, was the inclusion of

³⁵ Previously Labor had endured conflict between the Parliamentary Leadership and the Conference over the conscription debates in World War II see D.W. Rawson, *Labor in Vain?* (Melbourne: Longmans, 1966), p. 38; James Curran, *Curtin's Empire* (Melbourne: CUP, 2011), p. 90.

³⁶ Beazley, 'Federal labor and the American installations', p. 167.

³⁷ ALP Statement of the Federal Executive Re Nuclear Testing and Disarmament, 4 May 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 623, Box 201, MS4738, NLA.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

a proposal that called on the Government to initiate a conference on the establishment of a Southern Hemisphere nuclear free zone.³⁹

Whitlam, who was the progenitor of the Southern Hemisphere proposal, advocated the immediate initiation, by the Government, of a conference which sought ‘with all of the nations in the Southern Hemisphere’, the establishment of a ‘nuclear free zone’ that would extend the 1960 Antarctic Treaty from its perimeter at the 60th parallel of latitude to the equator.⁴⁰ Contrary to the Government’s opposition, this proposal Whitlam asserted ‘would in no way jeopardize American or Western defence’.⁴¹ Moreover, such arrangements would ‘in no way promote or facilitate anti-Western aggression’.⁴² Rather he argued that ‘Australia’s defence would be promoted if other countries were party to such a proposal’.⁴³ Fundamentally, Whitlam’s proposal was designed to mollify the anti-nuclear Left while not necessarily locking a future Labor government into a strict anti-nuclear policy.

Critically, these were the publicly held positions of the Party until its second meeting on 5 July 1962. More than any difference of opinion on the policy, the interlude between the party’s first public statement and the July resolution revealed the conflict between the factions over how to deal with the issue. Calwell was placed in the awkward position of advancing a policy that went against both public sentiment

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ E.G. Whitlam, *CPD*, H. of R., 15 May 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2327.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2329.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

and the warnings from Washington.⁴⁴ In the parliamentary debate, less than a fortnight later, Calwell attempted to mitigate any potential damage the party's temporary rebuke to American policy might cause, stating that the:

United States has a dual responsibility in the world today. First, the United States must look to its own security. ... Secondly, her position as leader and protector of the Western alliance imposes upon the United States a heavy responsibility... Recognising this, the Labor Party has always supported the American view that any nuclear arms ban must be part of a general program of total and complete disarmament... Australia has its part to play in the Western alliance; and that implies our right, or rather duty, to defend ourselves in the event of war by whatever means circumstances may dictate.⁴⁵

Calwell had tacitly acknowledged that Australian acquiescence to American testing was a *fait accompli*. Moreover, he contradicted the Executive: a Labor government would reserve the right to use nuclear weapons if the circumstances dictated. In the context of the Executive's statement on the matter Calwell could not be said to have expressed formal Labor policy. The Right, mainly led by NSW, was dismayed that the Left would equivocate on the matter, when it was clear that doing so gave credence to the Government's arguments against Labor's policies. They were rightly concerned that even the mere perception of a divide on such a momentous question would harden the public suspicion of the ALP's ability to handle questions of foreign policy satisfactorily.

Yet, as long as the Executive delayed the decision on what construed formal party policy, the Left would continue to advocate a position that valued absolute idealism over compromise and pragmatism. This was explicitly illustrated by Leslie Haylen's representation of the Left's views in the May parliamentary debate. Haylen

⁴⁴ On 5 May 1962 a Gallup poll found that a majority of Australians were in favour of the resumption of American nuclear tests. See E.H. Cox "Australian's Favour American Tests", *The Herald*, 5 May 1962, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R, 15 May 1962, p. 2322.

emphasized that nuclear disarmament and testing was a ‘moral issue’.⁴⁶ To Haylen, it did ‘not matter whether it was Khrushchev or Kennedy letting off bombs’.⁴⁷ This obviously contrasted starkly with the majority view of the parliamentary party, and certainly with the view of both Calwell and Whitlam. Yet, to Haylen it was entirely satisfactory that there should be ‘violent feelings in our party over this matter’.⁴⁸ Extending this defence of the equivocation within the ALP, Haylen argued that though ‘we do not say that we are united’, on the nuclear question, there is unanimity in the party’s desire to ‘save the world for the peoples of the world’.⁴⁹ Furthermore, to Haylen, militancy was entirely pragmatic. Basing Australia’s security on the question of ‘how much the Americans have got and how much the Russians have got’ gambled everything on a ‘balance of terror’.⁵⁰ In reality, this position did not stray particularly far from the principles the ALP universally espoused. Nor, it might be argued, did it appear very different from the position the Kennedy administration held.⁵¹ However, it diverged from the dominant perspective of the parliamentary party in its refusal to acknowledge the incremental nature of any disarmament policy and the constraints of the Cold War.

By July, with public opinion firmly against the left’s position, the Executive grudgingly agreed to the compromise outlined by the leadership.⁵² In what *The Age* called a ‘major victory for the Right wing’, both the proposal for a conference on a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone and the reservation to use nuclear weapons

⁴⁶ Leslie Haylen, *CPD*, H. of R., 15 May 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2334.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2335.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2334.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2335.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2335.

⁵¹ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 487 – 88.

⁵² See for example: “Inspection, Control in Labor’s Bomb Policy”, *The Age*, 5 July 1962, p. 3; “ALP Executive quizzes Calwell on N-weapons”, *The Sun*, 3 July 1962.

was included in the party platform.⁵³ The policy now read, ‘Labor declares it will not be the first nation to stockpile nuclear weapons in its territories in peacetime’.⁵⁴ This amendment provided a resolution to two separate problems. First, it seemingly nullified the Government charge that Labor would leave Australia defenceless should China obtain a nuclear weapon.⁵⁵ Second, it provided a compromise for the Left who, while still ardently opposed to any possession of nuclear weapons, acknowledged the domestic implications of a policy that would assist the Government’s attempts to paint the party as weak on defence.

Unfortunately, this was a pyrrhic victory for the parliamentary leadership. Declaring two alternate policies in the space of two months had lent unfounded credibility to the Government’s claim that Labor could not be trusted on foreign policy. If there was any opportunity for the Labor party to ameliorate the public perspective on this issue it was decisively lost during the Cuban missile crisis. Soviet aggression in Cuba lent legitimacy to any paranoid claim of Asian Communist expansionism. Taken collectively alongside the other major international and domestic issues of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament, the party’s internal disagreement over disarmament assisted the conservative Government’s landslide re-election in November 1963. Reflecting on why Labor lost the election, the *Bulletin* chastised Calwell on ‘expecting the people of this country to have swallowed the absurdities of

⁵³ “Inspection, Control in Labor’s Bomb Policy”, *The Age*, 5 July 1962, p. 3.

⁵⁴ ALP Statement of the Federal Executive Re Nuclear Testing and Disarmament, 4 May 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 623, Box 201, MS4738, NLA.

⁵⁵ Though Labor decided on their policy in July, the Government continued to attack the party’s nuclear policy, see for example “Labor’s Nuclear Policy is Unrealistic”, *The West Australian*, 8 November 1962, p. 6; “ALP Defence thinking is out of date”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1962, p. 2; “Danger in A-ban Seen by Barwick”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1962, p. 4.

a nuclear-free zone which would leave this country virtually defenceless'.⁵⁶ Though centrally concerned with the issue of Australian sovereignty, the imbroglio over NWC brought sharply into focus the impact on Australian foreign policy of the Alliance in a nuclear age.

“We will never cede one inch of our territory, or permit the diminution by one iota of the rights of our Government and people”

On 17 May 1962 Menzies announced the Government's approval for the establishment of an American naval communications facility at NWC.⁵⁷ It was the Prime Minister's only statement in both the parliament and in public until 26 March 1963. Indeed, it seemed as if the aim of the Government was to misrepresent the purpose of the base long enough for the ALP to question its establishment. Barwick described the facility as 'a wireless station, nothing more nor less'.⁵⁸ But NWC was far more than a wireless station. It was actually a key installation in the US nuclear defence network, capable of sending radio communications to submarines armed with Polaris missiles in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans.⁵⁹

Before examining the impact Labor's policy-making structure had in impeding the parliamentary leadership's capacity to decide on ALP policy, it is worth exploring the reasons the base became such an issue. On 9 May 1963, Australia and the US signed the NWC Agreement that provided for the establishment of the station.⁶⁰ Essentially, this granted the US a lease for a minimum of twenty-five years over an area of

⁵⁶ "A Resounding Victory for the Government", *The Bulletin*, 7 December 1963, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Robert Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 17 May 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2449.

⁵⁸ Freudenberg, *a figure of speech*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ Jim Cairns, *Living with Asia* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1966), p. 10.

⁶⁰ The North West Cape Agreement, *Australian Treaty Series, Treaty No. 16* (9 May 1963) contained in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 652 – 4.

twenty-eight square miles at Exmouth Bay in WA.⁶¹ The basic premise of a foreign power establishing a military facility on Australian territory during peacetime was an issue for Labor, but the matter of territorial sovereignty was not the most pressing concern.⁶² The substantive issue was over the question of Australian Government control. Would the Australian defence forces technically retain operative joint control over the facility alongside the United States? Furthermore, would the Australian Government have control, and therefore veto, over any communication that may draw Australia into a war without prior consent? All of the questions that were finally posed by Labor as conditions of support for the bill before parliament related to whether Australia would maintain complete sovereignty in relation to the base. As Calwell opined in his speech on the bill, the Labor Party ‘will never cede one inch of our territory, or permit the diminution by one iota of the rights of our Government and people’.⁶³ Arguably, Calwell’s concerns were not abstract. Article Four of the treaty arrangement stipulated that:

The communication services of the station will be available to the Australian armed forces in accordance with technical arrangements made by the co-operating agencies of the two Governments.⁶⁴

Neither the Australian Government nor the United States interpreted this clause as the basis for joint control.

Barwick, in an attempt to paint Labor’s conditions as anti-American, released a letter from the US Ambassador to Canberra, which stated bluntly that the agreement:

⁶¹ T.B Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations Since 1788* (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 2, 1991), p. 176.

⁶² For an exposition of this concern within the party see: Allan Fraser, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 November 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 2737.

⁶³ Calwell, *CPD*, 16 May 1963, p. 1488.

⁶⁴ The North West Cape Agreement (9 May 1963) Meaney, *Australia and the World*, p. 653.

...is not intended to restrict the Government of Australia's right of consultation but to spell out clearly that consultation does not carry with it any degree of control over the station or its use.⁶⁵

The memorandum itself went into greater detail and seemed to have been consciously worded with reference to the central focus of the ALP's by now public conditions:

It was clearly understood that consultation connoted no more than consultation and was not intended to establish Australian control over use of the station nor to imply any Government of Australia design to restrict at any time United States Government use of station for defence communications including, for example, communications to Polaris submarines. It is also understood that it was not intended to give Australia control over or access to contents of messages transmitted over the station.⁶⁶

It was stunning that Barwick was enthusiastic in placing on the public record a document that was not only a rebuke to the Labor position but was also an emphatic statement of the Government's willingness to subordinate Australia's sovereignty over the base to the United States. Yet, in the context of a dangerously febrile international environment, the letter advanced the Government's charge that Labor's actions reflected a callous disregard for the immediate needs of Australia's security. The Government's view of the Labor position may have served the purposes of political victory but it also fundamentally misunderstood, or actively misrepresented the philosophy Labor and Calwell held on the Alliance and on Australia's responsibilities as a small to middle power.

⁶⁵ Memorandum of Understanding covering letter from W.M Battle, U.S. Ambassador to Australia - The North West Cape Agreement, 7 May 1963, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 552, Box 193, MS4738, NLA.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

On 23 March 1963, *The Daily Telegraph's* front page carried a photo of Labor's parliamentary leadership anxiously waiting outside the Kingston Hotel in Canberra.⁶⁷ Excluded from a hastily arranged Federal Conference called to define the party's NWC policy, Whitlam and Calwell looked impotent.⁶⁸ It was an event that would become immortalized by Menzies' adoption of the *Telegraph's* jibe at Labor's '36 Faceless Men'.⁶⁹ Essentially, the conference exposed both a party divided by ideologically distinct factions, and a party structure that supported this state of affairs whilst simultaneously removing the autonomous capacity of the parliamentary leadership to direct the party's publicly stated policy. As Calwell and Whitlam stood outside, a tired and drained Federal Executive debated the party's position. Finally, Jack Duggan (Queensland Opposition Leader) split from his state delegation and cast the deciding vote on a motion providing provisional support for NWC.⁷⁰ In what was a victory for the party leadership, it is important to understand that two fundamentally contradictory propositions were put before the Conference.

The minority opinion was firmly held by Left Faction delegates from Victoria, Queensland and WA. The presence of the split was unmistakable. The left contended that even conditional support for NWC made 'arrant nonsense' of Labor's nuclear free zone policy.⁷¹ Though this view held some merit on the basis of the principle

⁶⁷ See for example Alan Reid, "36 Faceless Men." *Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1963, p. 1; "Calwell Challenges Menzies to Election on U.S. Base." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March 1963, p. 1.

⁶⁸ For an account of the events of the Federal Executive Conference on North West Cape see Graham Freudenberg, *a figure of speech* (Brisbane: Wiley, 2005), pp. 49 - 52; R.G. Neale, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January - June 1963' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 9, no. 2 (May 1963) pp. 136 - 40.

⁶⁹ Robert Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 3 April 1963 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1963), p. 346.

⁷⁰ Freudenberg, *a figure of speech*, p. 51.

⁷¹ Report of the Special Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs (1963)

expressed by the party in its July 1962 statement, it ignored the fundamental fact that Labor policy was not a universal commitment to the establishment of a nuclear free zone, but rather a promise to initiate a conference at which such arrangements may be made. Further, the base did not contravene party policy because it was not being used to stockpile fissile material.

The second criticism made was that the policy represented a ‘total and irrevocable commitment to the United States policy, leaving us no room for regional agreements with Asian countries’.⁷² This criticism bares testimony to the crux of the problem experienced by Labor throughout the 1960s. How could a subordinate position in the Alliance, unrelated to the obvious power imbalance between the two nations, provide enough scope for the exercise of independent decision making in the conduct of Australia’s external affairs? It is an important question not only because it defined the conduct of the party’s foreign policy in Opposition but also because it illustrated the underlying philosophy held by Labor in the conduct of Australia’s foreign relations, both in and out of Government. Though the party always recognised the necessity of great power protection they were determined to retain the sovereign capacity of an independent nation to agree or disagree with their allies.

The concept of a subordinating partner rather than an independent ally was undoubtedly central to Calwell’s approach to the public debate. He goaded Menzies and the Government exhorting, that ‘Australia is still – I use the qualification deliberately – an independent nation’.⁷³ Accordingly, in all its arrangements with foreign powers the ultimate objective must be to ‘guarantee and enhance’ both

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 16 May 1963, p. 1484.

sovereignty and Australia's international integrity.⁷⁴ This was not an abstract concern for Calwell or Labor; indeed, the matter was inextricably linked to the 'concept of sovereignty in a nuclear age'.⁷⁵ The issue was the degree to which Australia was now a genuine military target. The Federal Conference had rather ambiguously dealt with the problem stating:

In the event of the USA being at war or threatened with war by another power, Australian territory and ... facilities must not be used in any way that would involve Australia without the prior knowledge and consent of the ... Government.⁷⁶

Although this was primarily concerned with the inalienable right of the Government to withdraw consent to any action that drew Australia into a conflict, it also illustrated the underlying assumption that an American base with nuclear capacity on Australian territory heightened the risk of attack. Calwell reiterated his concern that Australia was limiting its capacity to remain out of a potential nuclear conflict, lamenting that 'whether we like it or not, we are taking a step closer to the firing line'.⁷⁷

Whether he liked it or not, Labor's position on the base was not accepted by the media, nor the majority of the public as credible policy. A Gallup Poll found that 'Australians are overwhelmingly in favour of America building its proposed radio station'.⁷⁸ Eighty percent supported the base, including a staggering seventy-four percent of Labor voters. Those polled opined that 'America is our main hope for defence; they saved us before'.⁷⁹ Public opinion, it seemed, was ignoring the subtleties of Calwell's call for an independent ally in favour of Menzies' baser appeal

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Report of the Special Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs (1963).

⁷⁷ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 16 May 1963, p. 1482.

⁷⁸ Gallup Poll (May – June 1963) contained in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), p. 657.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

to fear. Although it is impossible to specifically identify how this public support developed, it is important to note that the Australian press weighed in heavily on the side of an unconditional agreement. *The Herald* castigated the Labor Party's 'theoretical objections which do not match the realities of defence in the nuclear age'.⁸⁰ *The Sydney Morning Herald* echoed Menzies' line that the conditions laid down by the Federal Conference were a 'miserable compromise'.⁸¹

Unfortunately for Calwell the damage done by the imbroglio over the base was largely self-inflicted. The decision to refer the matter to a Federal Conference was an abdication of leadership draped in the trappings of extra-parliamentary democracy. When in October 1962 the Federal Secretary, F.E. Chamberlain submitted an amendment to the party's statement on nuclear policy prohibiting the establishment of a base 'that could be used for the manufacture, firing or control of any nuclear missile or vehicle capable of carrying nuclear missiles' it was clear that the issue would not be resolved without conflict.⁸² Yet, Calwell's response took over six months to materialise.

Finally, on 5 March 1963, Calwell attempted to broker a compromise at a specially convened meeting in Sydney. Though the matter was left unresolved, the parliamentary leadership was able to make it clear to the Federal Executive that Labor should provide conditional support for NWC. Whitlam in particular, having recently returned from discussions in Washington, advanced the importance of support.⁸³ Yet, rather than use this meeting as the basis to make a public announcement on the party's

⁸⁰ "Labor and The Base" *The Herald*, 10 June 1963, p. 2.

⁸¹ "Calwell Challenges Menzies to Election on U.S. Base", 23 March 1963, p. 1.

⁸² Report of the Special Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs (1963).

⁸³ Whitlam met with Dean Rusk in Washington towards the end of 1962, see Report of the Special Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs (1963).

policy through parliament, Calwell demurred, requesting a special Federal Conference be convened to decide on the matter. It should be made clear, that it was well within Calwell's power as leader of the parliamentary party to interpret or develop policy if the circumstances dictated. A Federal Conference was certainly not required, even if the issue was significantly contentious. The only justification for this measure was the inherent conservatism of Labor's policy-making traditions.

Menzies excoriated Labor for being subject to 'outside interference and domination'.⁸⁴ This was an effective political barb, though it was not a particularly fair criticism. Coming too late to mitigate the fallout, Calwell's valid response asserted that all Labor had done was 'write into our party constitution... what every other political party does, in practice, no matter how surreptitiously they do it, and no matter how piously they deny it'.⁸⁵ Where this argument fell down was in its conservative appeal to the practices of the past, practices that were simply not appropriate for the challenges that parliamentary democracies and political leaders faced in the nuclear age. Calwell's cognitive dissonance on the problem proved to be his undoing. As he stood huddled with the other parliamentary leaders under the pale glow of the electric lamp in the Kingston Hotel's front courtyard, the leader of the Opposition appeared impotent and subject to the decision of thirty-five faceless men and one woman.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Calwell, *Labor's Role in Modern Society*, p. 54.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 16 May 1963, p. 1483.

Conclusion

Both NWC and the debate over nuclear testing and disarmament illustrated the forces and structures that framed Labor's conceptualisation of the American Alliance and its role in Australia's relations with world. The ideological composition forged in the split profoundly shaped the party's approach to the large foreign policy issues of the 1960s. While far from an all-encompassing dogma, the comparatively neutralist perspective of the Left towards the Alliance inhibited Labor's capacity to present an image of unity on issues that both involved America and were of direct import to the electorate.

Furthermore, this disadvantage was increased by a policy-making structure that was both anachronistic and counterproductive to the requirements of leadership in the nuclear age. However, overriding the implications of factional division and structural ineffectiveness was the fundamental reality of the Cold War. In a volatile and uncertain international environment, Labor's determination to stand independently within the Alliance seemed anathema to Australia's national interest. Though there can be no doubt that Calwell, and Labor supported ANZUS, sometimes the measures required to maintain it were a grim and awful necessity.

THE LIMITS OF ANZUS:

Labor, the Alliance and Australia's Northern Neighbours

Throughout the 1960s Australia's gaze was fixed upon the transformation of the neighbourhood to its north. It dictated the actions of policymakers both in Government and in Opposition. It was a period in which an old colonial civilization passed away and a new Asian nationalism asserted itself on the world stage. The centre of this evolution, at least in the preoccupation of Australian historiography and of the popular history of the Alliance relationship, was the conflict in Vietnam.¹ However, though attracting less attention, a far more fundamental relationship was being developed that not only informed how Australia thought about its region, but also how the international community viewed the cold war in Asia.

From 1949 Indonesia was ruled by President Sukarno, a staunch nationalist and anti-colonialist.² Sukarno's own policies were strongly influenced by the bitter experience of Dutch colonialism.³ Through this historical experience Sukarno developed his own doctrine of 'new emerging forces'.⁴ Essentially, this amounted to a personal and national crusade to remove the last vestiges of colonialism in the region.

The first exercise of this doctrine was for the territory of West Papua, known until

¹ Australian cold war historiography has been heavily focused on the Alliance relationship that was cultivated in Vietnam. "Vietnam Syndrome" has diminished the importance of Indonesia as a key component in cold war strategy. See David McLean, 'Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review', *The International History Review*, 23, no. 2 (June 2001), p. 299; David Webster, 'Regimes in Motion: The Kennedy Administration and Indonesia's New Frontier, 1960 – 1962', *Diplomatic History*, 33, no. 1 (January 2009), p. 101; John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), pp. 94 – 114.

² Indonesian sovereignty was signed over to Dr. Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta at a bilateral conference in The Hague on 2 November 1949, see Bruce Grant, *Indonesia* (Melbourne, MUP, 3, 1996), pp. 31 – 32.

³ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*

1962 as Netherlands New Guinea.⁵ With the acquiescence of the United States, the resignation of the Australian Government, and the belated withdrawal of the Dutch, the dispute was resolved in Sukarno's favour in 1962. With the long crusade to incorporate West Papua into the Republic of Indonesia completed, Sukarno turned his attention to the British plan for a new Federation of Malaysia.⁶ From 1963 through till 1965 a series of crises best known as Konfrontasi (Confrontation) involved the new state, and Australia's original Great Power protector, Britain. Australia, as a member of the Commonwealth, was drawn into the conflict.

Since the Curtin and Chifley Governments, Labor had been committed to an idealistic vision of Australia's approach to international affairs. As a result, Labor developed a liberal internationalist toolkit to approach the problems of the post-war world, as discussed in the introductory Chapter. Fundamentally, Labor was guided by a belief that international conflict could be resolved through multilateral institutions rather than the power politics of force that prevailed during the Cold War.⁷ This chapter demonstrates how this underlying philosophical framework directed and influenced the Labor Party's position on the West New Guinea crisis. With specific

⁵ The naming of the territory is contentious. The Dutch called it Netherlands New Guinea; the Indonesians Irian Barat (West Irian) and later Irian Jaya (Victorious Irian); the indigenous nationalist movement prefer Papua Barat (West Papua). Papua is now recognised by Indonesia, see Webster, 'Regimes in Motion', p. 95. President Sukarno first declared Indonesia's intentions to annex the territory on 28 December 1949 see Glen St Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian-American diplomatic relations since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 100.

⁶ Malaya had been granted independence in 1957 see Parliament of the United Kingdom, *Federation of Malaya Independence Act, 1957* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1957), created 2002, The National Archives, UK, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1957/60/pdfs/ukpga_19570060_en.pdf>, viewed 15 August 2012; The Federation of Malaysia included Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah and Singapore (Singapore was expelled 10 August 1965) see Gordon Greenwood, 'Australian Foreign Policy in Action', in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper, eds., *Australia in World Affairs 1961 – 1965* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968), pp. 95 – 102.

⁷ Ibid, p. 48.

reference to Confrontation, this chapter examines Labor's fear that Britain's retreat from empire would leave a void not adequately filled by the Alliance.

This chapter will also highlight Calwell's response to the West Papua dispute. His commitment to the principles of liberal internationalism will be contrasted with both the Government's realist position and the broader international environment that shaped the American determination to ensure Indonesian neutrality. A closer examination of these connected viewpoints demonstrates the difficulty Calwell experienced in reconciling the party's commitment to the principles of liberal internationalism against the broader requirements of Australia's role in the Alliance during the Cold War.

'Reminiscent of Hitler's performances at the time of Munich'

Indonesian independence in 1949 did not preclude the Netherlands from stubbornly resisting withdrawal from its remaining colonial territory. The decision to retain Netherlands New Guinea was a festering sore in relations between the new Indonesian state and their former colonial masters. Indonesia demanded the territory be "returned to fold of the motherland", and explicitly threatened an irredentist war to achieve such ends.⁸ In 1954 Djakarta took its claim to the UN. It garnered the requisite two-thirds majority in the committee stage, but failed to replicate the necessary majority in the General Assembly.⁹ Following a similarly failed attempt to gain UN recognition of Indonesia's claim in 1957, relations between The Hague and Djakarta soured. Sukarno's response was immediate, announcing the nationalisation of Dutch corporations that dominated the Indonesian economy and the expulsion of

⁸ Webster, 'Regimes in Motion', p. 95.

⁹ The UN rejected the Indonesian claim on 10 December 1954 see "Holland Ready for Talks", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1954, p. 2.

forty seven thousand Dutch nationals.¹⁰ Consequently, Indonesia was thrown into economic and social chaos.¹¹ The tumult caused by Sukarno's reaction lasted until 1959 when he proclaimed his vision of 'guided democracy'.¹² In the new Indonesia, with Sukarno as guide of the perpetual revolution to rid Asia of colonial remnants, the conflict over Dutch New Guinea veered towards military conflict.

However, with the advent of the new Kennedy administration and the increasing military aid from Moscow to Djakarta, Washington fervently sought a plan to defuse the possibility of Indonesia falling into the Communist camp.¹³ Consequently, the US acted as a mediator between the Dutch and Indonesians. The eventual agreement over the American authored Bunker Plan to transfer Dutch sovereignty to Indonesia through a temporary UN administration ended the long-running dispute over West Papua.¹⁴

To understand the eventual facilitation by the United States of Indonesia's annexation of West Papua, it is worth revisiting the broad context of international affairs that shaped superpower strategy in Asia during the 1960s. Throughout the early 1960s the nationalist movements forcing rapid decolonisation dominated international affairs. Between 1960 and 1963 twenty one former colonial possessions

¹⁰ Grant, *Indonesia*, p. 36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Webster, 'Regimes in Motion', p. 99.

¹³ On 11 November 1961 US Secretary of State Dean Rusk sent a Memorandum to Kennedy stating that should the North Vietnamese succeed in capturing South Vietnam then 'The remainder of Southeast Asia and Indonesia would move to a complete accommodation with Communism, if not formal incorporation within the Communist bloc', see Memorandum, Rusk and McNamara to Kennedy, 11 November 1961, Papers John Fitzgerald Kennedy, National Security Files, Country File, Vietnam, Box 195, Kennedy Presidential Library; see also Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in The White House* (New York, Mariner Books, 2002), p. 533.

¹⁴ Webster, 'Regimes in Motion', pp. 118 – 123.

were admitted to the UN.¹⁵ George Ball, US under-secretary of state from 1961 to 1968 remarked that Kennedy's foreign policy necessarily 'focused on the problems involving the bits and pieces of disintegrating empires'.¹⁶ America's engagement with the advent of decolonisation through the ideological framework of the Cold War centred US strategy on developing pro-Western or neutralist regimes in Asia.

Contrastingly, for both Peking and Moscow, the momentum of decolonisation offered an opportunity to advance their own strategic interests. By fostering and supporting anti-colonialist nationalism, particularly in Asia, they hoped to acquire greater influence amongst the region's emerging states.¹⁷ However, despite the shared objectives of international Marxism, Peking and Moscow were rivals rather than allies for influence in Asia. Since Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin, the U.S.S.R had been moving steadily towards détente with the US. The leadership in Peking became increasingly critical of Soviet foreign policy, partly because of domestic turmoil, but essentially because détente inhibited the expansive nature of global Communism.¹⁸ The West had hoped throughout the 1950s for a Sino-Soviet schism. However, it did not have the immediate effect desired by Washington policymakers. Instead of inhibiting the Communist powers' development of regional influence, it actively compelled both powers to focus their efforts on a rapidly emerging Asia. The creation of a tripartite conflict for influence between the split Communist powers and America set the stage for the major geopolitical conflicts of the 1960s.

¹⁵ United Nations, *Member States of the United Nations*, created 3 July 2006/ updated 2012, The United Nations, <<http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>>, viewed 10 September 2012.

¹⁶ Thomas G. Paterson, 'John F. Kennedy's Quest for Victory and Global Crisis', in Thomas G. Paterson eds., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961 - 1963* (New York, OUP, 1989), p. 8.

¹⁷ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: V. III - The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961 - 1966* (New York, OUP, 3, 1997), pp. 121 - 134.

The New Frontiersmen of the Kennedy administration provided a shift from the policies of the Eisenhower years. It was readily apparent that Kennedy's presidency was going to be marked by a vigorous and activist foreign policy. Announcing that America would 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty', Kennedy signaled his intention to combat the spread of Communist influence in the world's emerging periphery.¹⁹ Moreover, the Kennedy worldview featured greater attention for and sympathy towards third world nationalism. David Webster has argued that the Kennedy years evinced 'a consistent trend towards activism, an intensified reliance on modernization theory, and a continued adherence to the same Cold War mental maps used by policy makers since the 1940s'.²⁰

Consequently, Kennedy's brand of foreign policy aimed to spread modernity throughout the world as a means of neutralizing or fostering positive relations. As proponents of modernisation theory, the administration's foreign policy focused heavily on economic and developmental tools to assist and hasten the growth of vulnerable countries important to US strategic interest. Furthermore, Kennedy sought to redress the 'drift and impotence' of the 1950s.²¹ His intention was to develop an internationally resonant synergy between the "greatness" of American economic and military capacity and the idealism of American "goodness".²² Kennedy's new frontier vision, shaped by the concept that 'America can succeed at anything', centred on the developing nations of Indonesia, The Philippines, Micronesia and the developed

¹⁹ John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address* (Washington: 20 January 1961) contained in, *The Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches* (London: Penguin, 3, 1999), p. 298.

²⁰ Webster, 'Regimes in Motion', p. 100.

²¹ Thomas Brown, *JFK: History of an Image* (Indiana: Bloomington, 1988), p. 23.

²² Timothy P. Maga, *John F. Kennedy and the New Pacific Community, 1961 - 1963* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 1 - 13.

nations of Australia and Japan.²³ The State Department coined the term “New Pacific Community”, which in essence brought together the various intellectual strands of administration thinking on American power in the Pacific.²⁴ This reframing of US international strategy, which was by now broadly centred on Asia, transformed neutral and third world states like Indonesia into potential partners in the containment of Communist, particularly Chinese, expansionism.

This vision altered the administration’s assessment of the West Papua dispute. Though Kennedy may have held latent sympathies for the desire of Papuans to self-determine, the administration’s view was that Indonesia was simply worth more than the ‘Papuan inhabitants of West New Guinea’ who ‘were barely out of the stone age’.²⁵ Any nascent support for the Netherlands’ independence plan, supported by both the Australian Government and Opposition, was essentially crushed by two factors. First, Sukarno had been growing increasingly reliant on military aid from Moscow following a failed CIA supported rebellion in Sumatra during 1958.²⁶ The United States could simply not afford to lose Indonesia to the Communist bloc. In addition, American foreign policy was consistently hampered throughout the 1960s, where self-determination along ethno-cultural lines was concerned. Arguing for anything short of a desegregationist approach to developing nationalisms, especially in the Indonesian case, would have reflected poorly on American policymakers who were increasingly vexed by domestic racial politics.²⁷ Therefore, a combination of activism and modernisation viewed through the strategic prism of the Cold War converged to facilitate the annexation by Indonesia of West Papua. For Australian

²³ Ibid, pp. ix – 14.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁵ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 533.

²⁶ Maga, *John F. Kennedy and the New Pacific Community*, p. 55.

²⁷ Gerald Horne, ‘Race from Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of “White Supremacy”’, *Diplomatic History*, 23, no. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 437 – 61.

policymakers this underlined the impotence of Australia's ability to influence Washington when policy priorities diverged.

Fundamentally, the difference in assessments of the dispute related to the basic fact that Indonesia was Australia's closest neighbour. For Australia, a nation that had long feared the Yellow Peril, the West Papua dispute enhanced fears of geographic isolation and invasion. Moreover, the dispute over West Papua had a long history. By 1961 it had become a perennial problem in the making of Australian foreign policy. Between 1950 and 1959, the Government's determination had been shaped by Percy Spender's assessment that 'New Guinea is an absolutely essential link in the chain of defence'.²⁸ Bruce Grant has correctly argued that Australia's view of the dispute rested on the 'fear that if Indonesia were given West New Guinea it would be but a matter of time...when the claim will be pushed further so as to include the trust territory of Australia New Guinea'.²⁹ This strategic consideration informed the political position that 'the Australian Government does not consider that Indonesia has any valid claim'.³⁰ Consequently, Australia made diplomatic efforts to ensure that both Washington and London supported the maintenance of Dutch sovereignty over the territory.³¹ Australian attempts to manoeuvre Britain and the US into sharing their view of the situation failed, and Australia was forced to alter its position.

Almost a decade of dispute had passed when Australia and Indonesia jointly announced that:

²⁸ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 March 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962), p. 1156; see also Percy Spender, *Disputing Indonesia's claim to Dutch New Guinea* (29 August 1950) contained in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 639 – 41.

²⁹ Grant, *Indonesia*, p. 211.

³⁰ Spender, *Disputing Indonesia*, p. 639.

³¹ St Barclay, *Friends in High Places*, pp. 100 – 12.

if any agreement were reached between the Netherlands and Indonesia, as parties principal, arrived at by peaceful processes and in accordance with internationally accepted principles, Australia would not oppose such an agreement.³²

This signaled the first stage in the Government's policy reversal. Yet the assessment did not yet constitute the abandonment of Australia's hope that the Dutch would continue to manage the territory. It was a hope left unfulfilled.

Menzies, who would hold the dual offices of Prime Minister and Minister for External Relations between 1960 and 1961, dealt with the issue rather tendentiously. Withdrawing to the comfort of a traditional euro-centric worldview, he found the opportunity to humiliate Sukarno and demonstrate Australian Opposition on West New Guinea at an unprecedented session of the UN General Assembly.³³ Sukarno sponsored a resolution calling for a bilateral meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev on disarmament. Menzies, mistaken in the belief that the Sukarno plan ought to be extended to a quadripartite grouping, inclusive of all nuclear powers, submitted an amendment.³⁴ It garnered the votes of America, Britain, France and Canada.³⁵ The other Commonwealth Countries opposed the measure.³⁶

By effectively sabotaging Sukarno's resolution Menzies had damaged Australia's standing in the increasingly sizeable Afro-Asian anti-colonialist bloc in the General Assembly. It proved a decisive blunder. Had the Government eventually sought to inhibit Indonesia's claim to West Papua on the grounds of indigenous self-

³² Casey Subandrio Communique, *Agreement for negotiated settlement in West New Guinea* (15 February 1959) contained in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 641 – 42.

³³ See D.C. Corbett 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy July – December 1960' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 7, no. 1 (May 1961), pp. 1 – 14; St Barclay, *Friends in High Places*, pp. 118 – 19.

³⁴ Corbett, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy', p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

determination, the hardened resolve in the Afro-Asian bloc would almost certainly have ignored Australia's wishes. Effectively, Australia now clung to the vague hope that the US and Britain, who had shown no support for the Australian view, would reverse their position and support Dutch control while the slow process toward self-determination continued. When the Government was forced to abandon support for the Dutch in January 1962 it became evident that their hope had been in vain.³⁷

Labor, and Calwell in particular, having agreed with the Australian position on West Papua since 1950, saw the capitulation to Indonesian aggression as nothing short of appeasement. It had become apparent that Sukarno was threatening the use of force from the middle of 1960. On 17 August 1960, following The Hague's announcement that the aircraft carrier *Karel Doorman* would tour West Papua, Sukarno announced that Indonesia was breaking off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands.³⁸ It appeared that the increasing infiltration by Indonesia in the territory and the Dutch police build-up could lead to an open conflict. Calwell's position, similar to the Government's was to reaffirm the desirability of self-determination, offering up the idea of a:

mutual regional pact, under the auspices of the United Nations, between Australia, Holland, and Indonesia for the purpose of maintaining the peace and security of the whole area of Indonesia and New Guinea.³⁹

This reflected a set of assumptions that would set the tone for Calwell's handling of the dispute between 1960 and 1962.

³⁷ For the Government's reversal of their position see Stuart Doran, 'Toeing the Line', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 36, no. 1 (2001), pp. 5 – 18.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁹ Arthur Calwell, "The Future of New Guinea.", *Sunday Mirror*, 21 August 1960, p. 1.

The path of Calwell's foreign policy had been well developed in Labor tradition during Evatt's tenure as Minister for External Affairs in the Chifley and Curtin Governments. Evatt's outlook and attitudes to the efficacy of multilateral institutions, particularly the UN, alongside bilateral security arrangements with the US and to a lesser extent Britain, were essential in shaping the Opposition's approach to the issues of the post-war decades.⁴⁰ Similarly, the wider ideological framework of the post-war years, fuelled by horror at the destruction of modern warfare, and the determination to develop a world order based upon principles of international and peaceful co-operation, provided the intellectual foundation for Calwell's assessments of the foreign policy challenges during the 1960s.

On 13 December 1961, four days after the 1961 Australian Federal election, Sukarno established the National Defence Council for the liberation of West Papua.⁴¹ The possibility of imminent conflict drew from Calwell a bitter polemic that illustrated his frustration at Sukarno's unilateral truculence. In a statement to the *Sydney Morning Herald* Calwell opined that 'The sabre rattling speeches of the Indonesian President, Dr. Soekarno, were reminiscent of Hitler's performances at the time of Munich, and just as menacing'.⁴² By invoking the spectre of Hitler, Calwell resorted to a by now familiar pattern of drawing solutions for contemporary policy problems from historical lessons. First, in drawing attention to Munich, Calwell was

⁴⁰ For a history of H.V. Evatt's attempts to secure a security pact with the United States see Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 38, no. 3 (1992), pp. 316 – 333.

⁴¹ P.G. Edwards & Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p. 230.

⁴² "Calwell Says Soekarno "Like Hitler"." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1962, p. 1.

implicitly drawing public attention to Menzies' history of appeasement.⁴³ Second, and of more import than political point scoring, was his contention that Sukarno's actions ignored the UN as the chief mediator in a dispute of this nature, the equivalent of which was Hitler's resignation and contempt for the League of Nations leading up to the September 1938 Munich Conference on Czechoslovakia.⁴⁴ Calwell's preference for a multilateral approach to dispute mediation was further illustrated in an outburst that the Prime Minister described as 'bellicose' and 'warmongering', announcing that:

If Indonesia seeks to deny the principles of the United Nations Charter and to use force to create a potential threat to Australia's security then I say, with all due regard to the gravity of the situation, that the threat must be faced.⁴⁵

Leaving aside the ambiguity of how Australia should respond to the threat, Calwell's statement illustrated the primacy of the UN as the appropriate international organ for dispute resolution between states.

Barwick claimed that Labor's approach ignored the changed composition of the United Nations.⁴⁶ Arguably, as a result of Menzies' staggeringly poor manoeuvre in 1960 and the determination of the Afro-Asian bloc to support anti-colonialist initiatives, any Australian referral to the United Nations would have failed. Rather than answering the Government criticism, Calwell preferred to delve into Labor

⁴³ Menzies appeasement of Hitler alongside the United Kingdom is comprehensively documented in Christopher Waters, *Australia and Appeasement: Imperial Foreign Policy and the Origins of World War II* (London: I.B Tauris, 2012).

⁴⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 2004), pp. 146 -7.

⁴⁵ For Menzies comments see Calwell on Menzies comments, 13 January 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 144a, Box 148, MS4738, NLA. For Calwell on UN see Statement on Dutch New Guinea, 9 February 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 629, Box 202, MS4738, NLA.

⁴⁶ Charles Grimshaw, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January - June 1962', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 8, no. 2 (November 1962), p. 142.

history, pointing out Evatt's successful referral of the original dispute over independence to the United Nations in 1949.⁴⁷

Recalling Labor's role in Indonesian independence illustrated the cognitive dissonance that shaped Calwell's approach to West Papua. In 1949 Labor had acknowledged the eventuality of Indonesian statehood but this stance was not driven by a belief in the principle of self-determination; rather, the Government's action was informed by the fear of the archipelago being 'lost to a potentially hostile Republican Left Wing movement'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, this recollection fundamentally ignored the nature of nationalist movements. Benedict Anderson has used the Indonesian example to assert the primacy of imagined communities as the basis for the emerging nationalisms of the post-war era, demonstrating that in Indonesia, the 'boundaries... left behind by the last Dutch conquests' formed a nation where 'Sumatrans share neither mother-tongue, ethnicity, nor religion with the Ambonese'.⁴⁹ Essentially, Indonesia was not ethnoculturally homogenous, and for Calwell to attack Sukarno on the grounds that he was abrogating the right of self-determination ignored the overriding power of the nationalist construct in Indonesia's territorial claim. Sukarno, though he had never been to West Papua, saw it as part of the extensive archipelago that belonged to the multicultural territories that made up Indonesia.⁵⁰ In a nation burdened by the range of problems that beset new states, Sukarno used the myth of nationalist revolution to maintain the support of the people, quell the threat of the

⁴⁷ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 March 1962, p. 1152.

⁴⁸ Burton to Officer (27 August 1948) quoted in David McLean, 'Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review', *The International History Review* 23, no. 2 (June 2001), p. 306; also see Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne: MUP, 1980).

⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 3, 2006), p. 120.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 122.

Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and save the military hierarchy he relied upon for power. Failure in West New Guinea would have threatened his doctrine of new emerging forces, and consequently, his grip on power. It was proper, but naive to hope that the powerful forces of anti-colonialist nationalism could have been contained through an activist application of international law.

The concept of activism has been an article of faith for those who adhere to the presence of a discernible Labor foreign policy tradition.⁵¹ Arguably, in Calwell's management of the West Papua dispute, there is a distinct trait of foreign policy activism. Following his attack on Sukarno, Calwell responded to criticism, asserting that 'Australia has a right to raise its voice in the name of international principle and aggression'.⁵² The issue of Australia's right to have its voice heard in the councils of the world was a recurring theme for Labor, emanating from a deep national wellspring that feared the implications of Australia's geographic isolation. This experience, largely drawn from the lessons of World War II, and Labor's break with isolationism, informed Labor's search not only for security in the form of Alliances, but also the complementary development of an independent defence and foreign policy to provide for any instance where an ally was unable or unwilling to protect Australia's interests.⁵³

This commitment to an activist conception of liberal internationalism, driven by potent fears of Australian isolationism, placed Calwell's position on West Papua at odds with the American approach. Following the US decision to block Dutch landing

⁵¹ For an interpretation of Labor foreign policy activism see Gareth Evans, 'The Labor Tradition: A View from the 1990s' in David Lee and Christopher Waters, eds., *Evatt to Evans - The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp. 11 - 22.

⁵² "War "Not Wanted" Over N.G. - Calwell", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1962, p.2.

⁵³ On Labor's turn away from isolationism see Kim E. Beazley, 'Labour and Foreign Policy', *Australian Outlook* 20, no. 2 (1966), pp. 125 - 131.

and transit rights, Calwell clung to the tenuous belief that ‘Only if... the United States consider us expendable, could they refuse to agree with our point of view, and that I do not believe they will do for one moment’.⁵⁴ Laden with the baggage of invasion by the otherness of Asia, Calwell painted the difference in assessments of the situation as only possible if America thought Australia was expendable. It was a basic interpretation of Washington’s policy priorities in the Asia Pacific and the ramifications for Australia. In part, his position can perhaps be understood by the absence of information coming from the Government on their discussions with Washington. However, before the official handover from the UN administration to Indonesia, the Americans made it clear to Calwell that his view on West Papua was not in convergence with theirs.

During a brief discussion with President Kennedy in Washington, the subject of West Papua was canvassed. Calwell stated that ‘the Labor Party did not like the Bunker Plan’.⁵⁵ Kennedy reflected that the ‘Dutch wanted to do nothing...which foreclosed any solution at all, except something along the lines of the Bunker Plan’. It was a subtle ticking off by a President who was cognisant that Calwell, given the Government’s reduced majority, may become the Prime Minister of their major ANZUS partner, at a time when the New Frontiersmen were trying to build a New Pacific Community.

Filling the Void

With the dispute over West Papua resolved in Djakarta’s favour, Sukarno’s active Opposition to colonialism then moved to the creation of the Federation of Malaysia.

⁵⁴ Statement on Dutch New Guinea, 9 February 1962, Arthur Calwell Papers.

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation Kennedy and Calwell, 23 July 1963, National Security Files, Country Office Files (Australia), Folder 7, Box 8A, JFK Library, Boston, MA.

Symptomatic of the broader international trend towards decolonisation, Malaysia illustrated the United Kingdom's increasing awareness of the impact aggressive anti-colonial nationalism could have on their worldwide strategic interests. Rather than relinquish the benefits of the old imperial framework, former colonial powers attempted to retain influence through close economic and military ties.⁵⁶ Djakarta took issue with the creation of the new state, partially because they were not consulted and primarily because they saw it as a neo-colonialist creation. For Canberra, Confrontation exposed unease that independent action was being increasingly curtailed by the departure of Britain and the reluctance of America to fill the void.

It must be emphasised here that this thesis will not investigate the numerous diplomatic and military events from the perspective of the multiple parties to the dispute; such an examination has already been conducted comprehensively by both J.A.C Mackie and John Subritzky.⁵⁷ Similarly, though the chronological structure of Confrontation shaped the Labor Party's response, it is not my intention to provide a running account of the conflict.⁵⁸ Rather, Confrontation serves as an instructive case

⁵⁶ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The retreat from empire in the post-war world* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 283 – 86.

⁵⁷ For a study of Indonesia and Malaysian attitudes to Confrontation see J.A.C Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesian – Malaysia Dispute 1963 – 1966* (London, OUP, 1974). For a study of British, American, Australian and New Zealand diplomatic attitudes to Confrontation see John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000).

⁵⁸ For a chronological history of Confrontation see R.G. Neale, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1963', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 9, no. 2 (November 1963) pp. 78 – 85; J.D.B Miller, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy July – December 1963', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 10, no. 1 (April 1964), pp. 1 – 15; Peter King, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1964', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 10, no. 2 (August 1964), pp. 283 – 295; Fred Alexander, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy July – December 1964', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 11, no. 1 (April 1965), pp. 1 – 6; T.B. Millar, 'Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1965', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 11, no. 3 (December 1965), pp. 267 – 276; Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia's road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 166 – 249.

for exploring Labor's doubts that ANZUS was an adequate arrangement for Australia's security in light of Britain's retreat from empire during the 1960s.

On 20 January 1963, Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr. Subandrio announced that Indonesia would pursue a policy of *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia.⁵⁹ The application of Sukarno's radical doctrine of new emerging forces caused concern for Australian policymakers who were still digesting the loss of West Papua. Calwell, in an echo of his hysterical response to Indonesian aggression in West Papua, attempted to gain a political advantage, warning that Indonesia had the capacity to 'destroy any Australian city after giving 24 hours' notice of its intention'.⁶⁰ Calwell neither gained a domestic political advantage from this approach nor did he seem to have learnt the lessons of his first denunciation of Indonesian action. Though this was a public statement, it is difficult to reconcile with Labor's position and may therefore be more reflective of Calwell's personal dislike of Indonesia and Sukarno. This conclusion can be drawn because in 1963 Calwell did not have complete control over Labor's foreign policy. After West Papua, the caucus Left, in return for their continuing support, extracted the right to consultation and veto in foreign policy matters.⁶¹ Given the internal divisions over NWC during early 1963, it is understandable that Calwell was forced to moderate his views in order to balance a dangerously febrile atmosphere within the party.

Although Calwell briefly addressed support for Malaysia and opposition for Confrontation at the July 1963 Federal Conference, the clearest exposition of his

⁵⁹ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 41.

⁶⁰ "Indonesia Could Destroy Any Australian City", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1963, p. 4.

⁶¹ See Freudenberg, *A figure of speech*, p. 43. It should be noted that Graham Freudenberg resigned as a speechwriter for Arthur Calwell and later joined Whitlam's staff. Given Calwell's later visceral dislike of Whitlam, personal circumstances should be noted.

thinking on the issue came four months after the 1963 election on 21 April 1964.⁶²

Outlining his opposition to the Government's approach, Calwell exposed Labor's central concern that America would not support Australia in the event of an open conflict with Indonesia over Malaysia. Calwell's argument was shaped by three concerns:

First, ... that the Government has placed itself in a completely false relationship with...Malaysia. Secondly, it is acting on completely obsolete notions of the situation of Great Britain. Thirdly, it has a completely false understanding of the United States' role and commitment in the Malaysian Indonesian dispute.⁶³

These three interconnected issues shaped Labor's response to Confrontation and, as a result, are explored here separately.

Calwell asserted that Australia's commitment to Malaysia was based on a 'vague commitment' to Britain rather than a direct relationship with Malaysia, a situation Menzies had admitted in 1963 when he stated that, 'we've not ourselves had direct obligations to Malaya. We have come in... on the side of Great Britain'.⁶⁴ The argument advanced by the Government was that due to traditional links with the United Kingdom, and because Malaysia was a member of the Commonwealth, Australia was obliged to offer assistance.⁶⁵ Calwell and Labor countered, arguing that 'the proper basis for the relationship between Australia and Malaysia is a treaty', whereby Australia could establish an 'open agreement which sets out precisely our

⁶² For Calwell's position on Malaysia at the Federal Conference see Arthur Calwell Speech to Federal Conference, 30 July 1963, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 477, Box 185, MS4738, NLA.

⁶³ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of. R., 21 April 1964 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 1271.

⁶⁴ For Calwell's concern over the definition of Australia's commitment to Malaysia see *Ibid.* For Menzies on Australian commitment see "Australian Troops And The New Malaysia", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1963, p. 2.

⁶⁵ See Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 74 - 94.

obligations and our responsibilities and – equally importantly – our rights’.⁶⁶ This call for a clear treaty relationship that enshrined rights and responsibilities of the two parties illustrated the primacy of international legal arrangements, over tradition or cultural relations, in Labor’s approach to foreign policy.

Moreover, Labor considered the argument that ‘no agreement with Malaysia is necessary because Malaysia is a member of the Commonwealth’ fallacious.⁶⁷

Fundamentally, Labor was concerned by the precedent set by acting as an appendage to British agreements, asserting that Australia was losing ‘real independence of action and real control over our own policy’.⁶⁸ It followed that:

Nothing could be more dangerous to Australia’s position in Asia, nothing could better substantiate Indonesia’s suspicions about our attitude, than that we would base the legality of our actions on a British agreement.⁶⁹

Importantly, Labor considered a treaty with Malaysia a necessity for two connected reasons. First, ill-defined responsibilities running from British arrangements reinforced Indonesia’s claim that Malaysia was a neo-colonialist construction and second, that Australia’s position sprang from ‘an obsolete view of Britain’s role in South East Asia’.⁷⁰

The early 1960s was a time of decline for global British influence.⁷¹ For Australia, Britain’s retreat from empire underlined the necessity of the Alliance as the basis for securing Australian regional interests. Labor, though not anti-British, believed the Government’s policy on Confrontation rested on flawed assumptions that ‘Britain is,

⁶⁶ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of. R., 21 April 1964 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 1272.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Britain’s role in Malaysia was secured through the ANZAM treaty, see *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1273.

⁷¹ For a history of Britain’s post-war retreat from empire see Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, pp. 167 – 336.

or may be, or can be, or wishes to still be a military power in South Asia'.⁷² This assessment of Britain's position in South East Asia reflected several distinct trends in Labor's thinking on foreign affairs. Primarily, it illustrated the idea that Australia ought to act in its own best interests; especially where relations with new Asian neighbours were concerned. Calwell reflected on this thinking, asserting that, 'Whatever we do in support of Malaysia, let us do it because it is best for Australia, not on any false proposition of what is best for...British power or interest in this area'.⁷³ This placed Labor's position on Confrontation in a broader tradition of Labor's adherence to the need for Australia to determine its own course in issues affecting the national interest.

However, though Calwell publicly argued against any subordination, archival research reveals that he was not immune from the national anxiety caused by Britain's retreat from the region. Six months after he laid out Labor's Opposition to Australia's engagement with Malaysia on the basis of traditional ties to Britain, Calwell wrote to Harold Wilson, the new Labor Prime Minister, seeking support for Labor's policy on Malaysia. Calwell wrote:

It would certainly help us in Australia if I could say that you would favourably consider representations from us of the Labor Party to use your good influence with the Tunku to negotiate a clear and definite treaty with Australia to cover the use of Australian forces for the defence of Malaysia.⁷⁴

Though under vastly changed circumstances for Britain and Australia, Calwell's letter illustrated the idea that British support for Labor's position could shape public opinion. Calwell had, to a degree, exposed the sentimentality of Labor's thinking on

⁷² Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 21 April 1964, p. 1273.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Letter Calwell to Wilson, 19 October 1964, PREM 13/23566, The National Archives (hereafter TNA).

Britain, and the residual resonance of British race patriotism in Australian society.⁷⁵ It should be noted that he had served as a minister in the Labor Governments of the 1940s when both Curtin and Chifley had argued for the maintenance of the ‘British Tradition’.⁷⁶ Furthermore, as Deputy Leader in the 1951 he had supported Evatt’s protestations that Britain had not been included in the ANZUS Treaty, as had been Labor’s desire throughout the 1940s.⁷⁷

Yet, Calwell had evidently not appreciated his own insignificance in the broader trend of Britain’s desire to extricate itself from the region. In an echo of Whitehall’s private response to Chifley’s concept of the ‘British tradition’, the Commonwealth Relations Office in its draft comments to Wilson lamented that the letter from Mr. Calwell was ‘slightly embarrassing’.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Wilson’s response to Calwell, that it was ‘entirely a matter for the two Governments concerned’ and ‘it would be quite improper for me to express a view’ illustrated Britain’s desire to rapidly shed the outdated trappings of empire in all its forms; while implicitly steering a reluctant Australia to the conclusion that it was now on its own.⁷⁹

Calwell’s desire to extract support from Whitehall was exacerbated by his concern that ANZUS would not underwrite the deployment of Australian forces in any conflict with Indonesia over Malaysia. Coming soon after Washington’s facilitation of the Bunker Plan, this betrayed a far deeper fear that as Britain retreated from South

⁷⁵ For a history of the British connection see James Curran & Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation Australia After Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

⁷⁶ For ‘British Tradition’ see Chifley comment in Whitehall see Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, p. 81.

⁷⁷ Calwell, *CPD*, 21 April 1964, p. 1274; see also David McLean, ‘ANZUS Origins: A Reassessment’, *Australian Historical Studies* 24, 94 (April, 1990), pp. 64 – 82.

⁷⁸ For Chifley comment in Whitehall see Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’, p. 81. For CRO response to Calwell letter see Letter to Wilson from C.F. Hill, CRO, 4 November 1964, PREM 13/23566, TNA.

⁷⁹ Letter Wilson to Calwell, 6 November 1964, PREM 13/23566, TNA.

East Asia, America would be unwilling to or incapable of supporting a geographically isolated Australia in an increasingly tumultuous region. Directly addressing ANZUS arrangements, Calwell asserted that ‘It is most important...that America would not allow Britain into ANZUS because the United States was not prepared to underwrite the stability of the remnants of British colonialism’.⁸⁰ Moreover, this was not an anachronistic reference; Calwell had sought assurances from Averell Harriman (US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs) and US Ambassador Bill Battle that the ANZUS Treaty would apply to Australian forces deployed in Malaysia.⁸¹ The response was that ‘America does not believe that its commitment does include the protection of Australian troops already in Malaya’...instead, they would fall ‘within the ambit of American policy, namely, the strategic containment of communism’.⁸² This mirrored Washington’s public statements of non-involvement in Confrontation, a decision most likely taken because of the importance of Indonesia and the escalation of American involvement in Indochina.⁸³ It is also plain that the Government had not disclosed that Barwick had gained a tacit, though essentially meaningless, agreement in October 1963 that ANZUS applied in limited form to Australian forces in Malaysia.⁸⁴

However, it is likely that Calwell was aware that Whitlam, in a visit to Washington in June 1964, did extract a tacit admission along the lines of the Kennedy Barwick

⁸⁰ Calwell, *CPD*, 21 April 1964, p. 1274.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.* For Labor position on SEATO see *Ibid.*, p. 1271.

⁸³ See for example Rusk on Confrontation as a ‘Commonwealth matter’ ‘Australian Troops and The New Malaysia’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1963, p. 2; see also Robert Kennedy comments on Malaysia in Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 21 April 1964, p. 1274.

⁸⁴ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 83.

Agreement that ANZUS applied to Confrontation.⁸⁵ It is difficult then to reconcile correspondence in the final months of 1965 – after Australia’s commitment to Vietnam – between Calwell and Kim E. Beazley that indicates that the ALP still did not believe that the US would come to their aid. Beazley questioned whether Calwell’s private attempts to ‘get an admission that the United States will not support us’ would do anything other than ‘encourage Soekarno to launch a war of aggression’.⁸⁶ Calwell responded that, ‘America will not become involved in the defence of our troops... We will be left on our own’.⁸⁷ Laden with the fear of geographic isolation Labor faced considerable difficulty in coming to terms with Britain’s retreat from empire and America’s reluctance to fill the void.

Conclusion

The Labor Party’s perspective on West Papua was an important manifestation of the party’s commitment to liberal internationalism as the guiding principle of its approach to Australia’s relations with the world. While far from an all-encompassing dogma, the Opposition’s outlook did provide a flexible and coherent framework for how Australia should approach its engagement with regional conflict. However, in his polemical attack on Sukarno and, by virtue, Indonesia, Calwell demonstrated a degree

⁸⁵ For Whitlam conversation in Washington see Memorandum of Conversation, Mr. E.G. Whitlam, Deputy Leader of the Australian Opposition, and Mr. Edward J. Thrasher, Officer in Charge Australian, New Zealand, and Pacific Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, June 19 1964, in RG 84, General Records of the Department of State, 1962 – 1967, Box 38, NARA.

⁸⁶ Letters between Arthur Calwell and Kim Beazley, 22 September 1965, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 135, Box 67, MS4738, NLA.

⁸⁷ For Calwell to Beazley see *Ibid.* For Labor position on Borneo troop dispatch see Arthur Calwell, *Statement on Borneo* (7 February 1965) contained in T.B. Millar, ‘Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1965’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 11, no. 3 (December 1965), p. 269.

of naiveté in his approach to the strategic balance of Australia's region in the Cold War.

In addition, this chapter has demonstrated how the geopolitical focus on Asia during the 1960s created contrasting approaches to the major foreign policy questions with which Australia was involved. By investigating American assessments of the cold war in Asia, particular the centrality of Indonesia, it is possible to understand how the limitations placed on Australian foreign policy by the Alliance shaped the views of both the Government and the Opposition.

This chapter has also highlighted Labor's desire to pursue an Australian foreign policy that might not act in concert with Washington and Whitehall; especially where relations with Australia's new northern neighbourhood was concerned. Moreover, this conception of Australia's place in its region was inextricably linked to the fear that Britain's retreat from empire would leave a strategic void that ANZUS would not fill. Critically, Confrontation also informed a profound sense of anxiety and isolation during a period when Australia and America committed to the quagmire of Vietnam.

“ALL THE WAY WITH LBJ”:

Labor, the Alliance and the Indochina Dilemma

On 29 April 1965, Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies announced the decision to commit 800 Australian combat troops to Vietnam.¹ This added to a token force of military advisors that had been in South Vietnam from 1962.² In August 1965 the military commitment was increased to 1400 men and then in March 1966 to 4500.³ By October 1967 Australian forces on the ground in Vietnam numbered more than 8000.⁴ The Government argued that the decision had been taken to avert the ‘takeover of South Vietnam’, which should it occur, represented a ‘direct military threat to Australia’.⁵ Yet, to the Menzies Government, Australia’s commitment was inextricably linked to an assessment of the conflict ‘as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans’.⁶

Framed by long-held and incorrect assumptions of Asian nationalism and monolithic Communist expansionism, Vietnam reflected both Washington and Canberra’s desire to contain Chinese influence in South East Asia.⁷ Moreover, for Australia it exposed the convergence of a profound regional insecurity, borne out of geographic isolation, and the correlating determination to ensure the United States

¹ Robert Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 April 1965 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1965), p. 1062; see also T.B. Millar, ‘Problems of Australian Foreign Policy January – June 1965’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 11, no. 3 (December 1965), p. 273.

² Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 April 1965, p. 1062.

³ Michael Sexton, *War for the Asking: How Australia Invited Itself to Vietnam* (Sydney: New Holland Publishing, 2002), p. vii.

⁴ Paul Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 332 – 33.

⁵ Menzies, *CPD*, H. of R., 29 April 1965, p. 1062.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Gregory Clark, *In Fear of China* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1967), pp. 170 - 1.

military engagement in South East Asia.⁸ As Sexton has revealed, Australia actively sought an American escalation and commitment in Vietnam.⁹ Indeed, Peter Howson (Minister for Air between 1965 - 1967) confided to his diary a conversation with Sir Paul Hasluck (Minister for External Affairs 1964 to 1969) in which Hasluck remarked that Australia's combat commitment would be a 'very small insurance policy' to involve the United States in the region.¹⁰

For Labor the Australian commitment in Vietnam was the nadir of both their vision for the Alliance and of an independent Australian foreign policy. The Party's deep opposition to Australian and American commitments in Vietnam must be understood as a fundamental disagreement over what the conflict was actually about, both within the framework of the Cold War and within an Asian context. The ALP did not believe Vietnam represented a genuine threat to Australian security because it was essentially a civil war being fought using guerilla tactics between a South Vietnamese military junta and a fiercely nationalist and Communist North Vietnamese regime.¹¹ Similarly, the party saw the policy orthodoxy on Communist China as fundamentally flawed: China may have been a subversive and insidious political power, but it did not have the resources to offer a military threat to Australia in the 1960s.¹² Consequently, Labor believed that the Vietnam conflict should be settled through a United Nations peacekeeping mission, a renegotiation of the 1954

⁸ Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia's road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 333.

⁹ Sexton, *War for the Asking*, pp. 1 – 6.

¹⁰ Howson diaries quoted in Glen St Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian-American diplomatic relations since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 167. See also Peter Howson, *Life of Politics* (Melbourne, Ringwood, 1984).

¹¹ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 4 May 1965 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1965), pp. 1103 – 1104.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 1105.

Geneva accords, and an increase of economic aid, to ensure the development of robust institutions and local economies.¹³

The Labor Party's alternative to a unilateral military solution evinced the strong liberal internationalist belief in economic aid and institutional capacity building as the basis of Australia's external affairs.¹⁴ This chapter will demonstrate how the liberal internationalist tenet shaped Labor's notion of how Australia should act in concert with a rapidly developing Asia. Moreover, this chapter will explore how Labor's opposition to America's vision for a military solution in Vietnam was not anti American, but derived from the view that war in Vietnam was inhibiting America from assuming her place as the rightful leader of the free world. Fundamentally, Labor's central problem, was defining how they could oppose American intervention and escalation in Vietnam while still maintaining support for the Alliance.

The conduct of foreign policy is inextricably linked to the intellectual backgrounds and approaches of individual politicians and policymakers. As a result, this chapter will also highlight the influence that Calwell's personal perspective on America's role in the world had on the party's vision for the Alliance. A closer examination of the connection between the intellectual approach of Calwell enhances understanding of the party's vision for the Alliance at a time when Prime Minister Harold Holt proudly proclaimed that Australia was going 'all the Way with LBJ'.¹⁵

"We oppose the Government's decision to send 800 men to fight in Vietnam".

¹³ The Geneva Conference opened in Geneva on 26 April 1954 see Sexton, *War for the Asking*, pp. 22 – 4; Pemberton, *All The Way*, pp. 107 – 8.

¹⁴ David Lee, 'The Curtin and Chifley Governments, Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation', in David Lee and Christopher Waters, eds., *Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 48.

¹⁵ 'All the Way with LBJ' is contained in remarks Prime Minister Harold Holt delivered in Washington on 25 July 1965, see Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 323.

On 15 September 1953, Gough Whitlam made his first speech on foreign affairs to the House of Representatives. Coming midway between the ceasefire in the Korean War and the advent of the Geneva Conference that ended the French Indochina War, Whitlam remarked that ‘it is to be regretted that the French... have so long denied liberty to Indo-China’.¹⁶ Paul Hasluck (the Minister for External Affairs during the Vietnam War) interjected that the French refusal to relinquish their former colonial possessions was ‘part of a world struggle’.¹⁷ Whitlam retorted that ‘the quarrel in Indo-China is entirely a quarrel between France and its subjects’.¹⁸ Hasluck’s contention that the situation in Indochina was between Red forces and the defenders of liberty may stand as a commentary to and summation of Government attitudes not only of the Vietnam conflict but also more broadly of the intellectual framework shaping the conduct of Australia’s external affairs until the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972.

In order to understand the American and Australian commitment to Vietnam, it is worth briefly revisiting the history of the conflict in Indochina and the ideological framework that shaped the decision to escalate the war. Asian nationalism, as has been seen in the cases of West New Guinea and Confrontation, posed one of the most difficult challenges for United States foreign policies in the twenty five years after World War II. America’s early involvement in Indochina adhered to the broad framework shaped by Eisenhower’s creation of the Domino Theory.¹⁹ Asian Communist movements, it was believed, formed part of a monolithic and inherently expansionist global phenomenon, with headquarters in Peking and Moscow. The

¹⁶ E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), p. 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁹ David McLean, ‘American and Australian Cold Wars in Asia’, *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 9, no. 2 (December 1990), p. 33.

rapid decolonisation of Asia, and specifically South East Asia, provided fertile ground for the development of Communist influence, where there had previously been staunchly anti-Communist colonial administrations.²⁰ This assessment, which ignored the fact that nationalist movements had no desire to replace colonialism with subservience to Peking or Moscow, viewed any perceived regional victory for Communism in Asia as a profound weakening of Western influence.²¹ Following Communist success in the Chinese civil war and the cessation of hostilities in Korea, it was perceived that another Communist victory, most likely in Indochina, would gravely increase the likelihood that the nations south to Australia would face an aggressive campaign of territorial expansion from the Communist bloc.²²

At the time of the Labor Split, Vietnam was itself being divided between North and South along the seventeenth parallel of latitude.²³ The North was controlled under the tyranny of the Soviet-educated Ho Chi Minh.²⁴ The South, predominantly Buddhist, but with a significant Catholic population, like the North, was suffering from the abuses of the French colonial period and was controlled by the weak, undemocratic and rabidly anti-communist military dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem.²⁵ However, there were striking continuities between the two Vietnams. Paul Ham has reflected that ‘in sum, the methods, if not the ideologies, of North and South Vietnam were alarmingly similar’: both regimes used ‘terror, lies, personality cults,

²⁰ Jim Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A history of Australia's Vietnam War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 27 – 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² For a history of United States approach to South East Asia see Andrew J. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to South East Asia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987).

²⁴ Ham, *Vietnam*, pp. 50 – 51.

²⁵ Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated on 1 November 1963. South Vietnam was then ruled by a succession of military dictators see *Ibid.*, p. 54; Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 165; Sexton, *War for the Asking*, p. 137.

propaganda and torture to pursue ends to which they gave different labels.²⁶

Ultimately, however, they meant the same thing, 'a closed, one party dictatorship'.²⁷

It was into this unstable quagmire that the Americans arrived, just as the French were leaving.²⁸

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, America's military presence in Vietnam numbered several thousand military advisors.²⁹ Their responsibility was to train the

South Vietnamese in jungle combat and guerilla warfare, though they gradually

became involved in active combat against the Vietcong throughout the period.³⁰

Kennedy, following his election in 1961, set about ensuring the integrity of the 1954 Geneva accords in the face of increasingly military success for the North Vietnamese-

backed Viet Cong.³¹ Yet, despite the seemingly enlightened approach of the New

Frontiersmen in the administration, throughout the Kennedy and Johnson

presidencies, adherence to the Domino theory was unquestioned.³²

As McLean has noted, the Cold War framework was 'profoundly flawed'.³³

Orthodox critiques written both during and after the Cold War have tended to treat the decisions of policymakers as reasonable responses to the situations brought upon

²⁶Ham, *Vietnam*, p. 56.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ For the American commitment to Indochina see for example Gregory Pemberton, 'Australia, the United States and the Indochina Crisis of 1954', *Diplomatic History*, 13, no. 1 (January 1989), pp. 45 – 66; see also Russell Trood, 'Alliance Diplomacy: Australia, The United States, and the 1954 Indochina Crisis', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 38, 3 (1992), pp. 334 – 353.

²⁹ Ham, *Vietnam*, p. 73.

³⁰ Pemberton, 'Australia, The United States and the Indochina Crisis', p. 73.

³¹ Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), p. 650.

³² For a history of the Kennedy administrations approach to foreign affairs see Thomas G Paterson, 'John F. Kennedy's Quest for Victory and Global Crisis', in Thomas G. Paterson eds., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961 – 1963* (New York, OUP, 1989), pp. 3 – 24.

³³ McLean, 'American and Australian Cold Wars in Asia', p. 34.

them by circumstance.³⁴ Yet, this assessment of attitudes ignores the intellectual framework that governed their actions. In Asia, and particularly for Washington and Canberra, policymakers greatly exaggerated the monolithic nature of Chinese and Vietnamese Communism, underestimated the nationalist character of Asian Communist parties and ignored the limitations of the West's ability to shape the Asia that emerged in the post-war era.³⁵ Partly, this framework can be explained by a range of other factors: strategic considerations, economic interest, geography and domestic politics. However, the decision to escalate the commitment to Vietnam in the 1960s did not flow ineluctably from the convergence of these varying factors. Rather, it was the uncritical acceptance of ideological assumptions that confirmed the righteousness of entanglement in Indochina.

Australian foreign policy in the early 1960s witnessed a watershed in Australia's approach to relations with China. Shaped by the intellectual framework of the Cold War, Indonesia's success in West Papua and Confrontation, the 1961 crisis in Laos, Chinese conflict with India and the increasing success of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam, Australian policymakers advanced a vision of a hostile China determined to achieve Asian hegemony.³⁶ Compounding the rapidity of regional events was a long-held assumption of Australia's geographic vulnerability. Consequently, the Domino theory – critical in determining US thinking – enhanced Australian fears of an aggressive Communist bloc, led by Peking, which would, like the Japanese, eventually form designs on Australian territory.³⁷ A month prior to the public decision to deploy troops to Vietnam, Hasluck illustrated the primacy of the Domino theory in

³⁴ Michael Hunt, 'Ideology', *The Journal of American History*, 77, no. 1 (June 1990), p. 112.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Clark, *In Fear of China*, pp. 167 – 72.

³⁷ See for example Clark, *In Fear of China*, pp. 161 – 212; E.M Andrews, *Australia and China* (Melbourne: MUP, 1985), pp. 180 – 209; Henry Albinski, *Australian Policies and Attitudes Towards China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 189 – 231;

Canberra's thinking on the conflict, and the profound need to further involve the United States in the conflict, asserting:

If the United States did withdraw, the same conflict would be renewed somewhere else. Within a brief period, the struggle now taking place in South Vietnam would be shifted to Thailand. If there was abandonment of Thailand, it would shift to Malaysia, to Indonesia, to Burma, to India and further.³⁸

Everybody knew where 'further' was. In this environment the presage of war took on an inevitability that was founded on an essentially superficial and incorrect set of assumptions about the nature of Chinese power and designs in Asia. The centrality of this intellectual framework informed two decisions: first, that it was in Australia's national interest to actively lobby the Americans to commit combat troops in Vietnam; second, following the achievement of this objective, that Australia would also commit combat troops to the small but existing presence of military advisors in Indochina.³⁹ In practice, even at the height of Australia's commitment in 1967, the military contribution was minimal. Rather, it was representative of political and moral support from a key Western ally, at a time when no NATO or European SEATO allies were willing to commit to the ill-fated venture; of Washington's western allies, only Australia and New Zealand committed to the cause.

Midway through the afternoon on 4 May 1965, Arthur Calwell rose in the House of Representatives to oppose 'firmly and completely' the Government's decision to send troops to Vietnam.⁴⁰ Yet, his opposition was not simply to the commitment of combat troops. It was in effect, a complete repudiation of the intellectual framework

³⁸ Paul Hasluck, *CPD* H. of R., 23 March 1965 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1965), p. 233.

³⁹ For a history of Australia's diplomatic efforts to commit America to Vietnam see Sexton, *War for the Asking*, pp. 51 – 157. For Menzies' statement committing Australian troops to Vietnam, see Sexton, *War for the Asking*, pp. 89 – 107; Pemberton, *All The Way*, pp. 249 – 329.

⁴⁰ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 4 May 1965, p. 1102.

determining the conduct of Australian foreign policy. Arguing against the primacy of the Domino theory, Calwell accused the Government of adopting a 'grotesquely oversimplified position' that rested on 'three false assumptions: An erroneous view of the nature of the war in Vietnam; a failure to understand the nature of the Communist challenge; and a false notion as to the interests of America and her allies'.⁴¹ Labor's opposition essentially rested on the divergence in assessments on these three issues. First, the view that Vietnam was a civil war, not an extension of Chinese Communist imperialism, was central to Labor's opposition to the war. It was willfully ignorant for the Government to propagate the narrative that 'once the aggressive invaders from the North are halted, our men will be engaged in the exercise of picking off the Vietcong', who were 'stranded from their bases and isolated from their supplies'.⁴² The ALP had long been of the view that Australia 'will be fighting the largely indigenous Vietcong in their own home territory'.⁴³

In addition, Calwell repudiated the Government's conception of the Communist challenge in Asia. The 'true nature of the threat from China', Calwell asserted, was 'not military invasion but political subversion'.⁴⁴ He reserved particular scorn for the notion that a commitment to Vietnam was in effect halting the onward march of Chinese Communism in South East Asia. Calwell contended that the Government, having wilfully misrepresented the composition and nationalist character of the Vietcong, advanced the theory that because 'Communist North Vietnam lies north of South Vietnam, so Communist China lies north of North Vietnam' any success for the

⁴¹ Ibid, 1102 - 03.

⁴² Ibid, p. 1104.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 1005.

Vietcong reflected a ‘thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans’.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Calwell, reflecting on the strategic obstacles to victory, propounded that the Australian and American action would undermine the ability of the West to influence the geopolitical positioning of Asian nations. He lamented that the ‘destruction of the North Vietnamese regime... would create a vacuum that China would undoubtedly move into’.⁴⁶ Australia would have ‘replaced a nationalistic communist regime—in a country with a thousand year history of hostility towards China—with actual Chinese occupation’ and would either have to ‘accept this disaster or face the even greater disaster of all out war with China’.⁴⁷ This endeavour Calwell, and by extension the ALP, believed was ‘the very height of folly and the very depths of despair’.⁴⁸

Finally, Calwell’s contention that this act betrayed the interests of America and the Western allies, including the neutral powers of Asia, requires exploration. Having previously deployed the analogy of Munich over West Papua, Calwell retreated from the same conclusion over Vietnam, arguing that ‘We talk about the lesson of Munich as if we had never learnt a single lesson since 1938. Preoccupied with the fear of a military Munich, we have suffered a score of moral Dunkirks’.⁴⁹ This was both a repudiation of the ideological framework governing intervention, and a rather curious attempt by a politician of the era to distinguish between the lessons of Munich, and the transformation of strategic circumstances in Vietnam. Consequently, Labor was unequivocally of the view that a large American military commitment to Vietnam was

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 1103.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 1105.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

ultimately destined to fail. They would fail not through outright defeat. Rather, ‘America could destroy the regime, but it cannot conquer and hold North Vietnam’.⁵⁰ Accordingly, Labor believed that ‘humiliation for America could come in one of two ways – either by outright defeat, which is unlikely, or by her becoming interminably bogged down in the awful morass of this war, as France was for ten years’.⁵¹ At the core of Calwell and Labor’s conception of the Alliance was the view that American idealism and exceptionalism conferred on the United States the responsibility to act morally and, where possible, to resolve conflict through negotiation and nation building rather than the destruction of war. Labor was emphasizing that Australia as a good ally was obliged to help America stay ‘true to its own history as the greatest revolutionary power in human history’.⁵²

However, for Labor, advancing this narrative of an enlightened America preserving moral and political goodwill in the developing states of Asia was not easy. Pitted against their vision of principled opposition to Communism was the realist intellectual framework of the Domino Theory, laden with powerful political narratives that stirred long-held fears of isolation and Asiatic invasion in the Australian public. In part, this explains the ALP’s earlier response to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, the catalyst for American escalation in Indochina.

On Sunday morning, 2 August 1964, President Johnson received news that the USS *Maddox* had repelled an attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats.⁵³ In

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Foreign Policy/ Defence Committee’s Report N.S.W. State Conference 1964, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1111, Box 257, MS4738, NLA.

⁵³ Ham, *Vietnam*, p. 78.

response, the United States authorised an air strike that sank the torpedo boats.⁵⁴ On the 7 August 1964, Johnson, who had essentially created a chimera dressed up as fact, sought a Congressional Resolution for further military action.⁵⁵ It was the closest America came to declaring war in Vietnam.⁵⁶

From the public recitation of events and certainly from the information the Government and the Opposition could glean from American officials, Tonkin provided America with *casus belli* to cross the threshold into open military confrontation with North Vietnam.⁵⁷ Moreover, it voided the need for America to seek a SEATO resolution for their actions.⁵⁸ After the congressional approval for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the Opposition predominantly supported the US action. Notably, Whitlam declared in parliament that in the circumstances, 'It is difficult to think that the United States President, or any other head of State, would have reacted differently'.⁵⁹ It is critical to note, that Labor supported US action in Vietnam in 1964 and in the early months of 1965.⁶⁰ Indeed, it was not until after the Australian

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 79.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Though the Gulf of Tonkin Incident did at the time provide *casus belli* for the American escalation of the conflict, it did not provide *casus foederis* which would have provided for an Australian commitment under ANZUS or SEATO. At no point in Vietnam were the two international treaties, obliging Australia and the United States to offer military support to one another, invoked.

⁵⁸ Because SEATO membership included France and the United Kingdom, it is highly unlikely that the United States would have been able to invoke the treaty in support of South Vietnam, which was referenced in the treaty as a protocol state. See for example, Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian politics, society and diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965 – 1975* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp. 35 – 36; Kim C. Beazley, 'Federal Labor and the Vietnam commitment', in Peter King, eds., *Australia's Vietnam: Australia In the Second Indo-China War* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 46.

⁵⁹ E.G. Whitlam, *CPD*, H. of R., 13 August 1964 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 226.

⁶⁰ Quote of Federal Executive Statement on US Bombing of North Vietnam contained in Graham Freudenberg, 'The Australian Labor Party and Vietnam', *Australian Outlook*, 33, no. 2 (1979), p. 160.

commitment in 1965 that the Labor Party began to actively campaign against any military solution to Vietnam. That is, the turning point for the ALP was Washington's decision to escalate the conflict and Australia's decision to actively support this course of action.

Labor's early concern was not whether there was a military component to the resolution of Vietnam, though it encouraged the US to enter 'negotiations while she is still in a position to influence terms'.⁶¹ Rather, it acknowledged the role of a military or peacekeeping element to the solution of the conflict, provided it did not entangle America and her allies in an unwinnable war.⁶² Essentially, Labor's vision for America's role in Asia centred on the notion that by using financial and intellectual power, Communism could be repelled through the development of economic prosperity and durable socio-political institutions that would support the growth of stable Asian states.

Belief in economic and institutional development as an indispensable tool in the conduct of Australia's external affairs illustrated the primacy of liberal internationalism in the intellectual composition of the ALP's thinking on foreign policy. As Lee has noted, the Labor Government of the 1940s evinced a strong commitment to 'laying the foundations for a lasting world peace through international economic cooperation to achieve full employment and rising living standards'.⁶³ Moreover, core economic focus acted in synergy with the establishment of effective

⁶¹ Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 4 May 1965, pp. 1105 – 06

⁶² As late as the May 1966 Labor Statement of policy on Vietnam, the Party were willing to contribute Australian forces for a UN mandated peacekeeping mission in South Vietnam see Report By Foreign Affairs Committee, 12 May 1966, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 135, Box 67, MS4738, NLA

⁶³ David Lee, 'The Curtin and Chifley Governments, Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation', in David Lee and Christopher Waters, eds., *Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 48.

social and political institutions capable of supporting developing democratic nation states. Calwell was a minister in the Curtin and Chifley Governments and, more broadly, the ALP intellectual approach to foreign policy was still shaped by the traditions of Evatt and the last Labor Government. Furthermore, while this may seemingly contradict the consistency of Labor's desire to maintain and enhance the bilateral Alliance with the United States, they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as the case of Vietnam shows, this tenet of liberal internationalist thought directed Labor's vision for how the Alliance and American power in Asia ought to function.

As early as 25 September 1963 Calwell was outlining the function that Labor ought to play in supporting the US to realise a liberal internationalist solution in Indochina. He asserted that the ALP should 'try to influence American policy by supporting those among the American policy-makers who wish the United States to seek purposefully a social and economic solution as well as a military one'.⁶⁴

On 7 February 1965, the US informed the UN Security Council that it had bombed military targets in North Vietnam.⁶⁵ Despite the escalation towards war, the ALP maintained staunch support for proportionate US military action, describing the bombing raids as 'unexceptionable'.⁶⁶ Yet the bombing did nothing to dampen Labor's belief in the effectiveness of a non-military solution. Adding to the international chorus for 'a shift...away from the field of battle to the conference table', the ALP again pushed for broader economic and institutional development,

⁶⁴ Foreign Policy/ Defence Committee's Report N.S.W. State Conference 1964, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1111, Box 257, MS4738, NLA

⁶⁵ P.G. Edwards & Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 345 – 6.

⁶⁶ ALP Statement of Party Policy on Vietnam – contained in Canberra to Washington Report, 18 February 1965, in RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 1964 – 1967, Box 8, NARA.

stating that the endeavour in Vietnam would fail ‘unless a program of full scale social and economic assistance is implemented without delay’.⁶⁷ This statement of party policy was not formally altered until May 1966, a year after the Australian commitment of combat troops. Though the May statement was unequivocal in its opposition to the war, it still maintained that a ‘Labor Government will be prepared to co-operate in the development of the area’, in particular the promotion of ‘individual liberty and the rule of law, and... economic well-being and development’. Even as the Party’s criticism of the war was reaching a bitter crescendo, they still advanced the liberal internationalist tenet of development, now an essential precondition to any successful resolution of the war.⁶⁸

With the announcement of Australian and US troop commitments in Vietnam, Labor’s tacit support for American Vietnam policy altered irrevocably. From 4 May 1965 until Calwell’s resignation as leader, the ability to manage the domestic political repercussions of its Alliance policy declined rapidly, exposing many of the internal tensions that had emerged in the early 1960s. Moreover, in their increasingly bitter opposition to the war, the purest exposition of the ALP’s vision for the United States as the leader of the free world was laid out in full public view.

“You can liken them to two exactly similar bottles, bearing different labels, and both empty”.

Three months into his Premiership, Harold Holt, perhaps somewhat overwhelmed at the lavish reception on his first visit to Washington, infamously pledged to go ‘all the way with L.B.J.’.⁶⁹ Few phrases in Australian political history have served to

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Report by Foreign Affairs Committee, 12 May 1966, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 135, Box 67, MS4738, NLA.

⁶⁹ Harold Holt’s comments were delivered on 25 July 1965, see Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 323; Ham, Vietnam, p. 255.

define and simultaneously obscure popular understanding. At one stroke, Holt had lashed Australia to the ill-fated American enterprise in Vietnam and subordinated Australia's independence to the United States. That it was a verbatim quote of Johnson's 1964 electoral slogan was forgotten as it accrued an unparalleled symbolic status.⁷⁰ Contrastingly, for Calwell and the ALP, this slogan referenced the nadir of Labor's vision for the Alliance, and Calwell's personal dismay at the failure of the US to realise its rightful role in world affairs.

The role of a public figure, and especially that of an Opposition leader, is to advance an alternate political narrative where there is public discord on a particular issue. It is arguably impossible to detach an understanding of the political past from the people that formed it. Their responses to the issues and events are fundamentally shaped by personal intellectual histories and the broader socio-cultural experiences of their life. There is a broad range of factors guiding politicians: personal beliefs, party and social traditions, historical interpretation, assessments of broad national and international trends, and base electoral strategy. The root of Calwell's response to Vietnam reflects all of these factors and at various levels shaped Labor's opposition to the direction of Australia's external affairs.

To further explore the impact of Calwell's intellectual history on the early debates around Vietnam, it is worth briefly exploring the events, ideas and connections that shaped his concept of America and its role in the world. Prominently, the Labor Government's wartime experience and the Party's view of the Alliance as a product of that period informed Calwell's idea of how the US ought to behave as a global power. Calwell pinpointed the creation of the Alliance, not in the establishment of

⁷⁰ Ham, *Vietnam*, p. 255.

ANZUS, but in Curtin's famous plea for assistance. Calwell, writing his memoirs in 1972, diminished the increasing intimacy of the Alliance under the conservative Governments of the 1950s and 1960s, loaded as it was with his own personal failure over Vietnam, and instead reflected on Curtin's statement as the moment 'Australia's dependence on Britain... finished forever; Australia was passing into the United States' orbit'.⁷¹ Moreover, during the last days of his leadership, Calwell constantly referred to this conception of Labor and the Alliance as a retort to the Government's claims that electing Labor would shatter ANZUS, saying that the 'Alliance was founded by the Curtin Labor Government against the bitter hostility of the same people whom Mr. Holt represents today'.⁷² He had good cause to claim that the conservatives were being hypocritical by labeling the ALP anti-American. Menzies had confided to his diary on his first visit to America that:

One thing which impresses the mind is that we err if we regard the Americans as our blood cousins... they have no consciousness of responsibility for the wellbeing or security of the world; no sense of an Imperial destiny.⁷³

As McLean has noted, 'Menzies' views were conditioned by an especially rigid Anglophilia', but conservative attitudes to America were remarkably resilient right up until the British decision to retreat East of Suez.⁷⁴ Yet, it was still the height of hypocrisy to harbour private reservations about the legitimacy or readiness for American global responsibility and simultaneously condemn the ALP for being anti-American.

⁷¹ Arthur Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not* (Melbourne: Lloyd O'Neil, 1972), p. 55.

⁷² "Labor Support U.S Alliance – Calwell" *The Sun*, 8 November 1966, p. 2; see also "Labor 'will keep ties'" *The Advocate*, 8 November 1966, p. 2.

⁷³ Overseas Diary, 1935 Trip, 'D' and 'E', Robert Menzies Papers, Series 13, Box 397, MS4939, NLA.

⁷⁴ McLean, 'American and Australian Cold Wars in Asia', p. 35. The Wilson Government's Defence White Paper of February 1967 outlined the removal of all British troops East of Suez see; Stuart Ward, Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the British Ideal* (Melbourne: MUP, 2001), pp. 249 – 51.

Calwell also held a deep personal connection to America through his lineage. His paternal grandfather, Davis Calwell, was born in Pennsylvania, and his great grandfather, Dan Calwell was an Ulster Presbyterian migrant to the United States.⁷⁵ Dan had served for a single term in the Pennsylvania General Assembly (state legislature) as a representative for Union County.⁷⁶ During Calwell's visit to Washington to meet President Kennedy in August 1962, he delayed his return to Australia in order to visit Pennsylvania. Following a tour of the Gettysburg Civil War battlefield he commented to the local *Gettysburg Times* that 'My people come from Union County'.⁷⁷ To Calwell, his American heritage 'helps to explain my keen interest in American history'.⁷⁸ It had not, however, 'blinded' him to 'the wickedness of American intervention in Vietnam'.⁷⁹ Understanding the private influences on his interest in America provides a great deal of clarity for his greatest criticism of America's commitment to Vietnam and his use of American historical references to reinforce the ALP's opposition to the war.

The national euphoria that greeted President Johnson's visit to Australia, the first visit by an American President, was tempered by the irreconcilable differences over the conflict in Vietnam.⁸⁰ The ill-judged comment of "all the way with LBJ" became

⁷⁵ Graham Freudenberg, *Calwell, Arthur Augustus (1896 - 1973)*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/calwell-arthur-augustus-9667>>, viewed 2 February 2012.

⁷⁶ Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, pp. 12 - 13.

⁷⁷ Gordon Tait "Australian to Visit U.S", *Gettysburg Times*, 7 August 1962, p. 9; see also "Australian Politician to Visit His Father's Native Union Co", *Sunbury Daily (Pennsylvania, U.S.A)*, 7 August 1962, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ For examples of media support for the Presidential visit see "President Lyndon B. Johnson To Australia", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1966, pp. 1 - 6; "The Johnsons Go Visiting", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1966, p. 1; "Tall, tanned leader shows magnetism, mastery of words", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1966, p. 6; "Gaiety and Drama In Visit to Remember", *The Sydney Morning Herald* (LBJ Souvenir Issue), 22 October 1966, pp. 2 - 3.

a slogan for supporters of the Government and the anti-war camp alike.⁸¹ NSW Premier Askin's infamous directive to 'Run over the bastards' epitomized the ill feeling as televisions across Australia broadcast the horror of the war into every lounge-room.⁸² Calwell, having at first questioned the timing of Johnson's visit so close to the 1966 election, used the opportunity to lambast the President.⁸³ In his speech at the official parliamentary luncheon, Calwell welcomed Johnson because he led:

the most powerful nation on earth, the nation that gave to the world its greatest revolution; the revolution that gave to the world the Declaration of Independence wherein it was stated for the first time that all men are created equal and that all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.⁸⁴

Furthermore he hoped that the President 'when he goes to Manila', to discuss peace in Vietnam, might 'succeed in influencing the opinion of that Conference and the opinion of mankind so that the day may not be so far distant when all mankind will be guaranteed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'.⁸⁵

Calwell reminded Johnson that 'there was never a President from the 1st to the 36th, from Washington to Johnson, who did not have difficulties'.⁸⁶ Concluding his remarks as he had started them, Calwell quoted Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in its entirety. It is difficult to reconcile Calwell's use of such powerful totems of American historical identity. What is evident is that his deep interest in the American Revolution and Civil War provided, in his mind, a way to simultaneously flatter

⁸¹ Donald Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), p. 52.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 52 - 3.

⁸³ Arthur Calwell, *CPD*, H. of R., 28 September 1966 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1966), p. 1331.

⁸⁴ Arthur Calwell Speech at Parliamentary Luncheon for President Johnson Visit, 21 October 1966, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1111, Box 257, MS4738, NLA.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

America, and caution Johnson for undermining the idealism that all American Presidents inherited.

Moreover, Calwell used the speech as an opportunity to define Labor's position within a framework of American and primarily Democratic Party Opposition to the war, asserting that 'some distinguished Americans, including Senator Fulbright, Senator Robert Kennedy, Senator Wayne Morse and others are not prepared to go "all the way with L.B.J"'.⁸⁷ The tension in the room was palpable as Calwell continued, landing his bitterest barb, speaking directly to Johnson:

Sir, I have tried to ascertain the difference between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the United States. I thought they had a bi-partisan approach to everything, and convinced that that was so, I read a description of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the great United States... You can liken them to two exactly similar bottles, bearing different labels, and both empty.⁸⁸

In a disturbingly brutal fashion, Calwell had suggested that both of America's major political parties were essentially devoid of idealism and, with the exception of the enlightened few, were disowning the legacy of American revolutionary greatness. It was an extraordinary rebuke to a visiting head of state, let alone the President of Australia's last major ally.

Johnson was incensed at the slight. Not only had Calwell elevated his Northeastern liberal opposition, and particularly Robert Kennedy, with whom Johnson had a notoriously bitter relationship.⁸⁹ He had also drawn parallels between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party and drawn on some of the most powerful American history to reproach Johnson's actions in Vietnam as a diminution of American

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ For a history of LBJ's feud with RFK see Robert Caro, *The Passage of Power* (New York, Knopf, 2012).

exceptionalism. In his remarks Johnson similarly drew on the history of the American Revolution reminding Calwell that there were men in the room who would agree with Thomas Paine's hope that "If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace".⁹⁰ It was a subtle rebuke to Calwell's inference that America's presence in Vietnam was an abrogation of the principles laid down by America's founding fathers. Johnson hammered home the point, asserting that in Vietnam:

Australians will go all the way, as Americans will go all the way, not a third of the way, not a part of the way, not three-fourths of the way, but all the way, until liberty and freedom have won.⁹¹

Johnson left Australia. Calwell was left looking, as Donald Horne wryly remarked like 'an old hulk floating out on the tide'.⁹² Labor's fortunes for the 1966 election were sealed. Their primary vote was reduced to 40 percent and the Holt Government was seemingly granted an undeniable mandate for its prosecution of the war.⁹³

However, though Calwell's reproach of Johnson reflected the public low point of Labor's Alliance relationship, the greater problem was the gradual erosion of trust at a diplomatic level. Since Calwell's speech in parliament opposing the Australian commitment, Edward Clark, Washington's Ambassador in Canberra, had positioned Calwell as following the 'line of J.F. Cairns...who holds position on Vietnam which could be described as almost classically Marxist'.⁹⁴ In part this was a result of internal

⁹⁰ Lyndon B. Johnson, *542- Remarks at the Parliamentary Luncheon*, (Canberra: 21 October 1966) created 1999, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project – a collaboration at the University of California Santa Barbara, USA, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27951>>, viewed 1 April, 2012., p. 2.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁹² Horne, *Time of Hope*, p. 53.

⁹³ *Ibid*.

⁹⁴ Telegram to USD – James Cairns and the Popular Front, 10 December 1965, in RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 1964 – 1967, Box 4, NARA.

divisions within Labor. Tension had been building between Whitlam and Calwell over the party's failure at the 1963 election. It was a division that was evident over Vietnam, with Whitlam offering a qualified strategy for withdrawal of conscripts and troops from Vietnam, and Calwell asserting that Labor stood for unilateral and immediate withdrawal; a position closer to the left than the 'moderate laborites'.⁹⁵

Demoralised by Labor's 1966 election loss, Calwell reacted bitterly to President Johnson's message of congratulations to Holt, stating 'As an Australian I resent the patronage, the interference and the arrogance with which the message reeks'.⁹⁶ The US Embassy reacted with diplomatic courtesy to this outburst; however, their annoyance soon became apparent. In what may stand as a testament to the low level to which the ALP and Calwell had sunk in their opposition to Vietnam, Clark, who was a close friend of Johnson's, cabled Washington with the following message:

CALWELL BELIEVED PRESIDENT WOULD BE WILLING TO DROP BOMB AND DESTROY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE SINCE 'HE HAS ALREADY DESTROYED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE BY DROPPING NAPALM AND PHOSPHORUS BOMBS IN VIET-NAM'. THOUGH USG WOULD DROP BOMB 'IF THERE WERE NO ALTERNATIVE' ...CALWELL IS SUFFERING HARDENING OF ARTERIES WHICH CUTS DOWN ON BLOOD FLOW TO BRAIN AND THUS AFFECTS FULL LUCIDITY. SITUATION COMPLICATED BY OVERINDULGENCE IN ALCOHOL. PROGNOSIS IS FOR FAIRLY RAPID DESCENT TO SENILITY.⁹⁷

This quite hysterical treatment of Calwell was unfair, and betrayed some of the casual arrogance that typified both Ed Clark's tenure as Ambassador, and Washington's

⁹⁵ US Embassy, Canberra to State Department, Washington, The ALP and Vietnam, 29 April 1966, in RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 1964 – 1967, Box 5, NARA.

⁹⁶ Calwell Press Release on Johnson Congratulatory Message, 29 November 1966, Arthur Calwell Papers, Folder 1111, Box 257, MS4738, NLA.

⁹⁷ US Embassy, Canberra to State Department, Washington, 16 January 1967, in RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Box 1, NARA.

complacency towards the value of its antipodean ally during the 1960s. Coming shortly prior to Calwell's resignation and Whitlam's ascension to the leadership, the cable also painfully illustrates how the Labor Party's management of the Alliance between 1960 and 1967 mirrored the decline in electoral fortunes. Vietnam, though representing the only active opposition of American policy offered by Labor during the period, acted as the final nail in Calwell's political coffin.

Conclusion

Framed by the fear and paranoia of the Domino theory, and of monolithic and expansionist Chinese Communism, Australia had actively pressured America to make a greater contribution to the quagmire of civil war in Vietnam. The Labor Party's opposition faltered by stressing Australia's sovereign right to have an independent say in world affairs and not become entangled in a conflict which was shaped by fundamentally false assumptions.

The essential problem that this created was how Labor could oppose American intervention and escalation in Vietnam while still maintaining support for the Alliance. Labor's hope for a peaceful resolution and economic and institutional development illustrated the primacy of an idealised liberal internationalism in its thinking.

In a period dominated by fear, Calwell was a victim of principle. Moreover, his fate as a political leader, shaped as it was by an historic and idealistic concept of America's role in the world, redeems him in the face of overwhelming evidence that Australia's and America's commitment to Vietnam did nothing but create untold suffering. Going "all the way with LBJ" weakened America's capacity to

influence the course of affairs in South East Asia, and had the effect of reversing Australian policy intentions to retain the security of Washington in the region.

– CONCLUSION –

Between 1960 and 1967 Australia increasingly looked to America as the basis for securing her position in a tumultuous region. For the ALP and Arthur Calwell, the period marked both a nadir in Labor's electoral fortunes and a marked decline in the Party's belief that ANZUS alone would adequately provide for Australian security. This thesis has demonstrated that Labor's notion of an assertive independent foreign policy, which often diverged from the assessments of the United States, was anathema in the 'test of loyalty' framed by both Canberra and Washington's flawed assumptions of the Cold War and Asian Communism.¹ Sitting squarely within a discernible Labor foreign policy tradition, Calwell's approach to foreign affairs evinced a tendency to apply the principles of liberal internationalism to the foreign policy issues that the Opposition faced throughout the 1960s. An undiminished commitment to the United Nations and international law complemented a belief that Australia's relationships in Asia would be better served through economic development and assistance in institutional capacity building. However, where this tendency departs from the current partisan historiographical construction of Labor foreign policy is in its commitment to bilateral relationships with both America and to a lesser extent Britain. Despite a continued pattern of conflicting assessments over the major regional and international foreign policy issues affecting Australia, Labor did not waiver from a commitment to the US as the guarantor of Australia's security. Rather, members of the party often disagreed on how Washington's policies ought to safeguard its role in world affairs, and consequently, Australia's responsibility as a good and true ally.

¹ Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government: 1972 – 1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), pp. 28 – 9.

Interestingly, Labor's ideological divisions and structure often inhibited the Party's capacity to present a unified public face on matters that defined the national debate. Though it should not be stressed too much, the left wing, which was increasingly prominent in setting Labor's position on foreign affairs, often advanced a comparatively neutralist policy that had the effect of weakening Calwell and Whitlam's attempts to undercut the Government's misrepresentation of Labor as a party that held an anti-American mentality.² Furthermore, Labor's attempts to prosecute an alternative foreign policy were profoundly affected by an extra-parliamentary policy structure that may have suited the Party at Federation, but was, by the early 1960s, an anachronism that diminished the obligation Calwell had as Leader to advance Labor's position in the electorate.

The advent of Indonesia's annexation of West Papua and Calwell's response to it reflected two profoundly important ideas in the development of Labor's management of the Alliance; first, that Calwell in particular and Labor in general were still gripped by a fear of invasion and Australia's geographic isolation; second, that America failed to appreciate, or ignored Australia's nascent fears of again being threatened by the otherness of Asia. Similarly, Labor's response to Confrontation reflected the increasing uncertainty that as Britain retreated from empire, America would not fill the void.

The development of Labor's thinking on the Alliance sheds light on their eventual opposition to America's and Australia's war in Vietnam. The complexity of the Vietnam dilemma is striking. Labor opposed Australian involvement in the war

² On the Left and neutralism see Kim E. Beazley, 'Labour and Foreign Policy', *Australian Outlook*, 20, no. 2 (1966), pp. 125 – 131; on Government attacks see for example Harold Holt, *CPD*, H. of R., 10 March 1964, Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1964), p. 409.

because they believed the commitment was framed by completely false assessments of the conflict in Indochina. The Government, which was fixated by the spectre of Communist China, actively painted Labor's opposition as wilfully negligent and anti-American. However, the argument here is that Labor, and particularly Calwell, viewed America's decision to escalate the conflict in Vietnam as an action that would irrevocably harm its moral capacity to fulfil its role as leader of the free world. Consequently, Labor's approach to Vietnam was not anti-American. Rather, by propounding a policy that recognised the reality of the situation in Vietnam, Labor and Calwell were actively attempting to save America from a decision it would later regret.

The story of an increasingly intimate Alliance relationship during the 1960s has received contrasting treatments in the existing historiography. There has been a substantial omission of the importance of domestic considerations to the prosecution of the Alliance relationship, and consequently the treatment of the Government's decisions that affected Australia's standing within her region. Critically, as Beazley notes, usually 'A Government is on trial at elections' whereas Australian politics between 1954 and 1966 was curiously marked by an inversion of this tradition and instead, existed in a state where 'the Government is never on trial, the Opposition is'.³ By exploring the alternative approach offered by Labor, this thesis sheds new light on the ideas and considerations shaping Australian foreign policy during the 1960s. Similarly, this thesis has illustrated the varying philosophical and intellectual themes shaping Labor's concept of Australia's place and role in the world.

³ Beazley, 'Labour and Foreign Policy', p. 132.

The 1970s, as Meaney notes, ‘marked a watershed in Australia’s relations with the world’.⁴ In 1970 Whitlam triumphantly told parliament that with the abandonment of the old shibboleths ‘one of the great tasks for Australian statesmanship would be to channel the Australian-American alliance into more fruitful and more constructive directions’.⁵ With the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 the direction of Australian foreign policy became more assertive and far less willing to subordinate the national interest to Washington.⁶ Yet, this new independence had not emerged as the ballots were being counted in 1972. Rather, it had been a long and hard road to achieving Government and with it, the ability of Australia to act with friendship and respect towards a nation with which they shared values, but to which they refused to submit to a test of loyalty. As Australia goes into what has been dubbed the ‘Asian Century’ it ought to remain aware of the need to assert an independent and respectful relationship with Washington that advances its interests within the region.

⁴ Neville Meaney, ‘The United States’, in W.J. Hudson, eds., *Australia In World Affairs 1971 – 75* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 163.

⁵ Gough Whitlam in the *Australian* (19 November 1970) quoted in Neville Meaney, ‘The United States’, in W.J. Hudson, eds., *Australia In World Affairs 1971 – 75* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 164 – 65.

⁶ James Curran, “Dear Mr. President: What did Gough Whitlam say to upset Richard Nixon” *The Monthly*, August 2012, p. 45.

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