

# **The Australian-American Alliance: Holt, LBJ and the Vietnam War**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of  
Arts (Research)**

**November 2013**

## **Abstract**

The Australian-American alliance, since World War II, has served as Australia's most important bilateral relationship, particularly in the field of security. Two decades later, the Australian government entered the war in Vietnam to secure an American military presence on the Asian mainland. This thesis examines the Australian-American alliance during the prime ministership of Harold Holt in relation to Australia's role in Vietnam, and growing concerns over Britain's planned withdrawal from Southeast Asia.

This thesis is a diplomatic history undertaken from a predominantly Australian perspective. This thesis is heavily reliant upon cables and reports prepared by the key departments of the governments of Australia, America, and where appropriate, Britain. This thesis differs from other revisionist studies centred on the Australian-American alliance in three clear ways: it highlights the influence of the British defence review on shaping Australia's engagement with the United States (US); it fills an historiographical gap in the literature by providing a detailed examination of the first US presidential visit in October 1966; and it analyses the US bombing pauses of 1965-66 and 1966-67 as a case study of the degree and scope of consultation between the two nations.

The thesis will argue that Britain's revised defence strategy significantly influenced the Holt government's dealings with the US in light of the Australian government's strategic goal of securing a US military presence on the Asian mainland. The Australian government used the uncertainty surrounding Britain's future in the region as a means of deflecting American calls for greater assistance in Vietnam, whilst referring to its role in Vietnam as justification for not further assisting the British. This thesis will also argue that, despite President Johnson's visit portraying unity between the two nations, Australia remained on the margins of American policy development, exemplified by its ignorance of US attempts soon after to end the war.

## **Master by Research Declaration**

“I, Adam Scanlon, declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled *The Australian-American Alliance: Holt, LBJ and the Vietnam War* is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

Signature:

01/11/2013

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my parents, family, friends, and partner, Kim, for all of their support and motivation throughout my degree, and the genuine interest they have taken in my thesis. A great thank-you is also extended to Professor Phillip Deery for his assistance during the past two years. Through his diligent supervision I have learnt many skills that I will take with me in my future endeavours. I am grateful for the assistance of the staff at Victoria University Footscray Park Campus Library, and the archivists at the National Archives of Australia, Canberra, and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library who helpfully responded to the numerous requests I made during the course of my research.

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## Abbreviations

ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty
CSR	Commonwealth Strategic Reserve
DEA	Department of External Affairs (Australia)
EEC	European Economic Community
FADC	Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee (Australia)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GOA	Government of Australia
GVN	Government of South Vietnam
ICC	International Control Commission
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff (US)
JPC	Joint Planning Committee (Australia)
L-CP	Liberal-Country Party
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLF	National Liberation Front
NYT	New York Times
NZ	New Zealand
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
WSJ	Wall Street Journal
WWII	World War Two

## Chapter 1: Literature Review and Introduction

The Australian-American alliance has long been regarded as Australia's most important bilateral relationship; particularly in the areas of trade, foreign affairs and defence. In 1968, the Australian historian and political scientist, T.B. Millar, encapsulated this alliance in a statement that still resonates today. He wrote: "If Australia has a cardinal point in its foreign policy, acceptable to all major political parties, it is to retain the friendship and military partnership of the United States."<sup>1</sup> Australian prime ministers from both sides of politics have duly declared the importance of Australia's relationship with the United States (US). The US is Australia's "older brother", said Billy Hughes; its "shield" proclaimed Harold Holt; and "an ally for all the years to come" said Julia Gillard recently in Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The quest for a military alliance with the US can be traced as far back as Alfred Deakin following the Great White Fleet's four-month tour of Australian ports in 1908, with sporadic attempts by subsequent prime ministers that followed. Symbolised by Prime Minister Curtin's famous "Call to America", the Australian-American alliance as it stands today was forged in the Pacific theatre of World War Two (WWII). After sustained efforts by Australian policy-makers in the post-war years, a Pacific defence pact was formalised in 1951. The Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), established in return for the Australian government agreeing to a "soft peace" with Japan, is a tripartite military alliance that binds the three nations together on defence matters if the territories of these three nations were directly attacked. ANZUS,

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<sup>1</sup> T.B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> For Hughes, see Harry G. Gelber, "Pacific Signposts: 1) the Australian-American alliance", *Meanjin Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (1), 1968, p. 5; for Holt, see "Holt: No Security if Reds win in Viet...", *Sun*, 11 October 1966, p. 4; For Gillard, see "Julia Gillard's speech to Congress", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 2011, or Julia Gillard, "I Always Remember Thinking: Americans can do anything", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. 77 (5), 2011, pp. 162-66.

however, did not guarantee the placement of a substantial US military presence in the region that would act as both a deterrent and a barrier between Australia and the perceived hostile nations to its north. But just over a decade later, the Vietnam War, provided Australian policy-makers, then concerned by the possible threat posed by Indonesia and China, with a unique opportunity to secure a large-scale US military presence in Southeast Asia.

Approached from a predominantly Australian perspective, this thesis is a diplomatic history that examines the Australian-American alliance during the years 1966-67. Its contribution to knowledge lies in it being the first detailed analysis of the Australian-American alliance under the Holt government, thus filling a neglected, but significant, historiographical gap. Often, scholars have chosen to provide a broader analysis of the alliance between the two nations by examining the alliance from WWII through to the conclusion of Holt's prime ministership, and in many cases, through to conclusion of Australia's involvement in Vietnam in 1975.<sup>3</sup> The central research question asked in this thesis is how did the Holt government manage its alliance with the US at this time in light of Australia's emerging role in Vietnam, and the uncertainty surrounding Britain's future presence in Southeast Asia? This question is addressed in the reports, files and cables of the key sectors of Australian foreign policy formation, particularly in the Departments of External Affairs (DEA), and Prime Minister, as well as Australia's Washington Embassy. Through an examination of these documents, a detailed picture of policy development has emerged. It will be argued that Australia's

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<sup>3</sup> See Glen St. J. Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian-American Diplomatic Relations since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Denis Phillips, *Ambivalent Allies: Myth and Reality in the Australian-American Relationship* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988); Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988); Trevor R. Reese, *Australia, New Zealand, and the United States: A Survey of International Relations 1941-1968* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969); Joseph Camilleri, *Australian-American Relations: The Web of Dependence* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980); Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian-American Relations Between 1900 and 1975* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987).

alliance with the US was significantly affected by three factors: Britain's revised defence strategy, Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam, and the need to consolidate the Australian government's policy of "forward defence". The "forward defence" policy was a defence posture wholly dependent on the positioning of American and British forces in advance of Australia's mainland borders. It will further be argued that because the US was the linchpin of this approach, Australia's alliance with the US was inseparable from any potential threat to "forward defence", including Britain's likely exit from the region.

This thesis will expand upon, and supplement, the various revisionist histories of Australia's involvement in Vietnam and studies dedicated to the Australian-American alliance in the Cold War period. The revisionists' stance posits that Australia aided the US in Vietnam with hopes of securing a significant American military presence on the Asian mainland to serve as a deterrent to the apparent threats to the north of Australia. In *War for the Asking*, Sexton argued that the Menzies government adopted a bellicose posture during the onset of the Vietnam War, as it strongly urged the US to escalate the war and looked for a way in to the conflict, with Australian diplomats in Saigon scrambling to secure a request from the government of South Vietnam for assistance from Australia.<sup>4</sup> The first volume of the official history of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts, *Crises and Commitments* by Edwards with Pemberton, detailed Australia's engagement in regional conflicts from 1948-1965.<sup>5</sup> The authors were in agreement with Sexton, but with complete access to the official sources, they painted a fuller picture of the Australian government's hawkish stance in the lead-up to Australia's entry in to the conflict. While this thesis is framed in the same revisionist

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Sexton, *War for the Asking: Australia's Vietnam Secrets* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises & Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992).

vein as these two sources, it is centred on the period after the Menzies government's decision to deploy the first Australian battalion to Vietnam in April 1965. Moreover, it focuses on the Australian government's attempts to achieve its tactical aim once engaged in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War has received considerable attention from American scholars for decades. Whilst policy-making in Washington has been central, the input of, and relations with, allied nations are often neglected. Histories of the conflict from an Australian perspective will provide a basis from which to expand and add to the previous literature. Edwards' second instalment in the official history of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, *A Nation at War*, addresses the social, political and military aspects of Australian society during its years of involvement in Vietnam, from the deployment of the first Australian battalion to the exit of Australian forces under Whitlam.<sup>6</sup> This thesis, however, attends less to the social and military facets of the conflict, choosing rather to investigate the diplomatic aspects of Australia's role in Vietnam given its alliance with the US. Pemberton's *All The Way* keeps with other revisionist scholars and suggests that Australia's marginal involvement in Vietnam was a continuation of the strategic goal to secure a US military presence on the Asian mainland.<sup>7</sup> According to Pemberton, "The Australian-US relationship reached its zenith between 1965 and 1967."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he described this period as a "'turning point' in Australia's post-war external relations", as Australia gravitated towards the US and away from its familial ally, the United Kingdom (UK).<sup>9</sup> While this thesis will not make such definitive statements, it will examine the Holt prime ministership more

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War-1975* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia's Road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

closely than Pemberton did, in order to understand the influence of Britain's shifting defence posture on Australia's alliance with the US. This thesis focuses particularly on the Holt government's decision to deploy a second battalion to Vietnam in relation to these factors. It will be shown that despite pressure from the US government to contribute additional military support, the Australian government was also grappling with the unwanted findings of the British defence review. The former Australian diplomat and Ambassador to the US, Alan Renouf, argued in *The Frightened Country*, as the title suggests, that Australia aligned itself with the US in the search for security in what it regarded to be an unstable region.<sup>10</sup> John Murphy's *Harvest of Fear*, a broad social and military history of Australia's Vietnam, is also revisionist in nature and does not contradict the above sources.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the histories of Australia's Vietnam, studies centred on Australian-American relations during this period of the Cold War are of particular importance to this thesis. Scholars such as Barclay, Bell, and Harper, much like Edwards, Pemberton, and Renouf, argued that since WWII, Australian policy-makers had continually looked to the US for security and had shaped foreign policy accordingly.<sup>12</sup> Barclay's *Friends in High Places* detailed the efforts of the various Australian governments, from the end of WWII through to the late 1970s, to strengthen Australia's military relationship with the US.<sup>13</sup> Barclay argued that Holt increased troop numbers in Vietnam as a means of consolidating this alliance. Barclay does identify the British withdrawal "east of Suez" as a concern for the Australian government, but he does not go into great detail

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: MacMillan, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> See Barclay, *Friends in High Places*; Glen St. J. Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988); Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Norman Harper (ed.), *Pacific Orbit: Australian American Relations since 1942* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968). *Pacific Orbit* provides a contemporary historical and cultural evaluation of Australian-American relations.

<sup>13</sup> Barclay, *Friends in High Places*.

regarding this issue; whereas this thesis will highlight the British retreat from Asia as a key factor in the Holt government's attempts to further strengthen the Australian-American alliance. In *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, Barclay concentrated solely on the prime ministerships of Menzies and Holt (although the latter's twenty-three months occupies only forty-one pages).<sup>14</sup> Much as he did in his previous study, he contended that Australia was not a subservient ally; rather, the Australian government pursued a hard-line approach in Vietnam to entrench the US in the Asia-Pacific region. Coral Bell's *Dependent Ally* also argued that Australian policy-makers strategically entered Vietnam to ensure a US presence in the region by offering political, diplomatic and military support for the US efforts in the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

As indicated earlier, an important thread throughout this thesis is the effect of the British defence review on Australia's alliance with the US at a time when the Australian government was endeavouring to strengthen its ties with the Americans in hopes of achieving a long-held strategic goal. Studies centred on Anglo-Australian relations during this period are limited, with the three most applicable studies being those of Goldsworthy, Pham, and Benvenuti.<sup>16</sup> The latter two scholars focus predominantly on Britain's attempts to enter the European Economic Community (EEC), in lieu of its presence in Southeast Asia, and the response by Australian policy-makers to forestall the exit of British forces from Malaysia and Singapore—a significant blow to Australia's "forward defence" policy. Whereas, in *Losing the Blanket*, Goldsworthy provides a broader understanding of Anglo-Australian relations

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<sup>14</sup> Glen St. J. Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> See David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain's Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002); P.L. Pham, *Ending "East of Suez": The British Decision to Withdraw from Malaysia and Singapore 1964-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Andrea Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations and the "Turn to Europe": 1961-1972* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2008).

from the winding down of Britain's empire, through to its efforts to enter the EEC. Possibly because these studies have been undertaken in the field of Anglo-Australian relations, they do not adequately address the importance of Australia's alliance with the US. At this time, Britain's Labour government called upon Australia for assistance to remain in the region, whilst those in Canberra balanced soundings from Washington for greater assistance in Vietnam. This foreign policy conundrum will form the basis of the third chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, the authors cast Britain as Australia's strongest ally; however, as this thesis will show, despite Australia's kinship with the UK, the US was, and has remained, Australia's most important strategic ally.

Political biographies of the key individuals involved in Australian diplomatic politics are scarce, as opposed to their American counterparts.<sup>17</sup> However, two studies, one a biography of Holt, and the other an examination of Holt's prime ministership through the lens of political science, are centred on the former Prime Minister. Frame's *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, is the only detailed political biography of the former Prime Minister.<sup>18</sup> However, only scant reference is made to Holt's visit to the US in 1966, or Johnson's visit in October of that year, the subjects of the fourth chapter of this thesis. In his chapter on Holt's endeavours in the field of foreign policy, Frame depicts Holt as a Prime Minister cursed by events beyond his control, inheriting a war from his predecessor and, in Britain, an ally exiting the region. Therefore, this thesis will examine the ways in which Holt and his government approached these issues whilst

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<sup>17</sup> For studies and biographies of Lyndon Johnson, see Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Robert Dallek, *Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of a President* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1982) and Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power* (New York: The New American Library, 1966). For studies on Secretary of Defence, Robert S. McNamara, see Paul Hendrickson, *The Living and the Dead: Robert McNamara and the Five Lives of a Lost War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); James M. Roherty, *Decisions of Robert S. McNamara: A Study of the Role of the Secretary of Defense* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Tom Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

managing relations with Australia's two major allies, Britain and the US. The prime ministership of Harold Holt was also the focus of an unpublished master's thesis, completed within a political science framework, by Paul Rodan.<sup>19</sup> This thesis clearly differs from Rodan's in that it is a diplomatic history examining the various foreign policy questions raised by Australia's alliance with the United States, whereas Rodan focussed on the domestic political issues faced by Holt. Though Rodan dedicated one chapter to foreign policy under Holt, he did not have access to primary source material to enrich the chapter, unlike this thesis. Furthermore, although he identified the war in Vietnam and Britain's withdrawal from the region as the two major foreign policy issues that confronted the Holt government, they are only briefly examined, with more attention given to Australia's immigration policy as a foreign policy challenge handled by the Holt government during this period. In this study, however, the Vietnam War and Britain's shifting defence posture are the two overarching and ever-present themes of immense importance to Australia's alliance with the US.

In the relevant scholarship, greater attention has been given to the former Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, a key figure in the development of Australian Cold War foreign policy. Porter's political biography of Hasluck will be used to support the view that he understood international power relations to be the determining factor in foreign affairs.<sup>20</sup> *Paul Hasluck in Australian History* provides an account of Hasluck's career in the public service and politics, and sheds light on Hasluck's management of the External Affairs Department.<sup>21</sup> An extremely useful source is *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats* which, *inter alia*, examined the Ministers

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Kenneth Rodan, *The Prime Ministership of Harold Holt*, MA thesis (unpublished), (St Lucia: University of Queensland, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> Robert Porter, *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Tom Stannage, Kay Saunders, and Richard Nile (eds.), *Paul Hasluck in Australian History: Civic Personality and Public Life* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998).

of External Affairs from 1941-69.<sup>22</sup> The contributors highlight the differing management styles of the Ministers studied, with Hasluck accurately depicted as an individual who believed that policy was the responsibility of the Minister. Assisted by such studies, it will be shown that Hasluck strongly believed that the war in Vietnam emanated from Peking; therefore, a US military presence on the Asian mainland was essential to combatting the communist menace. In the fifth chapter, through an examination of the two bombing pauses that marked the beginning and middle of Holt's prime ministership, it will emerge that Hasluck felt strongly that the Australian government must ensure that it benefited strategically from its role in Vietnam.

The memoirs and published recollections of five important individuals in the Australian political landscape during Holt's prime ministership provide an invaluable first-hand account of the formation of Australian foreign policy at this time, as well as the relationships between those who crafted it. Edited by his son, Nicholas, *The Chance of Politics* is a collection of Paul Hasluck's private summations of many of his contemporaries, including Holt.<sup>23</sup> Holt, he commented, struggled to grasp international relations, and believed that a congenial relationship with President Johnson was representative of his role in shaping world events. Like Hasluck, Renouf also stated that Holt let his friendship with Holt obscure his understanding of Australian national interests; however, this view will be contested in this thesis. In addition to the candid comments of Hasluck, this thesis will use the perspectives of Australia's envoys to Washington and London, Sir Keith Waller and Sir Alexander Downer Sr., respectively. In using these sources, a clearer picture of the foreign policy issues of concern to Australia and the envoys' host nations emerges. Downer's *Six Prime Ministers* provides

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<sup>22</sup> Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe, with Garry Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Paul Hasluck, with Nicholas Hasluck (ed.), *The Chance of Politics* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997).

a personal account of the Australian response to a shifting British defence policy “east of Suez”.<sup>24</sup> Downer wrote that, at this time, “Clouds of distrust were passing across the sky of British-Australian relations.”<sup>25</sup> Downer also provides some insight into the British interpretation of the Johnson visit—an area that has, until now, remained unexamined—and the strengthening alliance between Australia and the US. Two contributions by Sir Keith Waller focus on his tenure as the Australian Ambassador to the US.<sup>26</sup> Of great interest to this thesis are his views on Holt’s relationship with Johnson, and his thoughts on how to most effectively manage an overseas mission. The final contemporary recollection of the Holt government referred to throughout are the diaries of the Minister for Air, Peter Howson.<sup>27</sup> Howson provided frank, albeit brief, accounts of many key events from this period, such as: the intricacies surrounding the situation in Vietnam, the Australian-American alliance, the British withdrawal “east of Suez”, and the visit of President Johnson. Finally, the memoir of Holt’s wife, Dame Zara Holt, is used to supplement the examination of the Johnson visit discussed in chapter four.<sup>28</sup>

Memoirs written by individuals involved in policy-making offer an insight into the mechanisms of government; however, they are inevitably subjective and somewhat selective. The memoirs of Lyndon Johnson and the high-ranking State Department official, Chester L. Cooper, provide both context and an intimate account of events covered in this thesis. Johnson’s *The Vantage Point* provides a lengthy account of his

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander Downer Sr., *Six Prime Ministers* (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1982). The phrase “east of Suez” will be used to describe Britain’s strategic positions east of its base in Aden, Yemen. The British posts “east of Suez” were in Malaysia and Singapore. The British position in Hong Kong was not under review; therefore, it is encompassed in the phrase “east of Suez.”

<sup>25</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> See Keith Waller in W.J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980); and Keith Waller, *A Diplomatic Life: Some Memories* (Nathan: Griffith University, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics* (Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984).

<sup>28</sup> Zara Holt, *My Life and Harry* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Limited, 1968).

time in office, but he only fleetingly recalled his visit to Australia.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, there was no mention of Johnson's association with Holt, or the larger alliance between the two nations. Johnson did, however, speak of Australia's emerging role in the region. He noted that at this time, Australia and New Zealand "were reappraising their roles in the world community and that a profound, and doubtless painful, readjustment was under way" following the revised British defence strategy.<sup>30</sup> Australia's increased engagement in Asia "was an historic shift in policy", he added.<sup>31</sup> Chester Cooper's *The Lost Crusade* provides a first-hand account of "Marigold", a clandestine peace attempt that collapsed weeks before the 1966-67 bombing pause. Cooper's recollections are important as he was amongst a select few that were fully informed of the secretive peace-feeler.<sup>32</sup> Whilst Cooper noted that the Australian government had not been informed of "Marigold" until after the exploratory discussions had failed, as will be shown in the fifth chapter, it appears that he conflated the Australian Charge d'Affaires, Robert W. Furlonger, with the Canadian Ambassador to the US, Charles Ritchie, consequently meaning that, in fact, the Australian government had not learnt of the failed peace effort until it had reached the pages of the *Washington Post* weeks after Cooper's supposed meeting with Furlonger.

The literature on "Marigold" is sparse to say the least. Though a small number of sources briefly mention "Marigold", there are only two studies dedicated to it: one scholarly and the other a contemporary journalistic account.<sup>33</sup> Hershberg's *Marigold* is an extensive diplomatic history that examines the peace effort from the perspectives of

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<sup>29</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.361.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: The Full Story of America's Involvement in Vietnam from Roosevelt to Nixon* (London: Granada Publishing, 1970).

<sup>33</sup> Works that briefly mention "Marigold" include: Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, pp. 251-2; Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 21-12, 220, 279; and Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, pp. 333-42.

the Polish, American and North Vietnamese actors involved.<sup>34</sup> The latter, *The Secret Search for Peace*, co-authored by *Los Angeles Times* correspondents, Kraslow and Loory, is written in a journalistic manner: that is, to tell the story.<sup>35</sup> However, the authors fail to detail the ways in which the Johnson administration managed the consultation of its allies during this time. Where Kraslow and Loory overlooked such consultation, Hershberg only briefly touches on it. Therefore, the fifth chapter casts light on Australia's diplomatic relationship with the US by examining the anxious truce periods as a case study regarding consultation.

The inaugural visit of President Lyndon Johnson to Australian shores is examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Edwards, Barclay, and Pemberton all refer to Johnson's visit to Australia, however only fleetingly.<sup>36</sup> Overacker, Horne, Henderson, and McMullin also mention the visit, but even less so.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, given this significant gap in the literature, much of the fourth chapter is dedicated to examining the visit as a tangible representation of the Australian-American alliance, whilst also providing a much-needed narrative of the visit. Only one peer-reviewed journal article focuses on Johnson's visit to Australia.<sup>38</sup> Through a quantitative approach, Paul D. Williams endeavoured to determine whether the presidential visit, or poor Labor Party leadership, was the most influential factor on Holt's landslide election win in 1966. Despite previous claims that Johnson had interfered in Australian politics, Williams concluded

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<sup>34</sup> James Hershberg, *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> David Kraslow and Stuart Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1968).

<sup>36</sup> See Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 114-16, 118-19; Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, pp. 143-44; and Pemberton, *All The Way*, pp. 335-36.

<sup>37</sup> See Louise Overacker, *Australian Parties in a Changing Society: 1945-67* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire Publishing, 1968), p. 234; Donald Horne, *A Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), p. 53; Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child: The Liberal Party of Australia 1944-1994* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 192; and Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 313.

<sup>38</sup> Paul D. Williams, "Holt, Johnson and the 1966 Federal Election: A Question of Causality", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 47 (3), 2001, pp. 366-83.

that it was the disjointed Labor campaign that led to Holt's comprehensive victory. Two unpublished honours theses have also given attention to the visit of President Johnson, but for differing reasons and to a differing degree. In *A Question of Loyalty*, Nell P.H. Duly examined the influence of the Australian-American alliance, the Johnson visit, and the government's conscription policy on Australian domestic politics during the federal election of 1966.<sup>39</sup> Martin Brown also mentioned the Johnson visit, but concentrated on the visit as part of the ground-swell of student activism during the mid-to-late 1960s.<sup>40</sup> As noted previously, whilst the current thesis also examines the Johnson's visit, it is presented as a tangible representation of the developing closeness between the two nations during this period. Moreover, the visit is also analysed from a British perspective through the use of correspondence between members of the Wilson Labour government, as well as Downer's recollections in *Six Prime Ministers*.

Where applicable, American source material has been used to provide an understanding of the alliance from the American end. As part of its Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) collection, the US State Department has made available various documents, including summary notes from National Security Council meetings, and memorandums between senior members of the administration which have been utilised throughout this thesis.<sup>41</sup> These documents reveal that the administration believed that the Australian government would unwaveringly support its efforts in

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<sup>39</sup> Nell P.H. Duly, *A Question of Loyalty: the Effect of the American Alliance on the 1966 Australian Federal Election*, Honours thesis (unpublished), University of Sydney, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Brown, *Paintbombs Away on LBJ: Student Protest and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Melbourne, 1966-9*, Honours thesis (unpublished), Victoria University, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> The volumes referenced in this thesis are: David C. Humphrey and David S. Paterson, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1998); Edward C. Keefer and David S. Paterson, (eds.) *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2000); and James Miller and David S. Paterson, (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-68, Volume XII, Western Europe*, (Washington: United States Government Printing, 2001).

Vietnam. This is elaborated upon further in chapter five. Oral histories have also been obtained from the LBJ Library in Texas, which provide a subjective account of key events during Johnson's presidency. In regards to Johnson's visit to Australia, the oral histories of the Director of the Secret Service, James J. Rowley, and Rufus W. Youngblood, a secret service agent assigned to Johnson (and splattered with paint during the Melbourne leg of Johnson's visit), have been incorporated. Interviews undertaken by the LBJ Library with the Australian ambassador, Sir Keith Waller, and Johnson's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, have also provided insight into Australian-American relations during this period.

The second chapter of this thesis introduces the overarching theme of the study. It argues that Australia's alliance with the US was strongly influenced by Britain's revised defence strategy in view of Australian security needs. It provides a contextual background necessary to understand Australia's policy of "forward defence" and the desire to secure a substantial US presence on the Asian mainland. It addresses the importance of Australia's alliance with the US, and this wider strategic policy, as the Australian government conferred with the Wilson Labour government regarding the possible assistance that could be offered by the Australians to ensure that the British remained "east of Suez".

In the third chapter we see that the Australian government continually responded to US requests for greater military assistance in Vietnam by highlighting the duality of Australia's regional responsibilities, given its role in *Konfrontasi*—although by now the conflict had substantially declined—and the uncertainty surrounding Britain's future role in the region. This served two functions for the Australian government: not only did it highlight to the Johnson administration that, though its presence was slight, Australia was playing an active role in the regional security matters, it also emphasised the

importance of maintaining a British presence “east of Suez” as a means of consolidating the region.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the two most notable public spectacles of the Holt prime ministership: Holt’s trip to the US and UK in the middle of 1966, and Johnson’s visit to Australia in October of the same year. It was during Holt’s journey to the US that he declared that Australia was “all the way with LBJ”. Just days later on his subsequent stop in London, Holt was a vocal critic of Western Europe’s non-involvement in Vietnam. Though he had stated that his critique excluded Britain, unfortunately for Holt, many newspapers carried the comments without his disclaimer regarding Britain. To many it appeared as though the Australian government was turning its back on the UK and shifting closer to the US. A short time later, the Holt government welcomed President Johnson before the leaders met with their regional partners in Manila. This was a momentous occasion for the Holt government, as the visit—the first by a sitting US President—came just one month before the Australian federal election. It will be argued that Holt’s statements in the US and UK, and the grandiose welcome afforded to Johnson were tangible indications of Australia’s shifting allegiance. This chapter also addresses the relationship between Holt and Johnson. It is argued that Holt always had Australian national interests in mind when interacting with Johnson; however, in the public spotlight he lacked the tact required to present himself as Johnson’s equal, not his subordinate.

The final chapter of this thesis examines and compares the levels of diplomatic consultation between the US and Australia during the bombing pauses of 1965-66 and 1966-67. It will be shown that consultation during this period was very much dictated by the US government, and dependent on the role the administration envisaged the Australian government could play. This thesis confirms that the Australian government

only became aware of “Marigold” *after* it reached the pages of the *Washington Post*, not before, as claimed by Cooper, and Renouf. As the Australian government was fighting in Vietnam for purely strategic means, Hasluck harboured concerns that the bombing pauses would pave an avenue towards peace that could be detrimental to Australian national interests. Therefore, following the events of “Marigold”, Hasluck, through Ambassador Waller in Washington, pushed for greater consultation as a means of monitoring developments in US policy and ensuring the administration was fully aware of the Australian government’s perspectives on a negotiated solution to the war.

## Chapter Two: “Fortress Australia”

Writing on New Year’s Eve 1965, the Minister for Air, Peter Howson, assessed the probable short and long-term concerns for Australia. With Australia’s most important ally, the US, deeply involved in Vietnam, his focus was on the nation’s other significant regional ally, the UK. He confided in his diary that the Australian government’s “greatest need” for the next twelve months was “to persuade the British forces to keep this side of Suez.”<sup>1</sup> If unable to achieve this, “in four years we could be retreating to ‘Fortress Australia’.” This chapter will examine the Holt government’s pursuit to forestall a British withdrawal “east of Suez”, within the all-important context of Australia’s alliance with the US. The pursuance of quadripartite talks between Australia, New Zealand (NZ), the UK, and the US on defence matters served tactical purposes for the countries concerned. All four states remained uncompromising: individual interests impeded the ability of each to reach a consensus on Britain’s future role in Asia. Furthermore, the contingency of developing British bases on Australian soil was discussed against the broader strategic aim of keeping the Americans in Asia. The Holt government did not wish to facilitate a British withdrawal, fearing it could initiate an American exit from the Asian mainland. The Australians were placed in a precarious position, with one key ally preparing to leave the region, as the other entered it. This chapter will show that the Australian-American alliance strongly influenced Australian thinking regarding its policy towards the UK. It will also demonstrate that Britain’s revised defence policy had direct implications on Australia’s alliance with the US.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics* (Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984), p. 194.

Two recent studies by Pham and Benvenuti focussed on Anglo-Australian relations, culminating in the British withdrawal “east of Suez”.<sup>2</sup> However, they either downplay or overlook the significance of Australia’s relationship with the US and its influence on the policy direction taken towards the British. The US is portrayed as Britain’s most significant ally, but not as Australia’s principal ally. Furthermore, their studies examine the formation of policy from the British end with particular emphasis on Britain’s second attempt at entry into the EEC, whereas this chapter will be centred on the influence of the Australian-American alliance on Australia’s interactions with the Wilson Labour government. It will highlight the foremost Australian goal of securing a larger US presence in Asia, and the indisputable faith placed in Australia’s “forward defence” policy to combat the perceived threat of regional communist subversion stemming from China.

As a nation with a perpetual fear of the “near north”, Australia has long relied on alliances with larger nations.<sup>3</sup> This impetus on alliances was particularly significant during the Cold War. The signing of ANZUS in 1951 secured for Australia a long sought Pacific defence pact with the world’s leader in military might, the US. Furthermore, with sentimental and historical ties to the UK, Australia was now sheltered by two powerful nations, both with influence in Australia’s geographic sphere.

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<sup>2</sup> P.L. Pham, *Ending “East of Suez”: The British Decision to Withdraw from Malaysia and Singapore 1964-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Andrea Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations and the ‘Turn to Europe’, 1961-1972* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2008). For Anglo-Australian relations during the 1940s, see Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995). For Anglo-Australian relations from the post-war period through to the end of the McMillan prime ministership, see Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001). For a broader analysis of Anglo-Australia relations spanning the post-war period through to Britain’s exit from Southeast Asia, see David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain’s Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> In a radio broadcast on 26 April 1939, Sir Robert Menzies stated: “What Great Britain calls the Far East is to us the near north.” [http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/\(LookupVolNoNumber\)/2~73](http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/(LookupVolNoNumber)/2~73), (accessed: 26 April 2013).

Thus, Australia's post-war defence policy was shaped to capitalise on the support of two powerful nations in the joint defence of Australia were it to be confronted by an aggressor. Australian defence policy required these allies to hold positions forward of the Australian mainland to act dually as a deterrent and a buffer zone. This policy was known as "forward defence".

Prior to, and following, its entry into Vietnam, reports by the Australian Defence Committee outlined the key components of the "forward defence" policy.<sup>4</sup> The 1964 *Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy* stated that to guarantee the security of the Australian mainland, Australia must "hold Southeast Asia, thus providing Australia with defence in depth".<sup>5</sup> This was to be done to counter the threat of the "internal communist parties" of Southeast Asia and "Chinese communist expansionist aims."<sup>6</sup> In 1966, this strategy of "forward defence" was still vehemently supported by the Defence Committee. It concluded that Australia's "national objective should be ... to strengthen the Western commitment generally to the defence of mainland Southeast Asia".<sup>7</sup> To effectively secure the region, there needed to be a Western presence on the Asian mainland, or nearby. In light of Australia's modest defence force, the vital cog in this policy was the utilisation of allies to man these positions forward of Australia's mainland borders. With the Americans stationed in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, and engaged in Vietnam, the Committee believed that "an active and substantial United States role in implementing this concept is vital to Australia."<sup>8</sup> The sustained role of the UK in the region was also important to Australia's defence posture.

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<sup>4</sup> The Defence Committee consisted of: Secretary of the Department of Defence (Chairman); Secretary of the Department of External Affairs; Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department; Secretary of the Treasury; Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee; Chief of Naval Staff; Chief of Air Staff; Chief of General Staff; and the Secretary of the Defence Committee.

<sup>5</sup> National Archives of Australia (henceforth referred to as NAA): A1945, 83/2/9, *Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy*, prepared by the Defence Committee, 14 July 1964.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Defence Committee Report, Quadripartite Talks, 20 June 1966.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

With bases in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and forces involved in the Indonesian Confrontation of Malaysia (more widely known as *Konfrontasi*), Britain too, was heavily involved in Southeast Asia in a forward capacity. However, the British role was to change profoundly.

Meeting at Chequers, the country residence of the British Prime Minister, in mid-November 1964, high-ranking personnel from defence and foreign affairs arms of the newly elected Wilson government approved a review of defence and foreign policy with the purpose of easing budgetary pressures. The Ministry of Defence was assigned the task of assessing where cuts could be made in three spheres of British interest: Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Publicly, some senior ministers called for Southeast Asia to be the initial area of review. However, Prime Minister Harold Wilson responded that Britain's fortuitous position in NATO, and its "special relationship" with the US, was afforded to them because they were undertaking a global role, which included the world "east of Suez".<sup>9</sup> Despite a defence policy reliant upon the stationing of allied forces in its region, the initial calls for a reduced force "east of Suez" did not draw a strong reaction from Canberra. As both Pham and Benvenuti noted, the Menzies government, although aware of the British review, was confident in the assurances from the British Secretary of Defence, Denis Healey, that the British would remain in Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> However, British intentions were made clearer during talks between the regional powers.

Convening in London in September 1965, the British outlined a policy that called for greater interdependence between the UK and the ANZUS nations to lessen the strains on Britain's defence expenditure. However, the US and Australia were in

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<sup>9</sup> Pham, *Ending "East of Suez"*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, and Andrea Benvenuti, "The British are 'Taking the Boat': Australian Attempts to Forestall Britain's Military Disengagement from Southeast Asia, 1965-1966", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 20 (1), 2009: 86-106.

agreement as to the future they envisaged for the British “east of Suez”. The central point, identified in the notes of a meeting between representatives of the two nations, was that “Britain must not pull out of Asia.” The governments of Australia and the US unyieldingly expected the British to remain in the region as the US “should not be the only non-Asian power to support security in Asia.” However, at the four nation talks, the British stated that they would halve their forces in Singapore and Malaysia at the conclusion of *Konfrontasi*. Regarding this, the Johnson administration believed that the British position must not be based on the outcome and progress of *Konfrontasi*. As no comprehensive consensus on policy had been reached, many issues remained unresolved, as will be discussed throughout this chapter. The Australians had managed to avoid increasing their role in regional defence, which included potentially providing facilities in Australia to house British forces were the British bases in Singapore and Malaysia to become untenable, and at the same time they had deflected British calls for greater allied interdependence. As the US State Department noted, the US and Australians had “concerted their efforts to counter any British move to reduce [its] defence effort” in the region.<sup>11</sup> Following the talks in London, the British defence review became a pressing issue of concern for the senior policy-making elements of the Menzies government.

Howson recalled that the Defence Committee met regularly to discuss Britain’s future in the region. He expected the British to “gradually pull out of the Far East” leading him to “envisage a ‘Fortress Australia’ concept by 1968-9.”<sup>12</sup> The Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee (FADC), comprised of Cabinet Ministers and the Prime

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<sup>11</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Hasluck, Plimsoll, Waller, and Rusk, W.P. Bundy, and Conlon, 11 April 1966, Edward C. Keefer and David S. Paterson (eds.) *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 176.

Minister, met in mid-October 1965, during which three differing views were expressed.<sup>13</sup> Menzies, supported by the Defence Committee and Chiefs of Staff, believed that Australia should offer increased aid to encourage the British to remain in Singapore. Holt and McMahon took a tougher stance on the matter.<sup>14</sup> They thought the Wilson government was “bluffing” and “the only answer was to be tougher than ever with the UK and get the USA to help us”, recalled Howson.<sup>15</sup> The final point of view was presented by John Gorton and the Minister for Defence, Allen Fairhall. In their opinion, a British exit from Singapore was inevitable, and therefore the Australian government “had better plan accordingly either to stay there with USA help—or retreat to ‘Fortress Australia’.”<sup>16</sup> The agreed outcome was to attempt to send a Minister from the US, and Australia, “to pursue the matter as soon and as toughly as possible.”<sup>17</sup> This formed the basis of the government’s general approach to the issue: to gather representatives of the ANZUS nations and exert pressure on the British to remain “east of Suez”.

Regarding Britain’s possible bid to join the EEC in late 1965, Benvenuti noted that the “DEA strongly advocated the establishment of an inter-departmental committee with a view to reassessing Australia’s negotiating position”. On the other hand, John McEwen’s Department of Trade and Industry, despite identifying that the Common Market issue had again resurfaced in British political spheres, “was in no hurry to discuss contingency planning as proposed by the DEA”, wrote Benvenuti. The reasoning was that McEwen had always believed that the question of British entry into the EEC fell within his portfolio. Following the change in leadership in Australia,

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<sup>13</sup> Also known as the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

<sup>14</sup> William McMahon, the Australian Minister for Labour and National Service, and later Prime Minister from March 1971 through December 1972.

<sup>15</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p.181.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

McEwen took the lead on the EEC problem. Therefore, it was another year before any thought was given to the establishment of an interdepartmental committee, as first desired by the DEA, with its first meeting occurring in June 1967.<sup>18</sup>

The structure of the policy-making apparatus in Canberra allowed the DEA to exert far more influence on foreign policy than the Defence Department, a point noted by T.B. Millar.<sup>19</sup> At this time, members of the DEA were present in the upper echelons of the defence machinery. Not only did the DEA supply the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, but the Joint Intelligence Staff also included a member of the DEA, with an additional senior officer permitted, but not required, to attend the meetings of the Joint Planning Committee. To have various government departments working collectively on policy is, of course, preferable to an environment in which the departments act independently of one another. However, where the DEA was present in the Defence Department, defence officials were completely absent from the DEA.<sup>20</sup> Given this, the DEA's representation in the Defence Department made it "easier for foreign affairs considerations to impinge on defence policy than vice versa."<sup>21</sup>

With the British government examining various measures to reduce its defence expenditure, it was proposed that Australia could house part of the British commitment were they to leave Singapore and Malaysia. The British sought confirmation, at least at a contingency level, that if forced to evacuate their Singapore and Malaysia bases, there would be applicable sites available in Australia to reposition part of its Southeast Asian force. Prior to the British defence review, the notion of establishing British bases in

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea Benvenuti, "'Layin' Low and Sayin' Nuffin': Australia's Policy towards Britain's second bid to join the European Economic Community (1966-67)", *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol. 46 (2), 2006, p.158.

<sup>19</sup> T.B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968), pp. 15-16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. Millar noted that the Defence Department was not completely unaware of the DEA's actions as copies of diplomatic telegrams were "consistently routed through relevant portions of the Defence group of departments."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Australia had last been discussed in 1962. In a meeting of the UK Chiefs of Staff Committee in mid-1964, Lord Mountbatten “regretfully” understood that whatever the British did, they “could not halt the historical processes which led inevitably to the loss of our remaining bases in such places as Singapore”.<sup>22</sup> He noted that the British had abandoned this subject in 1962 as the Australians “had formed an impression that we were preparing to reduce or abandon our commitments in the Far East”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the notion had “been left to the Australians to raise again.”<sup>24</sup> The Australians, however, wanted the British to remain in Singapore and Malaysia for as long as possible and neglected the idea. Australia’s “forward defence” strategy did not allow for a buffer zone commencing at the perimeter of Australia. Mountbatten also discussed what he described as a “disturbing Australian attitude”, communicated to him by Hasluck that “Australia no longer looked to Great Britain for assistance in her defence since Great Britain no longer had the capacity to provide it.”<sup>25</sup> In Australia, a change in leadership some eighteen months later did not lead to a change in policy.

Harold Holt was sworn in as prime ministership of Australia on 26 January 1966 following Sir Robert Menzies’ retirement. Having entered politics in 1935, Holt held the portfolios of Immigration (1949-56), Labour and National Service (1949-58), and Federal Treasurer (1958-66) before becoming Prime Minister. Although an experienced politician, Holt was inexperienced in the fields of foreign affairs and defence. The Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, described Holt as a man with no interest in broader political questions, or the questions beyond his portfolio, particularly

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<sup>22</sup> UKNA: DEFE 25/105, UK Chiefs of Staff Committee minutes, London, 14 July 1964, S.R. Ashton, Carl Bridge, and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the United Kingdom 1960-1975* (Barton: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010), p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

concerning defence and external affairs.<sup>26</sup> With the British defence review in its final stages, Denis Healey travelled to the US and the Asia-Pacific region during late January-early February 1966, to meet with his nation's allies, including the Holt government.

Healey had come to stress the importance of interdependence between the allies and in doing so, appealed to Australia's "forward defence" mindset. In addition to seeking greater allied cooperation to ease British responsibilities, Healey once again raised the concept of strategic British bases in Australia. He argued that if he had an indication of the potential costs, availability, and a timeframe for development of bases, he could "discuss persuasively" with his Cabinet colleagues his proposals to keep the British this side of Suez.<sup>27</sup> Holt was not forthcoming, stating that his government had not had an opportunity to give "detailed attention" to the issue.<sup>28</sup> When Healey pushed for the Australian government to agree to the proposals at a contingency level, the leader of the Country Party, John McEwen, responded forcefully. He highlighted the potential effect that a decision to exit the region would have on Anglo-Australian relations, asserting that a "British withdrawal under duress was understood", but "Australia would not wish to facilitate a British withdrawal, and would feel a need to turn to the United States."<sup>29</sup> Healey, however, reminded the Australian delegation that they were being presented with an opportunity "to commit two powerful allies to the defence of Australia for another generation" if they were willing to provide facilities for the British.<sup>30</sup> To this, Holt countered that a British withdrawal from the region could trigger an American departure from the Asian mainland, placing Australia in a

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Hasluck, with Nicholas Hasluck (ed.), *The Chance of Politics* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997), p. 126.

<sup>27</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6595 Part 3, Summary Record of Discussions with Healey, Canberra, 1-2 February 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 153.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

precarious position. This tactical gamble was unacceptable to the Prime Minister, as Australia considered the “United States’ presence in Asia as vital to Australia.”<sup>31</sup>

In his study of Anglo-Australian relations, Benvenuti noted that Australia did not wish to facilitate a British withdrawal as it would affect Britain’s “strategic role in SEATO [Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation] and Commonwealth forward strategy”.<sup>32</sup> Though correct in stating this, he does not address the potential negative effect that any indication that Australia was providing the British with an exit strategy would have on the Australian-American alliance. With the US deeply involved in the region, and the Johnson administration expecting that the UK would remain in Asia, Australian hands were tied. The Holt government would not risk their important strategic relationship with the Americans for a few thousand British troops stationed on Australia’s northern perimeter. Any future policy, the Australians told Healey, needed to be discussed at a quadripartite level, bringing in the US and NZ. Such talks, as Goldsworthy noted, “would pit three against one.”<sup>33</sup>

In later recollections, Healey provided contradictory evidence regarding the sincerity of the British base proposals. In his memoirs, Healey wrote that the British had held out their hand in regards to the base proposals, “and the Australians, if they had any sense could have nailed it. But they didn’t.”<sup>34</sup> However, he later admitted that the base proposals were “all part of the bullshit of negotiations”.<sup>35</sup> The British minister Richard Crossman put it less colourfully.<sup>36</sup> He believed that the British Cabinet Defence Committee hoped that the Australian government would turn down the establishment of

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations*, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain’s Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 165.

<sup>34</sup> Healey, as cited in Andrea Benvenuti, “The British are ‘Taking the Boat’: Australians Attempts to Forestall Britain’s Military Disengagement from Southeast Asia, 1965-66”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, (20:1), p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Richard Crossman served as the Minister for Housing and Local Government from 1964-66.

British bases in Australia as it would be an expensive venture that would not remain within budget limits set by the British Cabinet.<sup>37</sup>

Before leaving Australia, Healey addressed the National Press Club in Canberra to put forth his government's perspectives on its defence review and ongoing relationship with Australia. He affirmed that the British could only continue to play a major role in military affairs beyond European borders "as part of a collective force."<sup>38</sup> The "critical condition" for any alliance, he believed, was "a fair share of the burden."<sup>39</sup> Elaborating on this, he said that "no alliance can survive with one country spending out of proportion of its national resources compared with those of others."<sup>40</sup>

The Australian government had not impressed Healey, and his memoirs contain disparaging comments regarding the government. He wrote that "apart from Paul Hasluck ... they [the Holt government] were not over-impressive."<sup>41</sup> In fact, he recalled that Gough Whitlam, who would replace Arthur Calwell as Opposition Leader by the end of the year, "overshadowed all the members of the government."<sup>42</sup> Healey also remarked that the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, James Plimsoll, possessed "immense reserves of wisdom and experience." But "even more impressive were the Australian academic experts on defence."<sup>43</sup> However, given the government's dissatisfaction with Britain's suggested course of action, one could hardly have expected the Australian Cabinet to engage in a nuanced, thoughtful, and unbiased discussion of the issue. The government's opinion was clear: they did not want the British to abandon their position "east of Suez"; therefore, they would not entertain the

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<sup>37</sup> Crossman as cited in Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket*, p. 166.

<sup>38</sup> NAA: A1954, 287/3/20, British Defence Minister Addresses National Press Club in Canberra, 2 February 1966.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 291.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 291-2.

idea. For example, when discussing the possibility of constructing British bases in Australia, the government provided weightless responses, such as: “it would be difficult to find the necessary construction workers” to complete the job.<sup>44</sup>

The revised UK defence strategy outlined two potential solutions for the future of the region that were unthinkable to the Australians. The British believed the best long-term solution for Southeast Asia was the development of a region of non-aligned states, in which aggression would be countered by the United Nations (UN), not political alliances. Furthermore, the British proposed that Western forces would revert back to the perimeter of Southeast Asia.<sup>45</sup> Holt conveyed his concerns with these resolutions to the US President, Lyndon Baines Johnson. The retreat of Western forces to the periphery of the region, he wrote, would “place all of us in a weaker position militarily, and we could scarcely exercise the same stabilizing and moderating influence that presence on the mainland could achieve.”<sup>46</sup> The removal of Western forces from the Asian mainland would leave the region vulnerable to Communist pressures, “first psychologically and then physically”, he added.<sup>47</sup> In supporting the UN, the British were suggesting that political alliances would become obsolete. Wilson stated publicly that he and his government looked forward to a time when “the UN and the rule of law will be so effective and comprehensive that alliances will not be necessary.”<sup>48</sup>

Wilson’s proposed world-view was in direct conflict with Australia’s “forward defence” policy. Paul Hasluck did not share Wilson’s optimism that the UN would become the great mediator it was intended to be. Present at the formation of the UN as part of the Australian delegation, Hasluck quickly came to understand that the UN could

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>45</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/24, Australian High Commission, London, to the DEA, 6 April 1966.

<sup>46</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, Bunting to Waller, letter from Holt to Johnson, 24 February 1966.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, R.F. Osborn to Plimsoll, text of speech by Wilson to the Parliamentary Labour Party, 17 June 1966.

not compete with the “great power rivalry” that quickly came to define the Cold War.<sup>49</sup> In his first statement to Parliament as Foreign Minister, Hasluck declared that world peace hinged on “our confidence that the two great nuclear powers—the United States and Soviet Union—will act with restraint.”<sup>50</sup> Hence, “the power situation in Asia cannot be separated from the major problems of the power situation in the whole world.”<sup>51</sup> Hasluck’s biographer, Robert Porter, described the Foreign Minister as a man of practicality and pragmatism when examining an issue; however, the exception was his understanding of international power relations, where he unwaveringly viewed the world as divided into two camps, the West, led by the US, and the communist nations, fronted by the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> Given the Foreign Minister’s disdain of the UN, it was ever unlikely that he would support Wilson’s sentiments of a world governed by the UN. Although unable to secure an Australian agreement to share the burden in the region, Healey did manage to secure approval for an examination of likely sites and costs associated with stationing the British in Australia.

In June 1966, the British Staff Planners completed an assessment of the viability of relocating British forces to Australia. In light of Australia’s small defence force, the British proposals were substantial. However, the force level proposed to be housed in Australia was far less than that currently situated in Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> Henry S. Albinski in, Tom Stannage, Kay Saunders and Richard Nile (eds.), *Paul Hasluck in Australian History: Civic Personality and Public Life*, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998), p. 173.

<sup>50</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 23 March 1965, p. 231.

<sup>51</sup> Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont, “Paul Hasluck as Minister for External Affairs: Towards a Reappraisal”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 52 (1), 1998: 63-75.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Porter, *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1993), p. 305. For a brief study that suggests that Hasluck held hopes that the Soviet Union would reinvent itself as a stabilising force in the region directed against Chinese communism, see Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont, “Paul Hasluck as Minister for External Affairs: Towards a Reappraisal”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 52 (1), 1998: 63-75.

<sup>53</sup> As of 1965, the British had 224 aircraft, two aircraft carriers, one commando carrier, one guided missile carrier, five submarines, and 19 infantry battalions and ten other major units totalling over 50,000 men. Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations*, p. 62. A cable from Hasluck to Holt lists the total number of

British planners projected the following: a naval base at Cockburn Sound, Western Australia; an amphibious force located near the naval base, consisting of three units of approximately a thousand troops; an airfield near the naval base, complete with 14 F-111 aircraft; a force of five-thousand troops in Rockhampton; and a force headquarters of five-thousand troops based in Brisbane. The Defence Committee estimated a total cost of £A250-300 million, although the Treasury believed the figure to be closer to £A500 million. As the planning was being conducted at an exploratory level, there was no discussion of how the costs of such a venture would be divided between the nations. At the time, Australian defence expenditure was predicted to top £A850 million between 1967/8, double its level from 1962/3.<sup>54</sup> With an increasing role in Vietnam, it is likely that Australia would have offered very little, if any, monetary assistance to the British.

In April 1967, meeting with the senior British diplomat and current High Commissioner to Australia, Sir Charles Johnston, Holt emphasised the large costs associated with any relocation of British forces. Though he clarified that he was not in possession of any figures regarding the redeployment of the Malaysia and Singapore forces, Holt told Johnston that the venture would be “at least as costly as continuation on the mainland, especially when aid to Singapore, consequent upon withdrawal, is added in.”<sup>55</sup> With the British shift in policy motivated by budgetary pressures, highlighting the vast costs of the project was the obvious tool to rebuff the British. Despite the Holt government’s unwillingness to provide the British with base facilities

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British service-men in Malaysia and Singapore at 80,000. NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Hasluck to Holt, 17 April 1967.

<sup>54</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Defence Committee Report, Quadripartite Talks, 20 June 1966.

<sup>55</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335 Part 2A, record of meeting between Holt and Sir Charles Johnston, 24 April 1967.

in Australia, various levels of the Holt government were far more disposed to stationing American troops in Australia.

Members of the Australian Joint Planning Committee (JPC), and Defence Committee, were far more receptive to the notion of constructing American bases on Australian soil than the development of equivalent British facilities.<sup>56</sup> Whilst in consultation with the British, the Australians were reluctant to plan for such facilities, even at a contingency level. Conversely, the JPC, and Defence Committee, encouraged the potential development of US strategic defence installations in Australia. Whilst downplaying the viability of British bases on Australian soil, the JPC agreed that “We should also wish to be in touch with American thinking about the development of base facilities in this part of the world”, as it was “obviously on the cards that America might seek additional bases on Australian territory in the foreseeable future.”<sup>57</sup> The Defence Committee wrote that at the quadripartite meetings between the ANZUS nations and Britain, Australia may sound out “American thinking on possible long term United States requirements for bases or staging facilities in Australia—possibly an outgrowth of the facilities being established at North West Cape.”<sup>58</sup> The Cocos Islands, a small collection of Australian territories in the Indian Ocean, were also listed as a potential replacement for British forces. However, the Americans had also shown interest in the islands. The Australian Cabinet had decided in 1964 that “any US interest in Australian staging facilities should be allowed to develop of its own accord.”<sup>59</sup> It is clear from the notes of the Defence Committee and JPC that an American presence, though not

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<sup>56</sup> At the time the JPC consisted of: Chairman (rotates between the Services) - Senior Navy Member; Navy - Director of Plans; Army - Brigadier-General Staff; Air Force - Air Commodore Plans; Department of Defence - Assistant Secretary (Defence Plans); Army - Director-General Operations and Plans; Air Force - Director-General Policy and Plans; Department of External Affairs (optional) - Assistant Secretary Defence Policy Branch.

<sup>57</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/24, report by the JPC, British bases in Australia, 7 April 1966.

<sup>58</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Defence Committee Report, Quadripartite Talks, 20 June 1966.

<sup>59</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6124, Note by the Defence Department, 17 June 1965, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p.86.

actively sought by the Johnson administration, was strongly preferred over the current British call for facilities in Australia. This illustrates the major geo-political aim of the Holt government: to increase the American presence in the region.

With allied assistance essential to the future defence policies of the UK, Australia, and NZ, ministerial discussions provided these nations with an opportunity to examine the other nations' strategies, and at the same time, reiterate their individual concerns. With many issues left unresolved from earlier talks, and no agreed allied strategy following Healey's travels, the Wilson Labour government was eager to participate in quadripartite discussions. As Pham noted, the British wished to undertake quadripartite discussions as a way "to induce the country's allies to carry some of the burden of its commitments."<sup>60</sup> The proposal of joint discussions between the regional powers pleased the Holt government although as McEwen had warned Healey, they would want to be heard at any such talks, and would not "simply fit in with Britain and America."<sup>61</sup> The Americans, too, were "quite enthusiastic about quadripartite talks", Healey told the senior members of the Holt government.<sup>62</sup> Having secured approval for such talks from the Americans prior heading to Australia, Healey exaggerated the level of American interest in the talks. Four-power talks, in fact, had very little appeal to many in the Johnson administration.

Multilateral ministerial discussions would not advance American national interests as they would the other three nations. As the largest Western presence in the Southeast Asia, the US had repeatedly insisted that the UK must not exit the region. The Australian Ambassador to the US, Sir Keith Waller, informed Canberra that the US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, believed that the British attitude was "defeatist and

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<sup>60</sup> P.L. Pham, "Ending 'East of Suez'", p. 77.

<sup>61</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6595 Part 3, Summary Record of Discussions with Healey, Canberra, 1-2 February 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 154.

<sup>62</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4 Part 9, D.W. McNicol to the DEA, 25 February 1966.

should be countered strongly.”<sup>63</sup> Waller assured his colleagues in Canberra that the “United States government was quite resolved on this process.”<sup>64</sup> The Americans had made their position clear at earlier talks, and their thinking had not changed: Britain must remain in Asia. While Healey was en route to Australia following discussions with the Johnson administration, Rusk contacted External Affairs, Canberra, to communicate an overview of his discussions with the British Defence Secretary. He believed that quadripartite talks would not address regional issues; rather, they seemed more like a forum in which to discuss the “reduction of existing commitments’ than a means for handling them.”<sup>65</sup> Rusk felt that the British were willing to undertake a political role “east of Suez”, but not a continued physical role. To Rusk, quadripartite talks served only as a means of countering the inconceivable British proposal of withdrawal.

Minister Hasluck travelled to Washington in April 1966 to meet with senior officials from the Johnson administration, during which the impending quadripartite talks were raised. The US Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, told Hasluck that he was “anxious for the discussions to get under way”, but only as a means for examining every nation’s hand.<sup>66</sup> He was concerned about the American people’s perception of such talks. Already believing that its nation was undertaking too large a role in the region, he believed that the public “won’t tolerate a quadripartite arrangement leaving out Asians.”<sup>67</sup> President Johnson also noted this as a concern in a letter to Holt. He wrote that the four nations needed to “avoid giving any impression that our four countries are deciding the fate of Southeast Asia ... or that we are forming

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<sup>63</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/20, cable from Waller to the DEA, 19 January 1966.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Pham, *Ending “East of Suez”*, p. 77

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum, drafted by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, John T. McNaughton, of a meeting between McNamara and Hasluck, 18 April 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

an exclusive club.”<sup>68</sup> The then Chairman of the administration’s Policy Planning Committee, Walt Rostow, was decidedly against any such expansion of ANZUS. In a memorandum to Johnson, he stated that if the British were to join ANZUS it would create a “White Man’s Club” in Asia and “antagonise” the other nations in the region.<sup>69</sup> William P. Bundy, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, reiterated this concern in a separate meeting with Hasluck, arguing that the four-power talks “would look too much like a “White Man’s Club” determining the fate of Asia.”<sup>70</sup> In addition, Bundy also informed the Foreign Minister that the US government was opposed to any redrafting of the ANZUS or SEATO Treaties. So too were the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), whom Edwin Hicks, the Secretary of the Australian Department of Defence, stated were “not—repeat not—agreeable to such talks” that would permit this.<sup>71</sup> The JCS were only interested in bilateral planning with the UK, but only “when [the] U.K. makes the running.”<sup>72</sup> At the time, the JCS were updating the *Joint Strategic Objectives*, an assessment of the size and flow of US forces in the proceeding fifteen years. The Australian Embassy, Washington, informed the Australian Department of Defence that the Joint Chiefs had “no desire whatever to take over Britain’s responsibilities in the Far East.”<sup>73</sup> Holt wrote to Lyndon Johnson to reinforce the value of the quadripartite discussions. The talks could provide the nations with an understanding of, and potentially, an agreement regarding the nature of the political problem posed by Britain’s defence review. Furthermore, the talks could serve to coordinate the nations’ objectives in the Southeast Asian area in both in the short term

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<sup>68</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Johnson to Clark for Holt, 15 March 1966.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum for Johnson prepared by W.W. Rostow, 20 January 1966, James Miller and David Paterson (eds.), *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XII, Western Europe*, (Washington: United States Government Printing, 2001), p. 513.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Hasluck, Plimsoll, Waller, and Rusk, W.P. Bundy, and Conlon, 11 April 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 24.

<sup>71</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4 Part 9, cable from Crabb to Hicks, 24 February 1966.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

and long term.<sup>74</sup> If Johnson replied to Holt's letter, it is not present in the official record of conversations between the two men.<sup>75</sup> His administration did not wish to fill the void left by the British; hence, there was little need to engage in four-power talks regarding the future allied approach in the region. With the Americans unconvinced, the Holt government needed to communicate the importance of these talks to their American counterparts. In addition to quadripartite talks, Hasluck also raised his concerns regarding China.

Alarmed by the British calls for regional non-alignment, Hasluck quizzed the Americans on their understandings of future relations between the West and the Chinese.<sup>76</sup> In a meeting with senior members of the Johnson administration, Hasluck believed it "fanciful ... that independent, non-aligned states on the border of China could exist unless there was available a powerful deterrent against China."<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, he stated that "a settlement in Vietnam would not solve the problems of the region", as he viewed Peking as the root of the conflict.<sup>78</sup> Secretary Rusk indicated that he hoped the independent states of the region would "gradually draw closer together", presumably in opposition to the Chinese, which he believed was already happening.<sup>79</sup> Unified in thought on China, the Australians needed to emphasise the importance of quadripartite talks to the Americans.

Various levels of the Holt government adopted an agreed approach directed at engaging the Americans in the proposed talks. In any discussions arising between the four nations, it was understood that the US was the only ANZUS nation that possessed

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<sup>74</sup> NAA: A7854/1, message from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 24 February 1966.

<sup>75</sup> For exchanges between the two men, see NAA: A7854, 1: [Personal Papers of Prime Minister Holt] Correspondence between the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Holt, and US President.

<sup>76</sup> Hasluck's grave fear of Chinese communism will be examined in the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>77</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/24, Hasluck to Holt, record of discussions between Hasluck, McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy in Washington, 12 April 1966.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

enough power to reject British calls for joint military command in the region—the Prime Minister of NZ, Sir Keith Holyoake, agreed. In a letter to Holt he wrote that the talks would offer a chance to “bring combined pressure on the British to maintain some determination to stay in Southeast Asia”.<sup>80</sup> Assessing the British defence review, the Defence Committee wrote that “the vital thing for Australia was to have the United States remain in the area and everything else must be measured against this.”<sup>81</sup> This statement highlights a key argument of this thesis: that Australia’s alliance was more than a traditional bilateral relationship, as this partnership impinged on Australia’s alliance with the UK. The Australian government, therefore, needed to place the “greatest importance” on “dissuading Britain from pursuing proposals for withdrawal” as it may jeopardise America’s role in Asia.<sup>82</sup>

Senior officials in the Australian missions in Washington, London, and Wellington were cabled by the DEA and instructed on how to approach discussing the proposed talks with their American contacts. Aware of the Johnson administration’s aversion to any joint planning or arrangements between the nations, they were instructed to distinguish between “quadripartite agreements” and “quadripartite talks”.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, when in communication with the Wilson government, they were instructed to talk of the discussions optimistically. Australia did not “wish to appear to the British to be negative, nor would we want the spectre of quadripartite arrangements to deter the Americans from engaging in quadripartite discussions.”<sup>84</sup> With all nations willing to participate, the Holt government began planning for the quadripartite discussions.

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<sup>80</sup>NAA: A1838, 682/4 Part 9, letter from Holyoake to Holt, 25 February 1966.

<sup>81</sup> NAA: A5839 Volume 1, Cabinet Decision No. 33 (FADC), Canberra, 30 January 1966.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4 Part 9, DEA to Australian High Commission, Wellington (copies also sent to Australian Embassy, Washington, and Australian High Commission, London), 3 March 1966.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

It was important that the Holt government developed an agenda that would appeal to both the US and UK, whilst addressing Australian concerns. In addition, the government needed to convey to its two major allies the “importance of harmonising their defence policies in the Southeast Asian area”, noted the Defence Committee.<sup>85</sup> This was apparent in what the Defence Committee regarded to be the principal goal of the talks: to illustrate to the US and UK, “the duality of Australian regional defence responsibilities”.<sup>86</sup> With Australian forces involved in *Konfrontasi* and Vietnam, the Defence Committee recognised that the government needed “to find ways of reconciling the resultant competing calls” on its resources from its two most important allies.<sup>87</sup> Whilst addressing Parliament, Holt stated that the four-power talks afforded Australia an opportunity to develop the “widest possible agreement on policy aspects, and to see how far our activities can be co-ordinated.”<sup>88</sup> The JPC noted, and agreed with, the joint minute drafted during Healey’s discussions with the Holt government in February 1966, which stated that such talks should be pursued on the basis of “bringing in the United States to secure agreement on the strategic concept and aims for allied co-operation in the area.”<sup>89</sup> Australia pursued consultations with the Americans before any regional defence agreements were to be made with the British. Presumably, the Holt government understood that it would not have to increase its regional responsibilities as long as the Americans were engaged in regional planning. As the Johnson administration would continue to exert pressure on the British to remain this side of Suez, it would not call for the Australians to do more. It may also be the case that the Australians recognised that the Americans would sooner call on them to do more in Vietnam, than ease the burden on British defence expenditure. In mid-1966, members of the Defence Committee

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<sup>85</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Defence Committee agendum, 20 June 1966.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Harold Holt, *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 8 March 1966, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/24, report by the Joint Planning Committee, 14 March 1966.

concluded that if the British showed the required “will and determination” to remain in Singapore and Malaysia, then the government should assist them in developing “a military posture which makes good military sense, which makes good political sense.”<sup>90</sup> However, if the British remained in Singapore and Malaysia, then there would be no need to relocate its troops to Australia. The assistance that the Australian government was willing to offer was also dependent on the US. The Defence Committee reported that the British needed to “meet the American requirement” that they were “playing a military part in preserving South East Asia from communist aggression.”<sup>91</sup>

International diplomats descended upon Canberra for three sets of ministerial discussions. A small group of placard-waving anti-war demonstrators awaited Secretary Rusk, the head of the American delegation, as he made his way to the nation’s capital. “Go home, you murdering Yank”, cried the dozen-or-so demonstrators as he arrived to deliver the opening address at the SEATO ministerial meeting, on 27 June 1966.<sup>92</sup> After a handful of separate altercations with the protestors, Rusk noted to President Johnson that he and the demonstrators “became quite familiar with each other.”<sup>93</sup> The Australian delegation was headed by Minister Hasluck. At this time, Prime Minister Holt was in the US, embarking on his first visit to the nation as Prime Minister—the visit during which Holt declared that Australia was “all the way with LBJ”—to be examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Following the commencement of the discussions, the powers turned their attention to the potential stationing of British troops in Australia. It appears that the British and Australian governments had different expectations as to the role to be assumed by any British contingent stationed in Australia. Though the British

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<sup>90</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Defence Committee agendum, 20 June 1966.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> “Australian students blast Rusk”, *Pittsburgh Press*, 27 June 1966, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram from Rusk to the Department of State, 1 July 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 192.

delegates would not detail the part that these forces would play, the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, stated confidently that these troops would be available to assist Australia and NZ if they were to come under attack. This assurance would have meant little to the Australians, given that any attack on these two nations' territories could invoke the ANZUS Treaty.<sup>94</sup> Hasluck, however, had privately relayed to Rusk that the British troops would be based in Australia, not for the immediate defence of Australian territories, but rather for projection into the region to combat any reasonable, impending threat.<sup>95</sup> Hasluck also underpinned the political ramifications that placing such forces in Australia would have on the Holt government. How could Australia house thousands of British troops as thousands of Australian National Servicemen were fighting in Vietnam, he queried.

Quadripartite discussions also provided the governments of Australia and the US with an opportunity to discuss the most constructive future role for the British in regards to the nations' "interests in promoting more active British responsibilities in preventing and/or combatting communist pressures in Southeast Asia". As it was improbable that British forces would enter the war in Vietnam, the Johnson administration and Australian government anticipated an enlarged role for the British in the region, specifically in Thailand, to combat the continued internal communist pressures in that nation. "If they [the British] could not go into Vietnam, the British might do more in Thailand", the nations agreed. With active communist subversion, particularly in the north of the country, it was feared that Thailand "may well be in the process of becoming the next serious area of communist inspired insurgency", noted the Defence Committee. The revised UK defence strategy, however, declared that the British would

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<sup>94</sup> Pham, *Ending "East of Suez"*, pp. 112-13

<sup>95</sup> Memorandum of conversation, SEATO Council Meeting and ANZUS Ministerial Meeting, 30 June 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 41.

fight only against “communist aggression”, not “communist subversion”. Therefore, the present situation in Thailand did not meet the criteria for possible intervention outlined by the Wilson government. Notwithstanding these reservations, the Defence Committee believed that “the main effort to enlarge upon the British commitment to the area should be concentrated upon Thailand.”<sup>96</sup>

Rusk and Hasluck shared their displeasure with the current British policy of non-involvement in Southeast Asia. Privately, Hasluck believed British thinking to be ill-conceived. If Thailand “became rotten and fell, it would be the end of the story for Malaysia”, he said.<sup>97</sup> The British were missing the point as they did not see that “Malaysian security depends upon Thailand’s security, and the latter depends upon SEATO”, he continued.<sup>98</sup> The British, however, were committed to their pledge to only fight against communist aggression, not subversion. Following the quadripartite talks, Rusk cabled his colleagues in Washington, stating that he now understood what Wilson meant when he said, “Let’s not revive SEATO.”<sup>99</sup> The British had no intention of entering Vietnam, or Thailand. In a frank report, Rusk concluded that the British “have not the slightest intention of joining in any military effort anywhere north of Malaysia”, and given the end of *Konfrontasi*, the British “would be glad to be invited out of Malaysia at the earliest possible moment.”<sup>100</sup>

The ministerial discussions, as they did in late 1965, proved fruitless. The ANZUS nations were firm in their resolve, and as a result, the British had not secured any cooperative arrangements between the nations. Now, however, British thinking was

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<sup>96</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/26, Quadripartite Talks, 20 June 1966.

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum of conversation, SEATO Council Meeting and ANZUS Ministerial Meeting, 30 June 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 41.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Telegram from Rusk to the Department of State, 1 July 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 193.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

visible. The ANZUS nations were, according to Rusk, “quite disappointed in the rapidly softening position of Great Britain on Southeast Asian questions,” during the discussions.<sup>101</sup> It was agreed that Australia, NZ and the US would individually “try to turn them [the British] around.”<sup>102</sup> However, Australian focus shifted towards its alliance with the US in the immediate period following the quadripartite talks. By the end of 1966, the Holt government had increased its commitment to Vietnam, and welcomed Johnson, the first serving US President to visit Australia shores, as will be examined further in chapter four.

In February 1967, the Wilson Labour government published a new Defence White Paper absent of itemised defence cuts. This publication was largely opposed, with 67 Labour back-benchers abstaining from voting on the White Paper.<sup>103</sup> The Paper was passed marginally, but the Defence and Overseas Policy Department, and the Defence Secretary understood that drastic cuts needed to be made. In mid-April 1967, representatives of the ANZUS nations and Britain convened in Washington for meetings of the ANZUS Council, and SEATO Council. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, George Brown, in private discussions, informed the ANZUS nations that, following a scaling down by half by 1970, the British would be abandoning their bases in Singapore and Malaysia by the mid-part of the 1970s. This revision in policy was “most disturbing” to Holt, who was being kept abreast of developments by Hasluck.<sup>104</sup> Brown “urged” Hasluck that the Australian government “should not react too hastily or too violently.”<sup>105</sup> It was “impossible” to halt the departure of the British from Asia, said Brown; however, it “might be possible ... to influence the British

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations*, p. 92.

<sup>104</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Holt to Hasluck, 20 April 1967.

<sup>105</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Hasluck to Holt and Fairhall, 20 April 1967.

Cabinet so as to have British forces based in Australia.”<sup>106</sup> Choosing not to cite the obvious economic motives, Secretary Brown stated that the time had come when “white faces” were unacceptable on the Asian mainland. Rusk acerbically responded that “friendly white faces were likely to be preferred to hostile Chinese ones.”<sup>107</sup> The problem, as the Americans saw it, was that “the British neither feel scared nor rich.”<sup>108</sup> Harold Holt warned Harold Wilson that “history would condemn” the British if they “were to plan, or even contemplate, complete withdrawal” from the region.<sup>109</sup> High Commissioner Johnston noted the physical toll that the shift in British policy had had on Holt. “For the first time in my experience of him, Mr Holt looked badly shaken and grey in the face”. “It was quite obvious”, recalled Johnston, that Holt was “profoundly upset”.<sup>110</sup>

During this period the Australian High Commissioner to Britain, Alexander Downer Snr, also responded to what he described as “vague” British calls for a joint base in Australia. The Australians rejected the proposal, as Downer reinforced that government “felt emphatically” that any British bases “should be in forward areas to be of any real use.”<sup>111</sup> But the Holt government had already grasped that the British had no intention to remain “forward”. The Australian government had been informed of a meeting with the NZ Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, and George Brown, during which

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, Paper prepared by political/military counsellor of the US Embassy in London for inclusion in Embassy’s annual review, given to Hasluck and Holyoake by Rusk, 22 April 1967.

<sup>109</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Holt to Downer, 21 April 1967.

<sup>110</sup> UKNA: FCO 46/54, telegram from Sir Charles Hepburn Johnston to the Commonwealth Office, 21 April 1967, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 183.

<sup>111</sup> NAA: MM1003, cablegram from Downer to Holt, 3 May 1967, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 190.

Brown frankly told Holyoake that the British “did not want to be further forward, but regardless of wishes did not have the resources to be forward.”<sup>112</sup>

On 18 July 1967, the Wilson government released the Defence White Paper that signified an end to Britain’s presence “east of Suez”. It confirmed its allies’ worst fears: the British would halve their Malaysia and Singapore contingents by 1971, and completely vacate the two nations by 1975. In addition, the British had cast aside any intentions of stationing a substantial force Australia.<sup>113</sup> Included in the proposals was the possibility of placing two battalions in Australia—a far cry from the more than ten thousand men initially discussed. A quick-response amphibious task force would serve as the British contribution to the defence of Southeast Asia. Troubled by the findings of the White Paper, the Defence Committee noted on 1 May 1967 that if the British completely withdrew from Malaysia and Singapore, “it may be necessary to devise, in consultation with the United States, an alternative way of conducting our forward defence strategy.”<sup>114</sup> Predictably, these decisions, they concluded, “should be made on the grounds of our national interest.”<sup>115</sup>

With the British inevitably exiting Singapore and Malaysia, and Australia’s stubborn devotion to a strategy of “forward defence”, the prospect of Australia “filling the void” left by the British after 1975 was studied. Before agreeing to station forces in these nations, the Australian government sought the views of key officials from the US Departments of Defence and State. The guarantee of American military support to assist a possible Australian contingent in Singapore and Malaysia was paramount. In April 1967, following Brown’s confirmation of the findings of the defence review, Rusk

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<sup>112</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Hasluck to Holt, 19 April 1967.

<sup>113</sup> Pham, *Ending “East of Suez”*, p. 95.

<sup>114</sup> NAA: A1945, 83/2/9, Allen Fairhall to Cabinet, Defence Committee Report on Britain East of Suez, 1 May 1967.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

stated clearly that the US would not fill the gap left by the British. Furthermore, Hasluck noted that Rusk had “expressed hope that we [Australia] would come in boots and all.”<sup>116</sup> When in Washington during the second week of October 1967, Hasluck probed Rusk and McNamara regarding the possible support that could be afforded to Australian forces stationed in Malaysia and Singapore. Of particular interest was whether the ANZUS Treaty extended to Australian troops on foreign soil. Hasluck, predicting that the Americans would remain in Thailand following the conclusion of the conflict in Vietnam, stated that he saw no probable threat from the Northern area of Southeast Asia. The only potential threat to Malaysia and Singapore, although unlikely, Hasluck believed, would emanate from Indonesia.<sup>117</sup> Hasluck was reassuring the Americans that an attack against Australian forces stationed in Malaysia and Singapore was highly unlikely; therefore, with no obvious threat to Malaysia and Singapore, there would be no need to invoke ANZUS. Thus, the Americans should have few misgivings about extending the Treaty to include Australian forces in the two nations. During his discussions with Hasluck, Rusk confirmed that Australian troops would be supported by the US, but “hoped that this would not be mentioned in so many words.”<sup>118</sup>

The Americans were supportive of the Australian proposal for the stationing of Australian and NZ troops in Malaysia and Singapore. Hasluck stated that SEATO provided the Australians with a legal basis for basing troops in the region. The FADC noted that if Australia’s presence in the nations could be incorporated under the umbrella of SEATO, it would put Johnson “into a better position for action vis-à-vis

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<sup>116</sup> NAA: A1209/1966, 7335, Part 2, cable from Hasluck to Holt, 17 April 1967.

<sup>117</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Hasluck and Waller with McNamara, Warnke, and Nuechterlein, 10 October 1967, *FRUS: 1964-86, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p 73.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Hasluck and Waller and Rusk and W.P. Bundy, 9 October 1967, *FRUS: 1964-86, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p. 71.

Congress” if the US was required to intervene in Malaysia or Singapore.<sup>119</sup> This “freedom of action that a treaty gives” was noted by Hasluck in his memorandum to the Americans.<sup>120</sup> He was blunt: Australia wished “to keep ANZUS alive as the principal guarantee of Australia's own security”; hence, they needed to have “the closest possible understanding with [the] USA on all matters affecting a continued American interest and presence in the region.”<sup>121</sup> The following month, the US JCS briefed Secretary McNamara regarding Hasluck’s memorandum. The JCS concluded that the “US strategic/military interests would be adversely affected if Australia ... decided not to maintain a military presence in those countries.”<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, the Americans must “support a continuing Australian/NZ presence in Malaysia and Singapore ... and encourage Australia to develop a leading role in the area.”<sup>123</sup> To facilitate this role, the JCS recommended that the US government needed to reassure the Australians that the ANZUS Treaty would extend to any Australian or NZ forces, public vessels or aircraft in Malaysia and Singapore. By supporting the Australians politically, the Americans would not be required to enter Malaysia or Singapore physically.

An evident trend in this chapter is the lack of alternative policy development by the various elements of the Holt government. There was very little diversion from the approach of countering any British attempts for assistance, in hopes of preserving the integrity of “forward defence”. Approximately a fortnight after the confirmation of British defence cuts, the Secretary of the DEA, James Plimsoll, believed Australia needed to present the future role of the British in a more attractive light, whilst lowering

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<sup>119</sup> NAA: A5840, 656, FADC, Cabinet Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, General Session, 25 August 1967.

<sup>120</sup> Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Warnke, to the Chairman of the JCS, Wheeler, 13 October 1967, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p. 82.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Memorandum from the JCS to McNamara, 8 November 1967, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p. 83.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

its own expectations of the role that the British could play. “Australia is trying to cast the British in a larger role than they can play”, wrote Plimsoll. Moreover, Australia needed to “present the future in a new light ... unconnected with all the obligations of the colonial power of the imperial past”, he advised. In a radical departure from Australia’s rigid defence policy, Plimsoll even suggested that the time had come to “put aside (without discarding) our larger ideas about substantial forces on the ground, and ‘forward defence’.”<sup>124</sup>

In a fascinating minute from Oldham, a former Australian Departmental Officer in Britain during WWII, to Hasluck, he stated that the Australian government needed to understand that “there is no fellow-feeling between the British and the Americans as exists between the Australians and the Americans.”<sup>125</sup> The British Prime Minister had, he believed, “looked to the future while the President of the USA has rather looked to the past.”<sup>126</sup> Subtly, Oldham was suggesting that by aligning itself with the US, Australia was doing the same. In early 1968, Wilson announced a total withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia by 1971. Britain’s global role had ended four years ahead of schedule—a schedule never accepted by the ANZUS nations.

A detailed analysis of Australian interactions with the British during Holt’s prime ministership highlights a clear, unwavering framework centred on the furthering of—or at the minimum, retention of—a US presence in the region. The Defence Committee always considered Australia’s relationship with the US when coming to its conclusions, having stated that defence and external affairs matters must be measured against the goal of retaining a US presence. Australia’s “forward defence” policy,

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<sup>124</sup> NAA: A1838, TS691/1 Part 8, minute by Plimsoll, 5 May 1967, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 192.

<sup>125</sup> NAA: A1838, TS691/1 Part 12, minute from Oldham (Australian Departmental Officer in Britain, 1939-45) to Hasluck, 19 July 1967, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 227.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

directed at combatting communist expansion in Southeast Asia, was solely dependent on an American presence in the region. It relied on allied nations manning forward positions in the region to ensure stability. To assist the British would be to revise this strategy. A strategic vacuum would be left in Singapore and Malaysia, which the US had repeatedly stated it would not fill. Australia's stubborn adherence to its policy of defence in depth led to an uncompromising position. Thus, the Australian government aligned itself with the Johnson administration and implored the British to remain in the region to fulfil their expected global role. Furthermore, the Australian government remained guarded as to the assistance they could potentially provide to the British. They hesitated and stalled when the British called for base facilities in Australia, yet, the Defence Committee actively proposed the seeking out of American intentions for future installations in Australia. This indicates the importance the Australian government attached to its partnership with the US.

Recent studies of Anglo-Australian relations have failed to adequately account for the importance of Australian-American alliance in relation to Australia's interactions with the British during this period. The US served two important roles to the Australians during this time. Not only was it Australia's strongest military ally, but it also had the capability of exerting a level of political pressure on the British that the Australian government just could not. This is evidenced by the lengths to which the Australians went to involve the Americans in quadripartite discussions, and the continual calls for American involvement in any defence planning to be undertaken between the British and Australians. The Australian government ambitiously thought that such talks could draw the Americans into greater security arrangements in the region, and in the course of doing so, also include the British in these arrangements. The Australian-American alliance was such an integral diplomatic apparatus that it strongly shaped Australia's

interactions with its former major ally, the UK. The following chapter will examine the influence of the early indications of Britain's revised defence strategy on the Holt government's decision to increase Australia's military assistance to South Vietnam in March 1966.

### Chapter 3: “Calls come from all directions”<sup>1</sup>

Following the retirement of Sir Robert Menzies on 20 January 1966, Harold Holt inherited the prime ministership just as Australia’s two major allies, the UK and US, were undertaking vastly different roles in Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> During this period of transition, the Australian government had received requests from the two nations for Australian military resources. This chapter will examine the Holt government’s decision to send a self-contained task force to South Vietnam in March 1966, in light of these conflicting calls from the UK and US. Australia’s small military commitment had been questioned publicly by the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator J. William Fulbright, in November 1965. Though his comments attracted attention from the Australian and American press, no discernible damage was done to the relationship of the two nations. The visit to Australia of the US Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey, in February 1966, will also be examined. This visit served both as a presentation to the Australian people of the united stance of the two nations in Vietnam, and a means to probe the Australians for an increased contribution to the war. In addition to the demands from the US for increased military assistance, the Wilson Labour government sought support from the Australian government to ease its burdensome defence expenditure, as introduced in chapter two. The Holt government endeavoured to communicate to the Johnson administration the duality of Australia’s defence commitments, and thereby not appear to be languishing in its regional defensive duties. It will be shown that Prime Minister Holt continually highlighted to Johnson the uncertainty of Britain’s future role “east of Suez” as a hindrance that prevented Australia from providing further military assistance to South Vietnam. On numerous

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<sup>1</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4, Part 9, note of discussion in Prime Minister’s Office prior to meeting in Cabinet Room, 19 February 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Holt was officially sworn in as Prime Minister on Australia Day 1966.

occasions it was stated, first by Menzies, and then by Holt, that the Australian government wished to do more, but could not do so until the implications of the British defence review were fully understood.

Meeting on 29 July 1965, the Defence Committee agreed that Australia could provide an additional 350 military personnel, increasing the infantry battalion in South Vietnam to a battalion group. The Defence Committee also reported that by February/March 1966, Australia could have available a further infantry battalion, complete with combat and logistic support units, increasing the Australian Army task force in South Vietnam to some 3,500 personnel.<sup>3</sup> Following the submission of the Defence Committee report to the FADC, Cabinet approved the build-up of the infantry battalion to a battalion group on 17 August 1965. However, the Cabinet “did not authorise the Army to plan and prepare on the assumption that we might commit an additional battalion to Vietnam in March 1966.”<sup>4</sup> Those with knowledge of the Defence Committee’s conclusion were to understand that “there is to be no implication or understanding of any kind that this development will take place.”<sup>5</sup> The Minister for Defence, Shane Paltridge, did not comply with the findings of Cabinet. He wrote to the Minister of the Army, Alexander J. Forbes, instructing that the Army should continue to develop plans directed towards the employment by 1966 of the numbers required to be in a position to form an additional battalion group at short notice.<sup>6</sup>

Both Pemberton and Edwards maintain that both the DEA and FADC agreed that if the government were to send a second battalion in the short-term, it would remain

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<sup>3</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, minute of the meeting of the Defence Committee, 29 July 1965.

<sup>4</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, cable from Shane Paltridge to Alexander J. Forbes, 18 August 1965.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

silent and not inform the US.<sup>7</sup> However, these scholars differ in their explanations. Edwards argued that the instructions of these chief policy-making elements of the government “reflected ministerial hesitancy over the future direction of policy on Vietnam amid the uncertainty caused by the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, and its possible effects on British policy east of Suez.”<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Pemberton noted that this approach was adopted to avoid “committing Australia to automatic ‘progression’; that is, an assumption that Australia should match every increase by America.”<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly, the Australian government would have hoped to avoid the automatic progression, to which Pemberton referred, which would have more deeply embroiled it in a war it was fighting out of strategy, not necessity. However, the decision to deploy additional forces by withholding the information from the US suggests a strong level of hesitancy and uncertainty in the Australian government at the time.

Australia’s minor force in Vietnam was placed in the public eye following a stop-over in Australia by Senator J. William Fulbright on 25 November 1965. En route to New Zealand, the Senator was met by reporters at Canberra airport and asked for his appraisal of the Australian effort in Vietnam. Fulbright said that he was “not aware of Australia’s commitment in Vietnam” and asked “how many troops do you have there?”<sup>10</sup> One report by an American reporter stated that “patriotic blood was running high” as the reporters “hastened” to inform the Arkansas Senator that Australia had over 1,500 men in Vietnam, which he described as a “very small force when compared with

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War-1975* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 57; and Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia’s Road to Vietnam*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 304.

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 304.

<sup>10</sup> “Fulbright irks Australians over their role in Vietnam”, *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 November 1965, p. 3A.

the US commitment of 165,000 men.”<sup>11</sup> Sections of the US news media reported that the Australian press and public were “boiling mad” at the Senator’s comments, which were interpreted as “belittling their war effort.”<sup>12</sup> Fulbright’s remarks led to the cancellation of his press conference, scheduled to take place four days later. The Australian press reacted sharply to Fulbright’s comments; however, one Washington newspaper was less sympathetic to the Australian position.

Accompanying a cable to the DEA from the Australian Embassy, Washington, the piece in the *Washington Evening Star* called for Australia to reassess its role in South Vietnam, as it was the foremost “English-speaking, democratic nation [that] has the most to lose in the event of a communist victory” in Vietnam. The Senator’s appraisal “might have been blunt, but it was honest”, the editorial continued. Furthermore, he had raised the issue “that too many people prefer to skirt”: the inability of the Johnson administration to attain “more than token assistance from nations which have as large an interest in South Vietnam’s independence as the US does.”<sup>13</sup>

Given this inability to gather material support for its efforts in Vietnam from its allies, the administration needed to assure Australia of the value of its role in South Vietnam. The Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, met with members of the Australian Embassy in Washington on 30 November 1965 to discuss Fulbright’s remarks. Rusk said that the President wanted the Australian government to understand that he “appreciates deeply the dedicated and generous support and gallant efforts” of Australia, both diplomatically and militarily, in South Vietnam. Mr M. R. Booker of the Australian mission “doubted whether Senator Fulbright’s comment had done any

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<sup>11</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, text of an editorial in the *Evening Star* (Washington) on 1 December 1965, received 3 December 1965.

<sup>12</sup> See “Fulbright irks Australians over their role in Vietnam”, *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 November 1965, p. 3A; and James Marlow, “President adept as iceman”, *Reading Eagle*, 3 December 1965, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, text of an editorial from the *Evening Star* (Washington) on 1 December, 1966, sent 3 December 1966.

serious damage to Australian-American relations.” He and the US Foreign Service Officer, Edwin M. Cronk, were in agreement that Fulbright’s comments were made under “considerable provocation” from the Australian press, and they “did not represent true feelings.” Booker told Cronk that “any appreciative statement by an American leader would of course be welcome.”<sup>14</sup> Such a statement from the President was already in transition.

Assistant Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department, A. T. Griffith, informed Menzies that the short message was intended to be used publicly however the Prime Minister saw fit. The Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department, Sir John Bunting, suggested that Menzies may wish to have the statement beside him if he needed to “dispose of a question in the House.” The Americans had intended for the message to be distributed freely to illustrate to the Australian public that Fulbright’s sentiments were not representative of the Johnson administration, and that their contribution was recognised and required. Columnist James Marlow wrote that the message was Johnson’s way of assuring the Australians that “the American government knew what was going on in Vietnam, if the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee didn’t.”<sup>15</sup>

Fulbright elaborated on his remarks in Australia during a public hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on 28 January 1966. He stated that he honestly thought Australia’s commitment was “very little”, particularly for an “extremely prosperous country very close to this area [Vietnam].” He believed that if anyone “would be interested in helping” it would be the Australians, in light of “their own self-

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<sup>14</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, record of conversation with Mr. Edwin M. Cronk, Counsellor, US Embassy, Washington, prepared by M. R. Booker, First Assistant Secretary, Division II, 30 November 1965.

<sup>15</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from A.T. Griffith to Menzies, 2 December 1965.

interests". At the hearing, Rusk told Fulbright that his remarks were interpreted as "minimising and depreciating" the Australian efforts. The Democratic Senator from Tennessee, Albert Gore Sr. interjected: "that is what he intended." Fulbright countered, saying that he was "trying to help you [Rusk] get a little bit more [from Australia] but they took exactly the opposite view up here in Washington."<sup>16</sup> What was markedly absent in the interactions between the two governments was any obvious resentment from the Australian side of politics. At this time, it was unlikely that any members of the Menzies government would have considered Australia's commitment in Vietnam as anything greater than a token force.

Fulbright's initial comments came at a time when senior members of the US government were attempting to secure an increased commitment from Australia. Secretary McNamara strongly suggested to Australia's Ambassador to South Vietnam, David Anderson, that Australia would be asked to increase its military assistance to South Vietnam. On the evening of 29 November 1965, meeting at the Saigon residence of the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, the men discussed the current situation in Vietnam. Following a general discussion of the military and political issues, McNamara asked Anderson if Australia was in a position to send a second infantry battalion to Vietnam. Answering in the expected diplomatic manner, Anderson said that any increase "was a matter for discussion by the Australian government", although such a request "would be given the most careful and urgent consideration." Anderson noted that McNamara was "confident that the Australian government would respond to an American request, and that such a request would be made shortly."<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, remarks made by Senator Fulbright at the Senate Foreign Relations public hearing on Vietnam, 28 January 1966.

<sup>17</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from Anderson to the DEA, 30 November 1965.

Australian Embassy in Washington expected the request to come from Secretary Rusk in the near future.

On 3 December 1965, the Australian Embassy cabled Edwin Hicks, the Secretary of the Defence Department, informing him that it was anticipated that Rusk would approach the Embassy for an additional battalion. On the same day, the Australian Embassy sent a similar cable to Prime Minister Menzies, although it asked for permission to “return a definitive and affirmative answer” to a request put forth by Rusk.<sup>18</sup> If the Embassy did this, it would be “psychologically very valuable.”<sup>19</sup> The instructions for the Washington mission, however, were as follows: “In the event of receiving a request please say that you will transmit the request immediately with a recommendation that it will be given early consideration.”<sup>20</sup> As Edwards stated, the Australian Ministers “did not yet want to receive any such request.”<sup>21</sup> The FADC noted on 7 December 1965, that “any decision on a request would need to be made in relation to possible commitments arising from the British defence review.”<sup>22</sup> From the available documentation, it is not clear if Rusk did in fact meet with, and thus make an informal request to, the Australian Embassy at this time. In mid-December 1965, Hasluck travelled to Saigon to meet with representatives of the governments of the US, and South Vietnam. Members of these governments both raised the possibility of a larger role by Australia in Vietnam, reported Hasluck. However, he skilfully deflected the issue by stating that not only had no formal request had been received by the Australian government, but his nation was also engaged in many facets of regional defence. He informed the representatives that if an official request were to be made:

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<sup>18</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to Menzies, 3 December 1965.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 86.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

We would consider it in the spirit of doing what we could to meet the common threat of Chinese aggression, and I have drawn attention to what we are already doing elsewhere in this respect in Malaysia, Thailand, and our defence at home and on the New Guinea border.<sup>23</sup>

A cable from Ambassador Waller to the DEA briefly outlined the US government's plans to continue to substantially increase its effort in Vietnam. Speaking with Bundy on 10 December 1965, Waller was informed of the Johnson administration's decision to build up an American force of 240,000 men by the end of the first quarter of 1966. In light of the intensifying American commitment, an additional Australian contribution of an infantry battalion and any supplementary aid that could be provided would be "warmly welcomed", cabled Waller. However, the State Department preferred "not to have too specific a request at this point in time." The Johnson administration was "perfectly happy" to allow the Australian government to "judge the timing and the method of any additional contribution."<sup>24</sup> The timing of the next Australian increase was of particular importance to the Johnson administration as it was embarking on a "peace offensive" during the Christmas and New Year period. Consequently, any increase in allied military assistance would be contradictory to the administration's current international posture.

In early January 1966, the US Ambassador-at-Large, Governor W. Averell Harriman, visited Australia as part of a wider global tour to garner support for the United States' "peace offensive". This visit (which is examined in more detail in chapter five in the context of diplomatic consultation) served two purposes: to inform the Australian government with a general overview of the status of the bombing pause and

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<sup>23</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from Hasluck to Menzies, 18 December 1965.

<sup>24</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, cable from Waller to the DEA, 10 December 1965.

endeavours towards peace, and act as a means to push for an additional Australian commitment to the war. In his meeting with Harriman, Prime Minister Menzies emphasised the duality of Australia's regional responsibilities by linking an increased Australian effort in Vietnam to the British withdrawal "east of Suez". Australia was "moving towards a greater contribution", said Menzies, "but commitment must await talks with [Denis] Healey."<sup>25</sup> During Harriman's meeting with Cabinet, Menzies had again stated that if the British presence in the region remained unclear, so too did Australia's ability to further aid the US in its efforts in Vietnam.<sup>26</sup> To the Australians, given Australia's policy of defence in depth, in the context of regional security, the two issues were interwoven, and they wanted the Americans to be of like mind.

Following Cabinet's discussion with Harriman, the FADC concluded that the "global context in which the US viewed Vietnam" had emphasised the significance of the British defence review. The Committee concluded that Australia now needed to pursue a wider treaty arrangement that included Britain and the ANZUS nations. The FADC believed that Australia "should be prepared to pay a good price" for the security offered by such a treaty. The linchpin of such an arrangement was, of course, the US. Therefore, it was paramount that this potential alliance was presented to the Americans as something worth attaining and not just "a new liability."<sup>27</sup> However, members of the Johnson administration were hostile to this idea. As we have seen in chapter two, Johnson, Bundy, and the Joint Chiefs all indicated to the Australians, in no uncertain terms, that they were unequivocally opposed. Including Britain in a re-framed ANZUS treaty was not beneficial to the Americans. The US was already in partnership with the

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<sup>25</sup> Telegram from Harriman to Johnson and Rusk, 12 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> NAA: A5828/1, Volume 5, Cabinet minute, FADC, decision 1473, report of discussions with Governor Harriman, 10 January 1966.

<sup>27</sup> NAA: A4940, C4305, FADC decision no. 1465, 10 January 1966.

UK as member nations of NATO. Hence, there was no desire to join another defence pact half-way around the world; one that, essentially, called for the US to do more as a means of allowing the British to do less. This would prove to be one of Menzies' last forays into foreign affairs with his retirement just weeks later.

As early as August 1965, the Minister for Air, Peter Howson, noted that some in the government expected Menzies would retire before the year's end, but not before Holt and McEwen had returned from the Melbourne Cup in November.<sup>28</sup> By December, Howson predicted that Holt would succeed Menzies. This was confirmed in January the following year. Holt wished the changing of the guard to be rich in symbolism. In his first party meeting as leader, Holt emphasised the need to create "AN AUSTRALIAN IMAGE."<sup>29</sup> This was reinforced by his swearing in taking place on Australia Day. According to Howson, this was done to contrast with Menzies' perceived "UK connection."<sup>30</sup> Holt wanted to present a new image for Australia, one of independence. Australia was "a national independent entity of its own" said Holt.<sup>31</sup> Upon taking office, the Prime Minister "declared no intention of increasing Australia's contribution and that otherwise Australia's policy remained the same."<sup>32</sup> However, this statement proved hollow: the early months of Holt's prime ministership confirmed his strong support for the American efforts in Vietnam, culminating in the deployment of a second Australian battalion.

In his first communication with President Johnson, Holt was informed that the US would resume its bombing of strategic targets in North Vietnam. The President felt that Australia, as the United States' "major ally and companion in arms in supporting

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<sup>28</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Tom Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt* (Crow's Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005), p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: MacMillan Publishing, 1979), p. 260.

South Vietnam” was “entitled to know in advance of this decision.”<sup>33</sup> Of course, Johnson expected that this information would be held in the “utmost confidence.”<sup>34</sup> Holt had been afforded what appeared to be an exclusive level of consultation by the President in their first exchange. However, as a State Department memorandum detailed, the US had sent a circular message to other nations, at the same time as the message to the Australians, confirming the recommencement of bombing, “to all countries with which we have had any meaningful exchanges”; this included lesser engaged nations, such as Japan, Pakistan, Poland and Hungary.<sup>35</sup> Holt replied that he would, after the fact, “declare our strong support for your decision.”<sup>36</sup> He assured the President that this opinion represented “very much more than a public posture.”<sup>37</sup> It reflected the “strong belief” of himself and his government that the decision to resume bombing was “the right conclusion.”<sup>38</sup> Publicly, Holt described the decision to resume bombing as “realistic and necessary”, as “North Vietnam must not be permitted to remain a haven immune from military risk”, free to mount attacks against Australian soldiers.<sup>39</sup> William P. Bundy made particular note of this statement in discussion with members of the Australian Embassy. “It was invaluable to have these things said by another government”, and the “whole statement would be of great use in dealing with Congress”, said Bundy.<sup>40</sup> However, the US expected such a response from the Australian government. Five days prior to Holt’s message of support, Bundy had told

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<sup>33</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, Ed Clark to Holt, text of letter from President Johnson, 30 January 1966.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum prepared by William Bundy, 28 January 1966, David C. Humphrey and David S. Paterson, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1998), p. 170.

<sup>36</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, cable from Bunting to Waller, text of letter from Holt to Johnson, 1 February 1966.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> NAA: M4295, 21, press statement by Prime Minister Holt on the resumption of bombing of North Vietnam, 1 February 1966.

<sup>40</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 2 February 1966.

the President that “the Australians are solidly aboard.”<sup>41</sup> Rhetorically, Australia was in firm support of the US; however, a further increase in Australian troops had still yet to take place due to the British defence review.

In chapter two, the visit of the British Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, was examined in the context of Australia’s unwillingness to heed British calls for greater interdependence believing it could jeopardise Australia’s strategic aim to secure a US regional presence. In its interactions with the Wilson government, the Australian government highlighted its current commitment to the war in Vietnam, and the importance of supporting the US in the regional struggle against communism. With its defence force engaged in Vietnam, Australia could not support the UK to the extent that the Wilson government had hoped. Throughout this chapter we have seen that the Australian government briefly and sporadically raised the British defence review as a hindrance thwarting an increased Australian role in Vietnam. However, as British intentions became clearer, this argument would appear more frequently in Australian communications with the Johnson administration. As the time for discussions drew closer, P.H. Bailey, the First Assistant Secretary of the External Affairs Department, wrote in a departmental report that there were a “wide range of problems associated with the Ministerial discussions on Defence which are to be held with the British and with Australia’s commitments in South Vietnam.” Bailey expected that the British government would request Australian “men, money or equipment.” It was clear that Australia, “with its relatively limited resources,” needed to ensure that its assistance to the UK or US did not lead to the other feeling that Australia was “dragging its feet.” He concluded that the long-term benefits lay in assisting the US; however, “the little Australia can provide may possibly be of more significance if used to assist the

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<sup>41</sup> Memorandum prepared by William Bundy, 28 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, pp. 170-71.

British.”<sup>42</sup> One can assume that Bailey understood that Britain did not wish to retain a long-term position “east of Suez” without allied assistance. On the other hand, the US would not discontinue its war effort if an additional commitment from Australia was not immediately forthcoming.

In his first letter to President Johnson, Holt highlighted the significance of the upcoming discussions with the British Secretary of Defence. The subject was noticeably absent from Johnson’s message of 1 February 1966, to Holt, though the American government had met with Healey and the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, only three days earlier. The Australian government believed that the talks held “critical importance” to regional security, and also had a bearing on US global strategy.<sup>43</sup> Holt underpinned the importance of the talks in relation to Australia’s future ability to assist the US in Vietnam. “Conceivably”, Holt wrote, the talks “will have a bearing on the matter of a possible increase in the Australian military force in Vietnam.”<sup>44</sup> Holt achieved two things by writing such a reply to Johnson: first, he had drawn attention to the defence review, which was increasingly concerning to the Holt government, and second, he had highlighted the defence review as a cause for any delay in Australian assistance in Vietnam. In a press conference following his government’s discussions with Secretary Healey, Holt outlined the importance of the talks, and the impact that they had on Australia’s future defence policy:

In the first place, they helped to remove some of the uncertainty which had previously existed as to the British intentions—long-term intentions—and now that we have a clearer picture of what the UK has in mind, we will be

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<sup>42</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 1, report by P.H. Bailey, “Defence Talks with the British and commitments in Vietnam”, 3 January 1966.

<sup>43</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 1 February 1966.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

able to review our own with more certainty and plan more confidently in relation to our own long-term thinking, so that was a very useful gain from the discussions.<sup>45</sup>

Approximately three weeks after Healey's visit, the Holt government welcomed the US Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey, and the Ambassador-at-Large, Averell Harriman. It was the second time that a serving US Vice-President had ventured to Australian shores—the first being Richard Nixon a decade earlier. It was the Ambassador's second visit to Australia in under a month. The visit was part of Humphrey's regional tour to present the outcomes of the Honolulu Conference, a series of diplomatic discussions between the governments of America, and South Vietnam. The Holt government utilised the visit as a means of reinforcing to the Australian people the importance of Australian support for the US position in Vietnam. Additionally, the timing of the visit was opportune for the Johnson administration. As the bombing pause had not achieved a peaceful solution, the US resumed the process of securing increased military commitments from its allies. As had been the case during Healey's visit, it was imperative that the Holt government make it known to its ally the competing calls on Australia's military resources.

The official rationale for Humphrey's regional tour was to present to America's regional allies the outcomes of the Honolulu Conference. Held in early February 1966, the purpose of the Conference was to emphasise the social and economic reforms that were taking place in South Vietnam. Following the discussions, Humphrey and Harriman travelled to various South-east Asian and Pacific nations to highlight the reformist aims of the US in Vietnam. However, some in the US press believed the visit served a far more strategic purpose. Political commentators, Walter Lippmann and

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<sup>45</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, text of Holt's press conference in Canberra, 3 February 1966.

Marquis Childs, wrote that the US was doing in Asia what it had done in post-war Europe: it was developing a unilateral policy for the containment of regional communism.<sup>46</sup> Humphrey's visit to America's Asian allies was part of this larger US strategy to "shape a new alliance" and "build an infrastructure that will sustain it", wrote Childs.<sup>47</sup> This alliance would have a "broader scope and sterner purpose" than SEATO.<sup>48</sup> Lippmann wrote that the Vice-President was declaring "an unlimited commitment of American soldiers and American money" to nations that were actively combatting communist infiltration, such as South Vietnam.<sup>49</sup> However, the US would not fight the communist menace alone: it needed allies. Therefore, it was important to press America's allies for an increased military presence in Vietnam.

Meeting with the Australian Cabinet, Humphrey detailed the manner in which the US wished to exert its influence in the war in Vietnam. The US wanted to be "owls", in the most suitable way, he said. It sought to exert its substantive power to meet its "limited objectives" in Vietnam.<sup>50</sup> Humphrey raised his concerns with the "hawks" within the Johnson administration, while dissenters were few; thus, the "major problem ahead" was "with those who wanted to do much more, rather than less."<sup>51</sup> A member of the American delegation drew a similar conclusion regarding the Australian government. Following the final meeting between the Vice-President and the Australian Cabinet, one of Humphrey's senior advisers was taken aback by the strong support from the Australian Ministers for a hard-line approach in Vietnam. The adviser was

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<sup>46</sup> See Marquis Childs, "US commitments in Pacific so massive Vietnamese war seen only as one phase", *Toledo Blade*, 14 February 1966, p. 12; and Alistair Cooke, "Mutinous voices on Vietnam", *Glasgow Herald*, 16 February, 1966, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Childs, "US commitments in Pacific so massive Vietnamese war seen only as one phase", *Toledo Blade*, 14 February 1966, p. 12;

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cooke, "Mutinous voices on Vietnam", *Glasgow Herald*, 16 February 1966, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, Visit by the honourable Hubert Humphrey to Canberra—summary record of discussions, 19 February 1966.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

overheard by members of the press saying that he thought that “there are too many hawks in the Australian government.”<sup>52</sup> According to Howson, one Cabinet Minister who adopted a tough line during the discussions with Humphrey was Hasluck. Though not present at the meeting, Howson received a telephone call from the Treasurer, William McMahon, regarding the meeting and subsequently noted the call in his diary. “Apparently we pressed for quadripartite talks—before we commit any more troops to Vietnam. Paul Hasluck dissented; he would like to commit more immediately”, he wrote.<sup>53</sup> It was clear as to where Hasluck believed Australia’s future lay. An ardent supporter of the “forward defence” policy, he was, as we saw earlier, also of the belief that Britain could no longer defend Australia if the latter were to come under attack.

Holt regularly highlighted to Humphrey the uncertainty of Britain’s role “east of Suez” and its implications on Australia’s future role in Vietnam. In a discussion with the American delegation prior to formal discussions with the Australian Cabinet, Holt said that, in his communications with President Johnson, “inevitably the question of what more Australia could do in Vietnam had arisen.”<sup>54</sup> The Australian government wanted to do more, but “calls come from all directions” stated the Prime Minister, referring to the appeals of the Wilson Labour government. Nevertheless, Holt guaranteed Humphrey that Australia’s contribution in Vietnam was “a most important one in our eyes”, as it is an “indication to the US that they are not standing alone in the Vietnam cause.” Also, his government had “no illusion about the need for [a] growing defence contribution by Australia”, said the Prime Minister. To this Humphrey reiterated to Holt and his Cabinet what would be his public stance throughout the visit—that “nothing he says is to be looked upon as a request to Australia for additional

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<sup>52</sup> “Hard line in Vietnam”, *Age*, 22 February 1966, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> The American delegation included: Vice President Humphrey, Governor Harriman, Ambassador Ed Clark and President Johnson’s Special Assistant, Jack Valenti.

forces.”<sup>55</sup> Publicly, Holt said that he hoped to “announce soon what Australia can do to supplement our present forces in South Vietnam.”<sup>56</sup> However, this could only occur once the Australian government had an opportunity to consider the implications for Australia of the British White Paper on defence, to be published on 22 February.<sup>57</sup> Deputy Prime Minister John McEwen emphasised that America’s efforts in the region were critical. He told Humphrey bluntly that Australia’s “own ultimate safety was guarded more by the United States’ determination to hold communism at bay than anything else.”<sup>58</sup> McEwen repeated this sentiment to an audience at the annual Queensland Conference of the Country Party. By fighting in Vietnam, Australia was “paying a premium”, and Australians should “recognise the decisive value to our security of the American and British presence in the Far East.”<sup>59</sup>

The Vice-President told the Australian Cabinet that he believed the conflict in Vietnam to be part of a larger push from China—a perspective strongly supported by the Cabinet. This “was no civil war”, said Humphrey, “it was a war controlled from Hanoi and, through the regime there, from Communist China.” This, no doubt, pleased Holt, who hoped that the Vice-President would say this publicly. Humphrey believed the war in Vietnam to be part of a “major offensive by Peking in different parts of Asia.” Holt once again asked Humphrey to relay this publicly “because this was the kind of medicine which was needed.” Humphrey’s views on China were congruent with those of Hasluck, who believed that insufficient focus had been placed on the role of China in the conflict in Vietnam. Hasluck stated that regional security could only be obtained once the threat posed by China was faced. Further, “if China could not be

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<sup>55</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4, Part 9, note of discussion in Prime Minister’s Office prior to meeting in Cabinet Room, 19 February 1966.

<sup>56</sup> “More Australians?”, *Eugene Register-Guard*, 19 February 1966, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> “Statement by Holt soon on Australia’s defence role”, *SMH*, 21 February 1966, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, Visit by the honourable Hubert Humphrey to Canberra—summary record of discussions, 19 February 1966.

<sup>59</sup> “CP leader: ‘A price for safety’”, *Age*, 23 February 1966, p. 3.

persuaded to cease hostilities, there could be no settlement [in Vietnam]”. It was, Hasluck continued, “important to do more thinking on the problem of China.” McMahon concurred with Hasluck and Holt, stating that it was “most important” that Humphrey convey to the Australian people “the direction of the Viet Cong from Hanoi, and thence from Peking.”<sup>60</sup> In doing this, the Vice-President would highlight to the Australian people the collective motivation of Australia and the US, and reinforce the alleged influence of the Chinese in the conflict in Vietnam.

The Vice President’s press conference focussed on three themes: the Honolulu Conference, the role of China in Vietnam, and a possible increased military presence from Australia, with particular emphasis on the final theme. The Vice-President lauded the Australian effort in Vietnam. Australia was “bearing burdens far beyond what should be expected of a nation of this size.”<sup>61</sup> As he had done when meeting with the Australian Cabinet, he stated that he had not come to Australia in pursuit of more troops. However, he added that the US expected “every government that can do so to make some contribution, or a greater contribution, to what is being done in Vietnam.”<sup>62</sup> Holt confirmed that no pressure had been placed on his government by the Vice-President, and that he hoped to “announce soon what Australia can do to supplement our present forces in South Vietnam.”<sup>63</sup> The Australian government had “been considering for some time what more might be done”, Holt said, but a decision could not be made until the Australian government had met with senior representatives of the

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<sup>60</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, Visit by the honourable Hubert Humphrey to Canberra—summary record of discussions, 19 February 1966.

<sup>61</sup> “Statement by Holt soon on Australia’s defence role”, *SMH*, 21 February 1966, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> “Vietnam is ‘test tube’ for Communist wars”, *Age*, 21 February 1966, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> “More Australians?”, *Eugene Register-Guard*, 19 February 1966, p. 1.

governments of its two major allies.<sup>64</sup> “It was important for us to be clearly aware of British intentions”, said Holt.<sup>65</sup>

Seeking an additional commitment from Australia, Humphrey had come to Australia to explain to the Australian people why such an increase was required, as Frame had suggested.<sup>66</sup> This is evident from the cables between the Australian High Commission, Wellington, and the DEA. McNicol, of the High Commission, wrote that as a result of Humphrey’s visit, the “American position in Vietnam was now much better understood by the people as a whole.”<sup>67</sup> McNicol also included a statement that likely would have pleased his colleagues. Harriman had disclosed to the NZ Foreign Minister, Alister McIntosh, that “the Americans had long memories and would not forget New Zealand’s contribution to Vietnam, small though it was.”<sup>68</sup> The American delegation left Australia with an increased Australian commitment all but confirmed. In a meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Humphrey reported that the “Australian government is with us 100 per cent.”<sup>69</sup>

At an L-CP rally at the Box Hill Town Hall, Holt again outlined the influence of Britain’s revised defence strategy on Australia’s willingness to deploy additional forces to South Vietnam, while praising the performance of the Vice-President during his recent visit. Addressing the audience, Holt spoke of the importance of the recent visits of senior representatives from its two major allies on the Australian government’s line of thinking on the British defence review, and Australia’s future defence commitment in Vietnam. “The talks of the past few weeks have cleared our minds on both these matters

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<sup>64</sup> “Vietnam is ‘test tube’ for Communist wars”, *Age*, 21 February 1966, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, p. 178.

<sup>67</sup> NAA: A1838, 682/4, Part 9, cable from McNicol (Australian High Commission, Wellington) to the DEA, 25 February 1966.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Notes drafted by Valenti and Bromley, 24 February 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 256.

and enabled us to go forward firmly with our own planning,” said the Prime Minister. He indicated that his government would first measure the implications of the British White Paper before making an increased commitment in Vietnam. When speaking of the British, Holt’s language reflected the uncertainty his government felt concerning Britain’s diminishing regional role, which was to be confirmed in the impending White Paper. However, Holt spoke of the Americans in a more positive light. The value of Vice-President Humphrey’s visit “could hardly be exaggerated,” Holt stated; neither could the role undertaken by the US in “one of the most critical battles for free peoples throughout the world everywhere.” Anyone who witnessed the Vice-President’s press conference, in which he defended the American position in Vietnam, was privy to “one of the most powerful and moving statements of a political lifetime”, stated Holt. Following Holt’s appearance, the *Age* wrote that Australia’s future defence commitments were “largely dependent on Britain’s willingness to retain substantial armed forces east of the Suez region and in Southeast Asia.”<sup>70</sup>

This hurdle preventing greater allied cooperation in Vietnam was once again raised in Holt’s communications with Johnson. Referring to the outstanding issue of an increased Australian commitment, Holt stated that Australia “needed to have a clearer picture of British intentions”. The “special problems” Australia had with its “dual commitment” in *Konfrontasi*, and the conflict in Vietnam, had been understood by Humphrey whilst he was in Australia, wrote Holt. Further, “we are willing to do more, but it remains important that whatever we do is endorsed by our allies as the best use of our forces and resources towards the total problem”—the combatting of regional communism. However, Holt conceded that he hoped to reach a decision about an additional increase in Vietnam at a scheduled Cabinet meeting the following week. Not

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<sup>70</sup> “PM will announce revised defence plans soon”, *Age*, 21 February 1966, p. 5.

only was Australia undertaking a military role in Vietnam, she was also playing a part in securing international support for the US position in Vietnam, wrote the Prime Minister. Having met earlier with the Thai Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister, the Australian government “emphasised that a stronger expression of opinion [from the Thais] ... would be of the greatest advantage.”<sup>71</sup> The Prime Minister’s next transmission to Johnson would confirm the long-awaited increase of Australian forces in South Vietnam.

Holt’s letter of 5 March to Johnson announced that Australia would be trebling its commitment in Vietnam to a level of 4,500 men. The self-contained Australian task force would include: two infantry battalions; a special air service squadron; combat and logistic support units; eight RAAF Iroquois helicopters—four of which would be removed from Malaysia; and six Caribou transport aircraft.<sup>72</sup> A force increase of this size represented the “upper level of our Army capacity, having regard to our existing military commitments in Malaysia”, noted the Prime Minister.<sup>73</sup> He assured the President that the task force was “the most militarily effective contribution we can make.”<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Ambassador Anderson had been contacted to seek the requisite request from the government of South Vietnam, so it would not appear that the request had not materialised from the Johnson administration.<sup>75</sup> In his reply of 7 March, Johnson described the Australian government’s decision as “the most welcome news I

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<sup>71</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 24 February 1966.

<sup>72</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 5 March 1966.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

have had in a long time.”<sup>76</sup> As Caulfield wrote regarding this greater than expected increase, “Australia was emphatically going to war.”<sup>77</sup>

The following day, Holt, in his inaugural address to Parliament, announced the increase in Australia’s Vietnam task force. Holt’s announcement was met by jeers from many Labor MPs, which subsequently led to their loyalty being questioned by some government members.<sup>78</sup> Holt articulated the rationale for Australia’s increased commitment, which referred directly to the “forward defence” policy. “Australia could not be isolationist or neutralist, placed as we are geographically, and occupying, as we do, with limited national strength, this vast continent.”<sup>79</sup> Australia could not leave the defence of Southeast Asia “solely to our allies.”<sup>80</sup> However, from what we have learnt about Australia’s unwillingness to assist the British, as outlined in chapter two, one could deduce that what Holt truly meant was that Australia could not leave the defence of Southeast Asia solely to the United States. Johnson contacted Holt to congratulate him on his “eloquent and impressive presentation in Parliament.”<sup>81</sup> The decision to deploy a self-contained task force had made the “most profound impression” on the American people.<sup>82</sup> Prior to this, there had been “a little hasty criticism ... that Australia had contributed only a ‘token force’”, wrote the President.<sup>83</sup> Conversely, he did not view the Australian commitment in such manner.<sup>84</sup> A relieving battalion was to arrive in Vietnam in May that year, with the timing of the task force to be determined following consultations between the Australian Chief of the General Staff, General Wilton, and

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<sup>76</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, letter from Johnson to Clark for Holt, 7 March 1966.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Caulfield, *The Vietnam Years: From the Jungle to the Australian Suburbs*, (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2007), p. 153.

<sup>78</sup> “Vietnam force to be trebled”, *Age*, 9 March 1966, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Harold Holt, *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 8 March 1966, p. 28.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, letter from Johnson to Clark for Holt, 9 March 1966.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

General Westmoreland.<sup>85</sup> In his first major venture in foreign affairs as Prime Minister, Holt had signified a strong support for the US policy in Vietnam, as his government prepared to rebuff British calls for assistance to remain “east of Suez”. With its increased role in Vietnam, the *US News and World Report* stated that Australia was “turning away from Britain and toward the United States for protection.”<sup>86</sup>

Discussions with the senior members of the Johnson administration regarding a further commitment from Australia were handled in strikingly different methods by the Australian Embassy, Washington, at one end, and by Minister Hasluck and his Department, and Ambassador Anderson in Saigon, at the other. Expecting Rusk to make a formal request for additional Australian forces, the Australian Embassy sought approval from Menzies to reply in a definitive and affirmative manner, which it felt would be “psychologically very valuable.” However, the Embassy was instructed to reply that any request would be transmitted immediately and given early consideration by the Australian government. This was the approach that had been used by Ambassador Anderson in discussion with Secretary McNamara, indicating that this was the preferred method of responding to questions regarding Australia’s future role in Vietnam. Minister Hasluck approached the matter in a similar way. When the issue of an increased Australian role in the conflict was raised in discussion with representatives of the US and South Vietnam, Hasluck stated that if an official request were made, Australia would consider it in relation to the central goal of combatting Chinese communist aggression. We can only speculate why the proposed approach of the Australian Embassy was so different from that of Hasluck or Anderson. Perhaps daily interactions with members of the State Department shaped the perspectives of Embassy officials. Whatever the reasons, the DEA did not seek to create a precedent—as

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<sup>85</sup> NAA: A1945, 287/3/22, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 11 March 1966.

<sup>86</sup> Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 334.

Pemberton noted—in which every US increase was met with by an Australian increase.<sup>87</sup>

Throughout this chapter, we have seen that with the all-important British defence review challenging Australia's policy of "forward defence", it was imperative that the Australian government highlighted the importance of the shift in policy to the Johnson administration. This was achieved by linking the defence review to Australia's ability to commit further forces to the war in Vietnam. The British defence review was used as a means of delaying and deflecting calls for a larger effort in Vietnam. This was not to shift the blame for any delay to the British, but as a way of highlighting to those in the administration the importance of the shifting British policy. Despite consistently telling the Americans that it wished to do more in Vietnam, Australia could not do so until the full implications of the defence review were understood. When examining Holt's first two months in office, it is clear that he adopted and adhered to an approach of declaring support for the United States' efforts in Vietnam, whilst associating any future Australian increase to the British defence review. The review also highlighted the duality of Australia's defensive efforts: Australia was engaged with the British just as it was with the US. While the findings of the Defence White Paper threatened Australia's strategic policy of "forward defence", it did not trigger the deployment of a second Australian battalion. This is clear from the fact that as early as July 1965, the Defence Committee had hoped to have a second battalion available for commitment to the war by February or March 1966. Before it received Cabinet approval to increase the infantry battalion to a battalion group, the Defence Committee was preparing for a third increase. Furthermore, with the US playing a central role in Australia's defence policy, and Australia aiding the Americans in Vietnam, the deployment of additional forces was

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<sup>87</sup> Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 304.

to be expected. There was to be no doubt about the developing relationship between the two nations following Holt's notable visit to the US in June, and the first presidential visit to Australia in October 1966—the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Nobody's "Poodle"?

The Australian-American alliance truly reached its high watermark throughout the months of June to November 1966. During this time, four significant events placed the Australian-American alliance at the fore of the Australian political sphere. These events were: Holt's journey to the US and UK in June 1966; Lyndon Johnson's historic presidential visit to Australia in October; the Manila Summit Conference; and the Australian Federal Election, fought on the issue of Vietnam, held only weeks after Johnson's visit. This chapter will demonstrate how these events illuminated the development of the alliance between Australia and the US. Furthermore, Harold Holt's relationship with Lyndon Johnson will be examined in the context of this alliance.

As discussed in chapter two, the leading foreign affairs officials from the ANZUS nations and the UK, gathered in Canberra in June 1966 to discuss the future of Southeast Asia. Holt opened the meeting before heading to the US and UK to meet with Johnson and Wilson, placing Foreign Minister Hasluck in charge of the Australian delegation. Hasluck, who was contemptuous of many of his counterparts, and in particular Holt (judging him as "not really interested in Asia or in international affairs as such and knew very little about either") would have much preferred to chair the meeting.<sup>1</sup> For Holt, journeys to foreign countries were exercises in public relations. As Hasluck commented, Holt "made his first visit to Asia purely as something to attract favourable attention and without a single idea about influencing policy."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he believed that Holt wrongly interpreted the courteous welcomes he received from these nations as a product of his amiability, and that Holt deluded himself that his own

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Hasluck, with Nicholas Hasluck (ed.), *The Chance of Politics* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Hasluck will feature prominently as a source throughout this chapter, given he is one of a select few of Holt's colleagues to provide a detailed assessment of his contemporaries.

“instant diplomacy”, was responsible for immediate goodwill and that this was “due to a personal diplomatic triumph.”<sup>3</sup> Frame, however, argued that Hasluck’s claims were unfair since Holt was genuinely “liked and respected” by those who welcomed him.<sup>4</sup> Holt did in fact display an amicable style with many foreign leaders, and his early communications with Johnson indicated that the American President warmed to him. This was evident when Holt arrived in Washington on 29 June 1966 for his first meeting with the President.

Currently in Australia, and having just met with Holt prior to his departure for Washington, Dean Rusk cabled Johnson to suggest that a lavish welcome should be prepared for Holt. As Holt was “one thousand per cent in support of what we are trying to accomplish in Southeast Asia”, Rusk expected that “his visit will be most helpful.”<sup>5</sup> He hoped that Holt would be “given exposure” to some members of Congress, presumably to laud the American effort in Southeast Asia, and to demonstrate that the US did, in fact, have some Western support.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Rusk suggested that Holt’s visit “should be in the framework of an ally meeting its responsibilities”, particularly in light of Australia’s “entirely respectable” role in assisting in maintaining regional stability. Therefore, the best way to approach the visit was by “bragging on the Australians and not subject them to the question ‘why don’t you do more?’”<sup>7</sup> However, three years later, Rusk revealed in an oral history that he believed that Australia “could have done more.”<sup>8</sup> But at the time, in June 1966, Australia had made a generous commitment to the war just three months earlier, and Rusk expected the Holt government to carry the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> Telegram from Rusk to Johnson, 29 June 1966, *FRUS: 1964-1968, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Dean Rusk Oral History Interview II, by Paige E. Mulholland for the LBJ Library, Recorded 26 September 1969, p. 32.

next election. In 1966 a commitment was valuable, regardless of size; hence, Rusk's telegram ended: "we have friends here and Holt's visit should underline this fact."<sup>9</sup>

Holt's first prime ministerial visit to the US was to be a greater spectacle than expected. At the White House, Holt was greeted by a full military ceremony, which included: a guard of honour, a military band, and a 19-gun salute. Holt informed High Commissioner Downer that this had been arranged at Johnson's behest.<sup>10</sup> According to the High Commissioner, "Holt was pleasantly surprised; he had no idea he would be received with such ceremony."<sup>11</sup> From London, Holt cabled Waller to convey to the President his thanks for the extravagant ceremony provided by him. "Mrs Holt and I are still talking about our memorable visit to Washington", wrote Holt.<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Waller told the Prime Minister that the extravagant welcome had "not gone unnoticed among the diplomatic missions in Washington", and pundits in Washington had "made much of the contrast between Holt's support for the President and that grudgingly offered by Harold Wilson."<sup>13</sup> Holt and Johnson shared one important similarity that Wilson did not: their nations were fighting a war together. In the eyes of many, Australia's key alliance was prospering. It was at the joint press conference, on the south lawn of the White House, that Holt declared Australia's steadfast support for the United States' policy in Vietnam to a global audience. Holt finished with the words that are now etched into Australian folklore:

And so, Sir, in the lonelier and perhaps even more disheartening moments  
which come to any national leader, I hope there will be a corner of your

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<sup>9</sup> Telegram from Rusk to Johnson, 29 June 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Downer Sr., *Six Prime Ministers* (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1982), p.74.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, cable from Holt to Waller, 11 July 1966.

<sup>13</sup> Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, p. 182.

mind and heart which takes cheer from the fact that you have an admiring friend, a staunch friend that will be all the way with LBJ.<sup>14</sup>

The turn of phrase was a play-on-words from Johnson's 1964 Presidential campaign catchphrase. It was an attempt at wit that was interpreted more as an indication of obedience.

The astute Johnson understood immediately that the Holt's use of his campaign slogan would not be generally appreciated outside of Washington. Waller recollected that "Johnson was quite horrified" when Holt said this.<sup>15</sup> Johnson "referred to this remark many times" in his meetings with Waller, and that when the President heard Holt say that Australia was "all the way with LBJ" he "shuddered."<sup>16</sup> Frame suggested that Waller's recollection of Johnson's response was "completely untrue"; however, it is he who is incorrect.<sup>17</sup> During the Manila Conference, Johnson met with Air Vice-Marshals Ky, Nguyen Van Thieu, and others from the South Vietnamese diplomatic team. During this meeting, Johnson mentioned that a Liberal-Country Party (L-CP) member—most likely E. M. C. Fox<sup>18</sup>—had rebuffed criticism of Holt's earlier remarks by saying: "Better all the way with LBJ than half a win with Ho Chi Minh."<sup>19</sup> Not only does Frame wrongly attribute this comment to "one of the Vietnamese leaders", but he also claims that as Johnson found this response clever, he therefore saw Holt's initial

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<sup>14</sup> [http://explore.moadoph.gov.au/trails/211-australias-prime-ministers-landmark-speeches/list?per\\_page=80](http://explore.moadoph.gov.au/trails/211-australias-prime-ministers-landmark-speeches/list?per_page=80), (accessed, 10 January 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Sir Keith Waller, *A Diplomatic Life: Some Memories* (Nathan: Griffith University, 1990), p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, p. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Fox interjected in a Parliamentary discussion held hours prior to Johnson's arrival that being "all the way with LBJ" was better than "half the way in with Ho Chi Minh." Source "Holt hits Labor: 'You are the hawks'", *Australian*, 21 October 1966. Though the quotes are not verbatim, they are similar enough to suggest that Johnson was referring the Fox's remarks.

<sup>19</sup> Notes of a meeting, between Johnson, Rusk, Lodge, Komer, and Westmoreland with President Thieu, and Air-Vice Marshal Kỳ, drafted by Rostow, 23 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68: Volume VI, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 770.

comments as “quite amusing”, and not, as Waller accurately suggested, horrific.<sup>20</sup> The repercussions of this statement would not be felt until Holt returned to Australia. Subsequently, Holt was labelled “the staunchest ally America ever had” by columnist, Richard Wilson, who was covering the visit in Washington.<sup>21</sup>

If Holt’s visit to the US signified the developing closeness of the two nations and their leaders, then his visit to the UK highlighted the declining alliance of the familial nations. The visit was “most necessary”, believed Downer, as “clouds of distrust were passing across the sky of British-Australian relations.”<sup>22</sup> Despite earlier hints from Healey that Britain’s position “east of Suez” was uncertain, Downer wrote that: “in the summer of 1966, Wilson’s words, first to me and then to Holt, were reassuring: in those months we had no cause to disbelieve what the Prime Minister was saying.”<sup>23</sup> Superficial, in the area of diplomatic hospitality, Holt found the welcome afforded to him lacklustre. Downer recalled that in comparison to his “glamorous Washington reception”, Holt “found London a little low key.”<sup>24</sup> Sights such as Buckingham Palace now appeared to lack their “customary flair and imagination.”<sup>25</sup> However, Holt did not share the same affinity for Great Britain that Menzies did. Despite many trips to UK during his career, Holt, according to Downer, was “more at home in America and with the American mode of living.”<sup>26</sup> With long-held familial ties to Britain, the US was a new frontier for Australian politicians. Domestically, Holt was presenting himself as a new type of leader for a new Australia. During the mid-1960s, as Frame commented, “the nation and its people were truly coming of age” and the once “unifying symbols of Crown, religion and race were becoming less relevant” to the

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<sup>20</sup> Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, p. 183.

<sup>21</sup> “Standing high after visit to President”, *Canberra Times*, 4 July 1966.

<sup>22</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

changing society.<sup>27</sup> If we can assume the reliability and veracity of Downer's memoir, it seems clear that the large-scale welcome orchestrated by Rusk and Johnson, with which Holt was so impressed, had been a stroke of diplomatic genius.

In his first press conference in the UK, Holt broadly attacked Western European nations—particularly France—for distancing themselves from the war in Vietnam. The US had every reason to feel “justifiably disappointed”, said Holt, for the Americans were not “looking for massive assistance ... it is looking for moral support at least from countries which the US helped in two World Wars.”<sup>28</sup> With its role in *Konfrontasi*, and its public support for the United States' efforts in containing regional communism, Holt differentiated between Britain and its continental partners. Yet only days after declaring that Australia and the US were going “all the way”, Holt's comments were interpreted by some to be directed at Britain. However, this would not become evident until Holt's arrival in Australia.

Before returning to Australia, Holt was summoned to meet with Johnson for a second time. Again, Holt was the subject of a formal luncheon at the White House. As Johnson put it, “a house twice visited by a good friend is a house twice blessed.”<sup>29</sup> Addressing the press and guests, Holt again criticised European attitudes towards the United States' role in Vietnam. He detailed the “disappointments” he had encountered on his journey to London. “Great Britain, and even more so, the other countries of Western Europe, seem to be almost oblivious to the existence of that area of the world”, said Holt. It was “almost as if they had quite deliberately turned their backs upon a large part of life.”<sup>30</sup> However, Holt again made a distinction between Britain and Western

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<sup>27</sup> Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, p. 157.

<sup>28</sup> “PM attacks Europe's inaction in Vietnam”, *Canberra Times*, 8 July 1966.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27713#axzz1gQK2NAc3>, (accessed 14 December 2011).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Europe, stating that Prime Minister Wilson still recognised “the need for the two great democracies of the US and UK to maintain a close comradeship in the affairs of the world.” The *New York Times*, however, chose to omit this.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately for Holt, the media coverage of his trans-Atlantic travels suggested that he had simply carried on from his castigation of European non-committal in Vietnam, and that the UK was not spared from this criticism. A notable oversight from previous examinations of Holt’s visits to the US in the middle of 1966 is the discussion of the nations’ differing policies of trade with China. Though overshadowed by Holt’s notable public declaration of support for the American policy in Vietnam and denunciation of European attitudes towards the war, Holt was credited with raising an enlightened view on the benefits of trade with China.

Prior to, and following, Holt’s journey to the US, the sale of Australian wheat and wool to the Chinese remained a contentious issue. The trade policy was in Australia’s national interest, argued Holt. Defending this policy, he said that his government had “weighed the balance of national advantage in the matter and concluded that it is to Australia’s net advantage that these sales be made.”<sup>32</sup> Though some in the Parliament were concerned that Australia was actively trading with the nation it held responsible for the conflict in which it was fighting. During the election campaign, Calwell raised this peculiarity in policy. “The Holt-McEwen government gives Red China favoured treatment” while claiming that it is “menacing Southeast Asia”, stated the Opposition leader.<sup>33</sup> Replying to questions from both sides of the House, Holt stated that “in no stretch of definition can they [wheat and wool] be

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<sup>31</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.79.

<sup>32</sup> “Holt defends sales to China”, *Canberra Times*, 24 March 1966.

<sup>33</sup> “Labor leader hits back”, *Age*, 12 October 1966, p. 5.

classified as strategic materials.”<sup>34</sup> The question of Australia’s trade with China was again raised as Holt was completing a four-nation tour of Asia in late March-early April 1966.<sup>35</sup> In Saigon, the Prime Minister told the press gallery that the revenue accrued from trade with China enabled Australia to provide greater military and economic assistance overseas.<sup>36</sup> In response to media questioning in London, Holt contended that “trade could lead to an eventual breakdown of that nation’s [China] hostile attitude.”<sup>37</sup> Following Holt’s second visit to the US, the State Department announced that it would review its trade policy with China. Advocated by Holt, this course, together with “cultural and scientific exchanges with China”, could “penetrate the Iron and Bamboo Curtains while maintaining US strength in South Vietnam”, said a State Department spokesperson.<sup>38</sup> However, according to journalist Alan Reid, Holt “drew satisfaction not from his personal triumph [regarding the United States’ trade policy with China], but from the joint communique issued by the two leaders.”<sup>39</sup> The appearance of a unified bond between Johnson and himself was of greater importance to Holt than his own individual diplomatic achievement.

In their individual memoirs, Downer and Hasluck recalled their reactions to Holt’s “all the way” remark. The speech, Downer believed, “both in language and timing”, “was not one of Holt’s successful essays in international diplomacy.”<sup>40</sup> The Australian press had “magnified his use of those words far beyond their context.”<sup>41</sup> And “anyone who knew Holt should have realised he was too much of an Australian to be

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<sup>34</sup> “Holt defends sales to China”, *Canberra Times*, 24 March 1966.

<sup>35</sup> From 28 March to 9 April 1966 Holt travelled to Singapore, South Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia.

<sup>36</sup> “Holt claims China trade helping war effort”, *Canberra Times*, 26 April 1966.

<sup>37</sup> “We can lead the world”, *Sunday Telegraph*, date unknown. Press cutting located in NAA: A1728, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Reid, “LBJ goes all the way with Holt”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 17 July 1966.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.79.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75. Whitlam, continuing with the canine theme, stated in jest that it appeared that Holt was ready to replace Johnson’s recently deceased beagle, given his performance in the US. John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 155.

anybody's poodle."<sup>42</sup> Conversely, Hasluck felt that the speech was damaging to Australia's relationship with its regional partners, and the blame lay with the Prime Minister. As discussed earlier, in his early visits to Asian nations, Holt had selected nations where he would "attract favourable attention", thus developing a reputation of being an able statesman.<sup>43</sup> However, "when he tried to live up to his unexpected reputation, he made some of his worst gaffes."<sup>44</sup> One such example was "all the way", which Hasluck described as:

One of the most harmful slogans we had to counteract in our Asian diplomacy when seeking to bring an understanding of Australian interests and respect for our policies. It was quite a task to get the Prime Minister to switch from declaring that the keystone of our policy was to support President Johnson to presenting a picture of an Australia that wanted to work with its regional neighbours and had mutual interests with them.<sup>45</sup>

Holt had failed to immediately grasp the intricacies of international relations. A robust show of support for one ally could alienate many more. Furthermore, Holt must have been oblivious of the reaction to his comments by Australia's regional neighbours. In a cable to Johnson regarding his visit to the US, Holt wrote: "reports from our posts in Southeast Asia reveal that there has been a very favourable reaction from there, also."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Hasluck was of the opinion that Holt's Public Relations Officer, Tony Eggleton, had a detrimental effort on the Prime Minister. This was an "unfortunate association and did Harold a lot of harm." According to Hasluck, instead of seeking the

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<sup>42</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.75.

<sup>43</sup> Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, p. 145.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, message from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 28 July 1966.

counsel of John Bunting, the head of the Prime Minister's Department, Holt was "lured into Eggleton's strange and glamorous but quite fanciful world of 'public relations'."<sup>47</sup>

Upon arrival in Australia, Holt's performance came under scrutiny. According to Holt, the main purpose of the journey had been to "establish a warmer and closer working relationship with the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the President of the United States."<sup>48</sup> He was simply continuing "the same close, intimate communications developed between them [Johnson and Wilson] and Sir Robert Menzies."<sup>49</sup> When questioned about his reported slur on the British, Holt replied: "I am rather sorry that in the reports I saw in one or two papers covering my remarks in Washington there is the suggestion I implied a good deal of criticism of the British government."<sup>50</sup> These papers had "read more into what I said than I intended", stated Holt.<sup>51</sup> Expectedly, he was questioned about his steadfast support for the United States, articulated in his first White House address. His remarks were in relation to the conflict in Vietnam: a conflict which threatened Australia more than it did the US, replied Holt. He repeated the Coalition line that if communist aggression was not halted in Southeast Asia, it would spread until it ultimately reached Australian shores. Therefore, "when it comes to American participation, American resolution to see the issue through in South Vietnam, Australia undoubtedly is 'all the way'."<sup>52</sup> Addressing the National Press Club two days later, Holt further justified his staunch support for the US.

Responding to comments in the press that he had been "too fulsome" in his support of the American policy in Vietnam, Holt replied definitively:

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<sup>47</sup> Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> "PM denies slur on Britain", *Canberra Times*, 18 July 1966.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.79.

<sup>52</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, Part 3, extract from file 66/333, undated.

If I am fulsome, I have every reason to be ... If Australia cannot be appreciative of what America had meant to our country in terms of security and comradeship, then there is little room for gratitude left in the world.<sup>53</sup>

Additionally, Holt stressed that Australia did have an independent foreign policy, and “all the way” did not mean that Australia supported all aspects of US foreign policy. This sudden hostility from the press must have surprised Holt. Hasluck surmised that Holt developed a “disillusionment” with the press, as he had made “exceptional and constant efforts to ingratiate himself with the press and had treated them with very great generosity, they were beginning to bite him and to be, not merely critical, but sometimes mean and nasty.”<sup>54</sup> Choosing to not mention the media scrutiny that had ensued, Holt instead told Johnson that there had been a “very favourable reaction in Australia to my Washington visits.”<sup>55</sup> Putting Holt’s mind at rest, Johnson said he was pleased with Holt’s performance in Washington. In a short message accompanying photos from the trip, Johnson wrote: “you gave this country a lift and a zest by your visit. You made me proud to call you friend and ally.”<sup>56</sup> In three months’ time, Johnson, too, would give Australia a lift and a zest as he embarked on his first tour of the Asia-Pacific.

Prior to his historic visit in October 1966, on two separate occasions it had been anticipated that Johnson would come to Australia: once as Vice-President in 1962, and later following his electoral triumph in 1964. In July 1962, the Australian Embassy, Washington, cabled Menzies and Garfield Barwick informing them that the State Department had relayed that Vice-President Johnson wished to visit Australia within the

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<sup>53</sup> “Standing high after visit to President”, *Canberra Times*, 4 July 1966.

<sup>54</sup> Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 28 July 1966.

<sup>56</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Johnson to Clark for Holt, 17 August 1966.

following month.<sup>57</sup> It would be a “goodwill mission” with “a minimum of ceremony and formality”, as per Johnson’s request.<sup>58</sup> Menzies replied promptly, telling the then Ambassador to the US, Howard Beale, that the Australian government was unable to accommodate Johnson. The Prime Minister had pressing domestic matters to focus on, as his government had “the task of putting the finishing touches on the Budget” during this period.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, they were also busy preparing for the visit of the King and Queen of Thailand in late August. In a supplementary message for Beale, Menzies again noted the importance of the budget, but stressed that there was merely too little time to prepare for the visit.<sup>60</sup> However, Australia’s other ANZUS partner, New Zealand, had accepted the offer. Despite accepting the invitation, Collins, of the Australian High Commission in Wellington, informed the DEA that the New Zealand authorities “seemed relieved to learn our reaction which they assume will result in proposal being dropped.”<sup>61</sup> Beale relayed a message from James D. Bell, the Director of South Pacific Affairs at the State Department, in which he forwarded Johnson’s understanding of the “difficulties” involved in organising a visit at such short notice. But he “knew that Australia would welcome a visit by him at some appropriate time.”<sup>62</sup> It is hard to believe that an Australian government on either side of politics would reject an offer to host an American Vice-President, but one needs to note the timing of the proposed visit. Australia had not yet involved itself in *Konfrontasi* or Vietnam, and the region would have appeared somewhat more stable. By 1964, Menzies was far more willing to receive Johnson.

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<sup>57</sup> Sir Garfield Barwick served as the Australian Foreign Minister from 1961-64; Sir Howard Beale served as the Australian Ambassador to the United States from 1958-64.

<sup>58</sup> NAA: A1209, 1962/657, cable, Australian Embassy, Washington, to Menzies, Barwick and Beale, 8 July 1962.

<sup>59</sup> NAA: A1209, 1962/657, cable from Menzies to Beale, 11 July 1962.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> NAA: A1209, 1962/657, cable from Collins, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to the DEA, 12 July 1962.

<sup>62</sup> NAA: A1209, 1962/657, cable from Beale to the DEA, 16 July 1962.

Following Menzies' visit to Washington in June 1964, Alan Renouf cabled to express to him that the "principal accomplishment of the visit" had been to "establish a personal friendship of a real warmth" between the two leaders.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, he believed that "Australia may prove to be the first country Johnson will visit as President" as he "liked no country in the world better than Australia."<sup>64</sup> Having been briefly stationed in Australia during WWII, Johnson had "never forgotten the happy time" he had had there.<sup>65</sup> In his opinion, there was a kinship between Texans and Australia. Given the physical climate and lifestyle, Johnson believed Australians were closer to Texans than any other people—a line he repeated often in communication with Holt, and during his October 1966 visit. In closing, Renouf suggested that were Johnson to win the November election, Menzies should, in his congratulatory message, raise again the possibility of Johnson coming to Australia. The Prime Minister warmly praised Johnson, writing: "I must tell you how delighted I am personally and politically at your resounding victory."<sup>66</sup> He ended his message with an invitation, which if accepted, he would be "immensely grateful as a politician and delighted as a friend."<sup>67</sup> However, Johnson was then unable to travel to Australian shores. Following Menzies' retirement, in his first communication with Johnson, Holt wrote that he hoped that Johnson would "take up our long-standing invitation to visit."<sup>68</sup>

The Manila Conference of October 1966 provided Johnson with an opportunity to visit the nations that were fighting in Vietnam; this was, essentially, to reward the heads of government that were supporting the US. In his memoir, Johnson recalled how the conference evolved. In mid-1966, the leaders of South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia,

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<sup>63</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, cable from Renouf to the DEA, 27 June 1964.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, letter from Menzies to Johnson, 4 November 1964.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 1 February 1966.

and the Philippines suggested to Johnson the holding of an all-Asian conference to discuss Vietnam. The summit was discussed further with President Marcos in Washington in September. Conscious of the conference appearing to be a US-led war summit, Johnson told Marcos that he approved of the meeting, but that the United States was unwilling to organise it or stage it.<sup>69</sup> It was agreed that the conference would be held in Manila, with the date yet to be confirmed.

The timing of the Manila Conference was of particular importance to the Johnson administration as the US mid-term elections were to be held on 8 November 1966. Johnson and McNamara met to discuss a cable wired to them from US government representatives in Japan regarding the timing of the conference. President Marcos wished to postpone the meeting until mid-November, much to the disapproval of McNamara and his deputy, Cyrus Vance.<sup>70</sup> According to the cable, the Filipino Foreign Secretary, Narciso Ramos, said that they “had been carried away by their enthusiasm to schedule a meeting so soon and without adequate preparation”, citing evidence that there were no hotels available in Manila during the scheduled dates.<sup>71</sup> However, the Marcos government’s real concern was that the conference could be misconstrued as a campaign tool for the Democratic Party. Both Ramos and Marcos told Emerson, a US government representative in Japan, that there had been criticism in the Filipino media that the conference was occurring in the lead-up to the election. Yet William P. Bundy believed that holding the conference before the US elections had

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<sup>69</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 359.

<sup>70</sup> Cyrus (Cy) Vance was Deputy Secretary of Defense from 1964-1967, and later served as Secretary of Defense from 1977-80.

<sup>71</sup> <http://whitehousetapes.net/transcript/johnson/wh6609-13-10857>, recording number: WH6609-13-10857, 30 September 1966, 4:37pm - 4:45pm, (accessed: 9 January 2013). Narciso Ramos held the post of Filipino Foreign Secretary from 1965-68.

“many great and perhaps decisive advantages” as opposed to after the mid-terms.<sup>72</sup> However, this would leave the US vulnerable to domestic and international criticism.

In his reply to Marcos, Johnson avoided addressing the issue of the mid-term elections, but he did raise the concern that with visits to Australia and New Zealand planned, holding the conference any later could give the impression that he was interfering in other nations’ elections. He planned on visiting these nations; however, to do this so close to an election “would run very serious risks of being interpreted as interference in elections.”<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, noted Johnson, it would be unlikely that Holt and Holyoake could attend due to their Federal election campaigns. In discussion with McNamara, the President said that if Marcos still had “cold feet”, the administration could have J. William Fulbright “pitch us as really trying to shove a conference down their throats.”<sup>74</sup> Holt, too, was concerned about the timing of the conference, having cabled the Johnson administration saying that he “didn’t want it any closer to his election.”<sup>75</sup> Johnson had told the Treasurer, McMahan, that when making his plans he was “not aware” of the Australian Federal election.<sup>76</sup> Bundy did not expect the visit to have a detrimental effect on the Australian election; in fact, he believed “that a presidential visit would, if anything, enhance his [Holt’s] chances.”<sup>77</sup> This, however, would “involve the US deeply in Australian politics.”<sup>78</sup>

On 6 October, Holt announced at a press briefing that Johnson would be travelling to Australia later that month. Holt made special mention that Johnson wished to visit Melbourne, “where he spent so many happy hours while he was here during the

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<sup>72</sup> Memorandum prepared by William P. Bundy, 21 September 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 656.

<sup>73</sup> <http://whitehousetapes.net/transcript/johnson/wh6609-13-10857>, recording number: WH6609-13-10857, 20 September 1966, 4:37pm - 4:45pm, (accessed: 9 January 2013).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, cable from McMahan to Holt, 30 September 1966.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

war years.”<sup>79</sup> Responding to a question regarding the possibility of a presidential motorcade, Holt replied: “having brought him, we don’t want to keep him on ice somewhere.”<sup>80</sup> Despite the timing, Holt assured the press that there was no political motivation behind the visit.<sup>81</sup> One reporter observed the Prime Minister’s enthusiasm as he announced the visit, saying: “you seem elated about the visit.” To this he responded, “Well, it is an historic visit and I am glad to have played some part in adding this particular chapter to the Australian story.”<sup>82</sup> Expectedly, Holt was pleased that he would oversee the first presidential visit to Australian shores. The following day, Holt told Johnson that he was “delighted” that he had found it possible to include Australia in his journey, and assured the President that “a warm Australian welcome” awaited him.<sup>83</sup> The announcement of the visit was front-page news throughout Australia, and the editorial commentary had been “uniformly warm in tone and widely approving.”<sup>84</sup> It was also an historic journey for Johnson as it was his first state visit beyond the borders of North America.<sup>85</sup> Pemberton, Murphy, and Horne all wrote that Johnson was coming to Australia to reciprocate Holt’s kind words earlier in the year.<sup>86</sup> However, this view is too Australia-centric. Johnson was embarking on a regional visit to reward his regional allies. As a State Department official, William J. Jorden, had informed the Australian

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<sup>79</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, press briefing given by Holt in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, 6 October 1966.

<sup>80</sup> “Here Oct. 20-22 with wife; Melbourne call”, *Age*, 7 October 1966.

<sup>81</sup> “US President here in a fortnight”, *Canberra Times*, 7 October 1966.

<sup>82</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, press briefing given by Holt in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, 6 October 1966.

<sup>83</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 7 October.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Johnson had been to Canada twice (16 September 1964 and 21-22 August 1966), and Mexico once (14-15 April 1966).

<sup>86</sup> See Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia’s Road to Vietnam*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 335-6; Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, pp. 155-6; and Donald Horne, *A Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1980), p. 53.

Embassy, the overarching theme of the visit would be “the new Asia and America’s relationship with it.”<sup>87</sup>

With an election and a presidential visit in the coming weeks, Holt and McEwen highlighted the importance of the firming relationship between Australia and the US, and the need to maintain it. At a Liberal Party dinner in Bentleigh, McEwen said that if Holt, in his career, were to accomplish “nothing other than the opinion that is held by Washington and the US generally of Australia and Australians, then his political life would be well worth living.”<sup>88</sup> Ironically, Australia’s close allegiance to the US had become synonymous with the prime ministership of Harold Holt. Unquestionably, the furthering of this relationship was vitally important to Holt. In May that year, he acknowledged that ANZUS was “the most important diplomatic achievement” of his time, as it had “brought Australia security which we could not have achieved ourselves.”<sup>89</sup> This was particularly important as Australia “could no longer rely on protection from the British Navy as it did during earlier conflicts”, added Holt.<sup>90</sup> As he had done consistently, McEwen reinforced the importance of the security offered to Australia by the US. Australia “should be as strong as we can build it [and] as respected as we can make it with strong military friends.”<sup>91</sup> The next day, Holt declared the Australian Labor Party (ALP) a threat to this fundamental relationship. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Liberal Party Federal Council, he labelled the ALP “schizophrenic”, and a threat to the Australian-American alliance: an alliance that was “fundamental to this country.”<sup>92</sup> With Labor promising to withdraw Australian forces

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<sup>87</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/913, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 15 October 1966. Jorden was the Asian Affairs Specialist in the White House. He was also a member of the Policy Planning Council from August 1961. A fellow Texan, he later assisted Johnson with his memoirs.

<sup>88</sup> “McEwen backs the PM”, *Melbourne Sun*, 10 October 1966.

<sup>89</sup> “Holt gets quieter audience in Brisbane”, *Canberra Times*, 21 May 1966.

<sup>90</sup> “A rowdy first Holt rally in Queensland”, *Canberra Times*, 20 May 1966.

<sup>91</sup> “McEwen backs the PM”, *Melbourne Sun*, 10 October 1966.

<sup>92</sup> “Holt: No security if Reds win in Viet...”, *Melbourne Sun*, 11 October 1966, p. 4.

from Vietnam, if it were elected, “it would be hard to conceive any action more damaging to Australia’s alliance with the US”, warned Holt.<sup>93</sup> To the Prime Minister, this was “incredible”, given that Australia’s “shield is the strength of ANZUS, and the strength of ANZUS is the US.”<sup>94</sup> To Holt, a Labor Party victory would cause irreparable damage to Australia’s chief military alliance, and its means of protection.

Following the announcement of the presidential visit two weeks prior, the President, his wife, and entourage, touched down on a cold, but clear, evening in Canberra on 20 October. A large crowd braved the brisk conditions to greet them. Recalling the drive from Fairbairn Air Force Base in Canberra to government House, the Prime Minister’s wife, Zara Holt, wrote that “there were certainly more people in the streets to see the President of America than I have ever known in Australia for any other visiting VIP.”<sup>95</sup> As he did consistently throughout his visit, Johnson went out of his way to address the larger segments of onlookers that lined the streets. Johnson’s personable style made the Johnsons and Holts late for the formalities at Government House. To Zara, this was “unthinkable”, as they were now “an unbelievable three-quarters of an hour late.”<sup>96</sup>

The Holts had gone to great measures to make the visit memorable for the Johnsons. Local fauna had been placed at the Lodge as the Johnsons would not have time to attend a zoo on their tight schedule. Zara Holt recalled the President taking a special liking to a wallaby he happened across in the drawing room.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, the dining table was decorated with yellow roses—the floral emblem of Texas—for the first

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<sup>93</sup> “Holt: No security if Reds win in Viet...”, *Melbourne Sun*, 11 October 1966, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Zara Holt, *My Life and Harry* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Limited, 1968), p. 183.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6.

meal with the Johnsons, and fellow Texan, Ambassador Ed Clark.<sup>98</sup> Not only was presentation important, so was the meal for the President. Mrs Holt wrote that “we had gone to endless trouble in the Lodge to get the absolutely, most perfect steak we could for the President’s grill.”<sup>99</sup> This was more than a customary formality for the Holts. They were “extremely fond of the Johnsons”; therefore, it was not only a “politically exciting time, but it was a lovely time personally and privately for us.”<sup>100</sup>

Holt’s Press Secretary, Tony Eggleton, identified Johnson’s Canberra luncheon as the event on the President’s schedule of greatest significance as it would foreseeably receive the most comprehensive coverage. He believed the timing of the event was all-important. He expected that Johnson’s speech at the luncheon—his first official address—would be the most widely reported of all of his public statements whilst in Australia. Additionally, as it was an afternoon event, maximum media coverage would be guaranteed. Television and radio could cover the event live and again report on proceedings during their evening broadcasts. Furthermore, newspapers would report on the luncheon address the following day’s edition. As Eggleton noted, evening functions, on the other hand, are held too late to ensure full coverage. Given these factors, Eggleton told Holt that “if we are hopeful that the President’s remarks will have maximum impact, I feel we must make the best possible use of the lunchtime slot of the Thursday programme.”<sup>101</sup>

Given the legacy of Australian and American joint cooperation during WWII, much was made of Johnson’s war-time experience in Australia, and the developing

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<sup>98</sup> It was not uncommon for foreign leaders, when in Johnson’s company, to emphasize the colour yellow. The First Lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, in her first White House dinner, adorned herself in a yellow Filipino formal dress, aware that it was Johnson’s favourite colour. James Hamilton-Paterson, *America’s Boy: A Century of Colonialism in the Philippines* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), pp. 211-12.

<sup>99</sup> Holt, *My Life and Harry*, p. 186.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>101</sup> NAA: M2093, 9, note from Eggleton to Holt, 6 October 1966.

relationship between the two nations during Johnson's official luncheon in Canberra. The President had "come to a place of strong memories." During WWII, Australia had become his "second home. He was "lonely and in need of friends" and in Australia he was "treated as I were in the house of my family." As a Texan, he felt that "this land of vast spaces, of farms, ranches, of booming cities and dynamic industrial growth" was his own. Noting the developing alliance between the two nations, Johnson stated that the "foundation[s] of the friendship between our two peoples are deep, and they are increasing."<sup>102</sup> Toasting the President, Holt said he envisaged Australia's and America's "destinies being linked."<sup>103</sup> Once again, McEwen made the implicit explicit. Seconding the toast, he frankly stated that "Australia's destiny is bound up with US policies." Echoing his remarks at the Liberal Party dinner twelve days earlier, he believed Australia had "a role to play in world affairs"—a role which could be played "most effectively in maximum friendship and co-operation with the US." Referring to the historical military undertakings of the nations, McEwen described the US as a "powerful ally", and Australia a "staunch ally at all times."<sup>104</sup> Australia fully recognised that its security depended "tremendously on our treaty arrangements with you [the US] under ANZUS and SEATO", added McEwen. But it was "under ANZUS that we feel that our greatest security lies", specified the Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>105</sup> Given the absent commitment from the European members of SEATO, it is likely that McEwen viewed SEATO as militarily inferior when compared to the more exclusive ANZUS, despite SEATO including the US, UK, and France.<sup>106</sup> In his oft-quoted diaries, Peter Howson's 21 October entry read:

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<sup>102</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, remarks by Johnson at Parliamentary luncheon, 21 October 1966.

<sup>103</sup> "Holt sees destiny of US, Australia tied for all time", *SMH*, 22 October 1966.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> The SEATO nations were: Australia, New Zealand, the US, the UK, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and modern-day Bangladesh.

Official lunch for LBJ ... The President made an effective and telling speech. Above all, it had cemented the US-Aust. alliance and confirmed a common policy in Southeast Asia. There can now be no doubt that Australia has an umbrella—or a shield. (Three years ago this was not nearly such a certainty.) But his policy for aid to Southeast Asia was also developed, and this gave us some food for thought. This should in addition be good value for the election.<sup>107</sup>

In discussion with the Australian Cabinet, Johnson voiced his regret at the lack of support from other SEATO members. Unlike the US, which once it “pledged its word, there would be no faltering”, many partner nations had been far less committed to Vietnam, which “disappointed” the US.<sup>108</sup> Johnson made specific reference to the lack of support from the British. He was disappointed by the “extent to which she [Britain] had distanced herself from the US position” in Vietnam.<sup>109</sup> Holt seized the opportunity to discuss the future role of Britain in the region, and to highlight once again the duality of Australia’s regional responsibilities. He felt it important that Australia “should continue to maintain a military presence around Singapore” for its own security, but also “as a means of influencing Britain to maintain forces east of Suez.” Holt added that there had also been “demands made by the development of Papua and New Guinea.” As noted in the minutes of the meeting, “the Prime Minister had mentioned these things because it was important to see the total picture of Australia’s defence and development.” Inevitably, the conversation shifted to the war in Vietnam. Johnson had “not come to Australia to ask for a man or a dollar”, as he expected “Australia would continue to reach its own decisions in offering assistance.” The President praised the

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<sup>107</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 245.

<sup>108</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, Cabinet minute—meeting with President Johnson, 21 October 1966.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

role undertaken by Australia in Vietnam, but he was quick to highlight that the region would be overrun by communism were it not for the sustained efforts of the US. If the Americans were to leave Vietnam tomorrow, other Southeast Asian nations would fall fast, “and the aggressor would get to Australia long before he got to San Francisco”, warned Johnson.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, the US and its allies needed to sustain its efforts in Vietnam to guarantee regional security. Johnson hoped that this military relationship between Australia and the US would translate to the diplomatic undertakings in Manila in the coming days.

In proclaiming a close diplomatic union between the US and its ANZUS partners, Johnson hoped to utilise the opinions and influence of Holt and Holyoake in Manila.<sup>111</sup> The President and his administration required vocal support from the allied nations to demonstrate that Vietnam was not solely a US undertaking, but in fact a joint effort. In so doing, hoped Johnson, the seven nations at the summit might “get across the point to 100 other nations”.<sup>112</sup> However, there had been little consultation between Australia and the US during this period. As has been shown throughout this thesis, many of the developments in US policy were communicated from the staff at Australia’s Washington Embassy to its colleagues in Canberra. There are no observable cables directly from Rusk, or McNamara, to their Australian counterparts. The Australian government was not included in discussions of US troop increases or tactics, such as bombing pauses and bombing increases. Writing of the declining levels of consultation between the nations since the Eisenhower administration, Renouf stated that when Johnson became President, “Australia was very much left in the dark”

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<sup>110</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, Cabinet minute—meeting with President Johnson, 21 October 1966.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

regarding the development of US policy in Vietnam.<sup>113</sup> This, he attributed to Australia's "selfish pursuit" of the "forward defence" policy: the Holt government would advocate the most suitable course of action that furthered its strategic aims.<sup>114</sup>

Johnson's meeting with Cabinet was more an address from the President in an intimate setting, than a diplomatic consultation. As Edwards noted, Johnson's voice was prominent during the meeting, with only a short reply offered by Holt following the President's address.<sup>115</sup> This is further confirmed by the minutes of the meeting.<sup>116</sup> The Johnson administration, however, preferred the phrase an "intimate give-and-take" as was used to contrast the formal, translator-reliant discussions that Johnson later had with the Thai Prime Minister, Thanom.<sup>117</sup> The delegation that accompanied Johnson to Australia further provides an understanding of the type of discussions that the Johnson administration intended to have whilst in Australia. Johnson was accompanied by six colleagues; however, none represented the Department of Defence, and the only member of the State Department was James W. Symington, the Chief of Protocol—a position concentrated on state visits and meetings with foreign leaders.<sup>118</sup> The Australian Embassy had expected William P. Bundy to accompany Johnson to Australia; instead, he accompanied Rusk to Manila for preliminary discussions between the Foreign Ministers of the nations involved.<sup>119</sup> Of course, the Manila Conference would facilitate diplomatic discussion; however, the state visit provided an opportunity for bilateral discussions between the Holt government and Johnson administration. The

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<sup>113</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, (Melbourne: MacMillan Publishing, 1979) p. 266.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>115</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 115.

<sup>116</sup> See NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, Cabinet minute—meeting with President Johnson, 21 October 1966.

<sup>117</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Johnson and the Thai Prime Minister, Thanom, 29 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII: Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 741.

<sup>118</sup> The American delegation that met with the Australian Cabinet included: President Johnson; Ambassador Ed Clark; Edwin M. Cronk, Counsellor, US Embassy; the Special Assistants to the President, Walt Rostow and Marvin Watson; Farris Bryant, Director Office of Emergency Planning; and James W. Symington, Chief of Protocol.

<sup>119</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, cable, Australian Embassy to DEA, 14 October 1966.

lack of representation from the State Department and Department of Defence, coupled with the enormous press contingent that accompanied Johnson, indicates that this was primarily a public relations exercise.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, Johnson had impressed at least one senior Cabinet Minister, as evidenced by a piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>121</sup> The unnamed Minister told the paper that Johnson had addressed his counterparts “in a manner we do not often get the chance to listen to”, and that the President had expressed himself in a “down-to-earth, intensely honest” way.<sup>122</sup>

Following an extensive examination of the potential security concerns to be encountered during the President’s Pacific tour, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identified the Philippines as the greatest direct threat to the President’s safety. The Filipino press reported that the communist guerrilla group, the Huks, were planning to assassinate both Johnson and Air Vice-Marshal Ky in Manila. The plot was attributed to Chinese communist elements whom the Filipino authorities believed had secured copies of the dignitary’s itineraries. It was expected that they would use anti-war demonstrations in Manila as a “smokescreen” for an attempt on the lives of Ky and Johnson. No such extreme violence was expected in Australia; however, the FBI expected large protests and “possible violence from two communist controlled unions.”<sup>123</sup> Additionally, an individual whom the FBI described as a “reliable source” had informed them that the ALP was preparing “a big surprise reception committee” for the President in the form of protest action.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> 1,592 press passes were issued to foreign and domestic media personnel during Johnson’s visit, with over one hundred travelling with the President during his Pacific tour. See NAA: AA1980/735. 690, H. R. Rayner, report: Visit to Australia of President Johnson of USA, undated; and NAA: M2093, 9, cable from Waller to DEA, 6 October 1966.

<sup>121</sup> “Cabinet assured of support in US treaties”, *SMH*, 22 October 1966.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> FBI Records: Lyndon B. Johnson Part 1, file no. 62-111200-191: message from legal attaché Manila no. 451 to Director Hoover, 19 October 1966.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

The President toured the East Coast of Australia to rapturous crowds of supporters and smaller segments of anti-war protesters. From Canberra, the distinguished guests made their way to Melbourne for the most notable leg of the journey. An enormous crowd lined the streets to witness the presidential motorcade. Officials estimated the crowd to be as many as one million, although the police estimated it to be half that.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, “all agreed that the total topped that for Queen Elizabeth II when she visited in Australia in 1963.”<sup>126</sup> The turn-out was so large that Johnson’s sixteen kilometre journey through Melbourne took close to three hours.<sup>127</sup> The bullet-proof presidential limousine had been flown out especially for the occasion, and was flanked by Secret Service officers to keep the more hostile elements of the crowd at bay. One such group were student protesters.

Protesting students gathered near Melbourne University as it had been included in the official route, but the motorcade travelled via an alternative route. This was a “ruse” to avoid the dissenters.<sup>128</sup> Many of these dissenters opposed sending conscripts to a war that they believed should not be fought. The journey was to end at South Yarra, with the President and First Lady scheduled to dine at government House with the awaiting Holts. At approximately 6:10 pm, just as Johnson returned to the limousine, John Langley leapt out from behind the bystanders, breached the line of security guards, and covered the limousine in green paint.<sup>129</sup> Out of brotherly loyalty, David splattered the limousine with a bag of red paint.<sup>130</sup> Smearred with red and green paint—the colours the brothers mistakenly believed constituted the flag of the NLF—the driver stopped the

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<sup>125</sup> Carroll Kilpatrick, “Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President”, *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Tillman Durdin, “Throng in Sydney greets Johnson but some protest”, *NYT*, 22 October 1966, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> Adam Shand, *The Skull: Informers, Hit Men and Australia’s Toughest Cop*, (Melbourne: Black Inc. Books, 2009), p. 95.

<sup>129</sup> David Langley, in Greg Langley, *A Decade of Dissent: Vietnam and the Conflict on the Australian Home-front* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992) p. 58.

<sup>130</sup> Langley, in Langley, *A Decade of Dissent*, pp. 57-8.

vehicle as John lay in its path in protest.<sup>131</sup> The hard-top presidential limousine had protected its occupants; however, paint obscured the windscreen. A few blocks later, a policeman tried in vain to wipe the paint from the windscreen. Three members of Johnson's Secret Service were also covered in paint. Regarding the episode, Lady Bird Johnson said: "In the perspective of two million people it was just a grain of sand."<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the head of the Secret Service, James Rowley, brushed off the events as a "show before the TV cameras."<sup>133</sup> As Waller described the spectacle, "some thousands of anti-Vietnam people demonstrated against President Johnson; but some hundreds of thousands turned out to welcome him."<sup>134</sup>

The Langley family sought the services of the renowned Melbourne criminal lawyer, Frank Galbally, to defend the brothers.<sup>135</sup> The incident was presented as an act of youthful jocularly, not an act of protest. Galbally's handling of the case did not impress David: "He tried to excuse the whole thing as a childish prank, and even wrote a profuse letter of apology to President Johnson and told us to sign it."<sup>136</sup> David signed the letter, stating: "I signed, even though I did not agree with its sentiment, because of the trouble and expense we had caused our father."<sup>137</sup> The letter to Johnson stated that the brothers had been "excited to fever pitch by your presence and the consequent air of exaltation and triumph", and that all they wished to do was "merely highlight in a

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<sup>131</sup> Kilpatrick, "Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President", *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1. For the decision to use red and green paint, see Langley, in Langley, *A Decade of Dissent*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>132</sup> Kilpatrick, "Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President", *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1.

<sup>133</sup> James J. Rowley Oral History Interview I, recorded by Paige E. Mulholland, for the LBJ Library, 22 January 1969, transcript, p. 13.

<sup>134</sup> Sir Keith Waller Oral History Interview I, recorded by Joe B. Frantz, for the LBJ Library, 1 December 1969, p. 5.

<sup>135</sup> In part, this incident and the wider anti-war movement in Melbourne from 1966-9 were examined by Martin Brown, *Paintbombs Away on LBJ: Student Protest and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Melbourne, 1966-9*, fourth year honours thesis, Victoria University, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Langley, in Langley, *A Decade of Dissent*, p. 75.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

manner typical of students and young people, your successful tour.”<sup>138</sup> The defence’s rather transparent case had failed, and the brothers were fined thousands of dollars and placed in remand for two weeks. David and John Langley escaped a jail sentence, which they attributed to their father. As David recollected, their father had arranged for many influential people to speak on their behalf. David believed that because of these connections, and the family’s social standing, the brothers escaped with a fine.<sup>139</sup> In hindsight, David Langley regretted the incident: “I was eighteen and very naïve. I did not realise the implications that action would have. It branded me and completely changed my life.”<sup>140</sup>

Fascinatingly, Johnson chose not to mention the Melbourne leg of his visit in his lengthy memoir, although the events had left a lasting impression on him. Johnson’s only comment on the day was voiced by his Press Secretary, Bill Moyers, who said: “I guess they couldn’t stand the size of the turnout.”<sup>141</sup> However, two years later, during an award ceremony honouring the Director of the Secret Service, James J. Rowley, Johnson detailed the two occasions when he and his protective staff had “grieved together.”<sup>142</sup> One was the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas; the other was the paint-bombing incident in Melbourne. Recalling the events in Melbourne, Johnson “just couldn’t keep back the tears” when he looked into the faces of the Secret Service agents, especially “the dearest of all, Rufus Youngblood, with that paint streaming down their faces, splattered all over them, but their chins up and their President safe.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Glen St. John Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), p. 143.

<sup>139</sup> Langley, in Langley, *A Decade of Dissent*, p. 75.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>141</sup> Kilpatrick, “Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President”, *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1.

<sup>142</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson: “Remarks to the Secret Service and presentation of an award to James J. Rowley”, 23 November 1968. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29254> (accessed: 20 February 2013).

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

It is remarkable that Johnson would associate the episode in Melbourne with the more traumatic events in Dallas. Youngblood briefly discussed the events of Melbourne in an oral history recorded for the LBJ Presidential Library. “Well, I might say I was mildly annoyed”, said Youngblood. The clean-up effort was immense. Parts of the limousine had to be repainted, and his clothes were “junked.” “I lost a suit, shirt, even underwear”, said Youngblood.<sup>144</sup> The shirt of which he speaks is now on display at the Melbourne Museum juxtaposed with a small flag—one of many distributed to onlookers that read “Welcome LBJ: First Presidential visit to Australia—1966” and tickertape lined with the phrase “hip hip hooray for LBJ”.<sup>145</sup> The Secret Service agents were taken to Prince Henry’s Hospital to be examined and cleaned up, and were given new clothes. A hospital orderly felt it a waste to throw away the shirts and took them home in an attempt to salvage them.<sup>146</sup> The paint, however, would not come out; thus, one of the shirts was donated to the Museum. Following the events of Melbourne, the Holts and Johnsons flew back to Canberra to prepare for the Sydney leg of the visit. During the flight, Johnson apparently “needled” Holt about the paint-throwing incident, who was “obviously embarrassed” by the events.<sup>147</sup>

Johnson’s visit to Sydney was also marred by protests. Again, Holt—according to Downer—had “instigated a rapturous welcome” for the President. School children were given the day off, and public transport was free to encourage people to line the streets to catch a glimpse of the President.<sup>148</sup> As a choir opposite performed “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”, an estimated eight to ten protesters threw themselves on the

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<sup>144</sup> Rufus Youngblood Oral History Interview I, recorded by David G. McComb for the LBJ Library, 17 December 1968, transcript, p. 47.

<sup>145</sup> [http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/itemimages/200/061/200061\\_large.jpg](http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/itemimages/200/061/200061_large.jpg), (accessed 21 February 2013).

<sup>146</sup> <http://museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/whatson/current-exhibitions/melbournestory/favourite-objects/lbj-shirt/?mode=v>, (accessed, 21 February 2013).

<sup>147</sup> Kilpatrick, “Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President”, *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1.

<sup>148</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.75.

road in front of the presidential limousine.<sup>149</sup> It was then that the Premier of New South Wales, Robert Askin, uttered the infamous line: “Run over the bastards.”<sup>150</sup> As Horne noted, Askin’s remarks epitomised the sentiments of both sides: “for the demonstrators his ‘fascism’ confirmed their commitment; for those who saw all the demonstrators as ‘communists’ his common sense supported their own.”<sup>151</sup> Australian authorities intercepted messages from “Melbourne Communists and other elements opposed to US policy in Vietnam” to fellow dissenters in Sydney, “indicating a Communist-led scheme to disrupt the President’s visit to Sydney.”<sup>152</sup> The messages apparently called for Sydney followers to stop the motorcade by lying in front of it and to gather “in areas of friendly Sydney people.”<sup>153</sup> What many expected to be the pinnacle of Johnson’s visit was dampened by rigorous security standards.<sup>154</sup> The Secret Service’s fear of another incident prevented Johnson from leaving his car to greet the crowds that had turned out to see him, much to the annoyance of Premier Askin. He was reported as saying that “the over-anxiety of American security men had ruined President Johnson’s visit to Sydney.”<sup>155</sup> In total, twenty-one people faced court on a variety of charges stemming from various incidents that occurred during the Melbourne and Sydney legs of the visit. The charges were minor, and included: offensive behaviour, using obscene language, and drunk and disorderly conduct. Those found guilty were fined.<sup>156</sup> In Canberra, H. Gilchrist, on behalf of the Acting Secretary of the DEA cabled the secretary of the Attorney General’s Department calling for “confidential enquiries” into the extent to which the protests in Melbourne and Sydney were orchestrated by any “central

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<sup>149</sup> Horne, *A Time of Hope*, p. 53.

<sup>150</sup> Askin has sometimes been quoted as saying: “ride over the bastards.”

<sup>151</sup> Horne, *A Time of Hope*, p. 53.

<sup>152</sup> Tillman Durdin, “Throng in Sydney greets Johnson but some protest”, *NYT*, 22 October 1966, p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Durdin, “Tightened security for Johnson disappoints throngs in Sydney”, *NYT*, 24 October 1966, p. 14.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> “Sydney tries LBJ visit disturbers”, *Washington Post*, 25 October 1966, p. A14.

organisation or political body.”<sup>157</sup> From Sydney, it was it on to Brisbane, where Johnson again “infected” the crowd, as he done in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.<sup>158</sup> Finally, Air Force One stopped in Townsville to refuel on its way to Manila.

Townsville was a place where Johnson had fond war-time memories. Following Pearl Harbor, Johnson, already a member of the Naval Reserve, requested to undertake active duty. During his seven months in Australia and New Zealand, he served as President Roosevelt’s special emissary.<sup>159</sup> Stopping for fuel in the northern Australian town, Johnson attended a church ceremony, and made a brief public statement. What he had observed from the countless Australians he had met during his whirlwind visit was that the “vast majority of the American and Australian people are together—all the way—on the battlefield and in the search for peace.”<sup>160</sup> This was a nostalgic visit for Johnson. Speaking to the mayor and townspeople, Johnson told them that, “never in my life have I gone among a people in any land where I have been received with such open arms and with such unfailing courtesy.”<sup>161</sup> Notably, the stop-over in Townsville was the only leg of his Australian journey to which Johnson referred in his memoir. For the historical record, and out of courtesy, Johnson wrote to Holt that day to thank him for welcoming him to Australia. The visit had evoked “many wartime memories” for the President.<sup>162</sup> The tour, coming only a month before the election had been a great achievement for the Holt government, and the Prime Minister relayed his appreciation to the Premiers of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, in a letter that read: “As

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<sup>157</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, H. Gilchrist to the Secretary of the Attorney General’s Department, 26 October 1966.

<sup>158</sup> Alan Ramsey, “Holt’s whirlwind vote-catcher”, *Australian*, 24 October 1966.

<sup>159</sup> “A sentimental visit to a strong ally”, *Evening Independent*, 19 October 1966, p. 8A.

<sup>160</sup> “President in Manila: hectic 3-day tour ends in Townsville”, *Age*, 24 October 1966.

<sup>161</sup> Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 361(n).

<sup>162</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, letter from Johnson to Holt, 23 October 1966.

I confidently expected with minor exceptions, the people of your state responded magnificently. Good on you, mate.”<sup>163</sup>

The success of the Johnson visit can be attributed to three interwoven factors: Johnson’s proficiency in the public spotlight; the large-scale media coverage; and the presidential motorcade. An advance party, led by Moyers, first met with the Australian planning group on 9 October to organise the inaugural visit.<sup>164</sup> The US representation, which included Embassy staff, focussed on three key factors for the visit: ensuring that there were adequate communication networks in place to broadcast the visit to American living-rooms; the establishment of “press centres”; and the motorcade. Press centres were created at each leg of the visit and were fitted with a large concentration of telephones and tele-printers, as the emphasis on communications was high.<sup>165</sup> If the Johnson administration was to capitalise on the public relations exercise, it needed the adequate space and technology to do so. As H. R. Rayner, the Australian Press Co-ordinator for Johnson’s visit, noted:<sup>166</sup>

It was always brought clearly to our attention that the needs of TV cameramen providing material for something like 120 million US viewers were considered far more important than facilities for some thousands of spectators, as for example, at the Fairbairn arrival.<sup>167</sup>

Important as these two factors were, the linchpin on which the success of the visit hinged was the motorcade.

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<sup>163</sup> NAA: A1209, 1964/6482, letter from Holt to Askin, Bolte and Nicklin, 23 October 1966. The three Premiers at the time were: Sir Robert Askin (NSW), Sir Francis Nicklin (QLD), and Sir Henry Bolte (VIC).

<sup>164</sup> The advance party comprised of 70 individuals plus 16 air crew.

<sup>165</sup> NAA: AA1980/735. 690, H. R. Rayner, report: “Visit to Australia of President Johnson of USA”, undated.

<sup>166</sup> Rayner’s official role was that of the Director of Public Relations for the Australian Defence Department.

<sup>167</sup> NAA: AA1980/735. 690, H. R. Rayner, report: “Visit to Australia of President Johnson of USA”, undated.

As we have seen, the motorcade attracted crowds in the hundreds of thousands to see the President and his wife. The motorcade allowed for the use of flat-top vehicles on which the press could perch to capture the motorcade. These open trucks provided a platform to capture the “best possible pictures of the President in the midst of welcoming crowds.”<sup>168</sup> This was the first time that this type of vehicle had been used in Australia, and “they made possible some of the most outstanding crowd pictures which have come from any State Visit in this country.”<sup>169</sup> Conversely, in Melbourne this also allowed the press to capture the paint-splattered limousine at close range. Images of the vehicle and secret servicemen covered in green and red paint were carried on the front pages of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.<sup>170</sup> The unprecedented media swell some—1,500 press personnel—therefore served as a double-edged sword. It captured the enormous crowds of well-wishers, but also the actions of the protesters. The President had surrounded himself with a multitude of press personnel, equipped with countless tools to broadcast the visit around the world.<sup>171</sup> Alan Ramsey wrote that the media had “blanketed his visit, with his every move and every word televised, broadcast or read the length and breadth of this country.”<sup>172</sup> However, the broad media coverage would not have been nearly as valuable if it were not for Johnson himself.

Segments of the press expected Johnson’s visit would be a valuable political tool for the L-CP in the November election due to his masterful performance during the tour. In a lengthy piece for the *Australian*, Ramsey wrote that the visit was “a political coup of the first magnitude” for Holt. He declared the election a foregone conclusion, writing

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> See Kilpatrick, “Throwing of paint underlines danger faced by President”, *Washington Post*, 22 October 1966, p. A1; and Durdin, “Throng in Sydney greets Johnson but some protest”, *NYT*, 22 October 1966, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> NAA: AA1980/735. 690, H. R. Rayner, report: Visit to Australia of President Johnson of USA, undated.

<sup>172</sup> Ramsey, “Holt’s whirlwind vote-catcher”, *Australian*, 24 October 1966.

that the “silver tongue of President Johnson set the seal on electoral victory for Mr Holt.” However, the broad coverage had only been successful because Johnson was “a politician to his fingertips.” For “65 hours, he hypnotised Australia with his magnetic personality and wide smile, his Texan drawl and folksy rhetoric”, wrote Ramsey.<sup>173</sup> Like Ramsey, Desmond Robinson heaped the plaudits on the President, as “it was he who decided what kind of tour it was going to be.”<sup>174</sup> One reported noted that Johnson had undeniably “tapped a fantastically rich vein of affection in the Australian people.”<sup>175</sup>

There were similarities between the Johnson visit in 1966 and the 1954 Royal Tour. Like the Johnson visit, the Royal Tour occurred in the lead-up to the federal election. Both visits were also unprecedented, since Johnson was the first serving US President to visit Australia, and Queen Elizabeth II the first reigning Monarch to come to Australia. As early as June 1952, Menzies planned to hold the election precisely two years later, but he later brought the election forward one month.<sup>176</sup> There were a number of factors that could have encouraged Menzies bring the election date closer, but one stands out: the predicted close outcome of the election. As Lowe contended, this factor may have led Menzies to attempt to capitalise on the “lingering afterglow” of the Royal Visit.<sup>177</sup> Just eight months after the Queen’s coronation, the timing of the visit was significant for another reason. Coming two years prior to the arrival of television, the Royal visit maximised “popular participation, mostly in the form of Australians craning their necks to see the royal couple pass by.”<sup>178</sup> Twelve years later, not only did the Johnson visit attract an enormous segment of the Australian population to line the

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Desmond Robinson, “Firsthand impression of a fantastic tour”, *SMH*, 24 October 1966, p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> John Bennetts, “Tribute to President”, *Age*, 24 October 1966, p. 2.

<sup>176</sup> David Lowe, *Menzies and the “Great World Struggle”: Australia’s Cold War, 1948-54* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999), p. 125.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

streets of the eastern capitals, but with the medium of television, reports of the visit were also broadcast to 95 per cent of households in Melbourne and Sydney.<sup>179</sup>

Lowe concluded that following the Royal Tour, Menzies emerged with “stronger chances of being returned at the impending federal election ... and with his stature as leader enhanced, both within Australia and internationally.”<sup>180</sup> When applying this statement to Holt’s performance during Johnson’s visit, the first statement is correct; the second is not. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the precise level to which the presidential visit enhanced Holt’s chances of election is near impossible to gauge, but at the very least, assisted Holt’s chances of winning the election. As we saw earlier, for the best part of three days Holt was juxtaposed with Johnson, and here we come to the question of Holt’s stature. What became apparent was that the effortless and skill exhibited by Johnson was absent in both Holt and Calwell. As a Liberal Party voter told an American reporter, “Johnson’s polish showed up his [Holt’s] lack of assurance all the more.” Additionally, the Australian political journalist, Ian Fitchett, wrote that, once again, Holt’s “unfortunate inability to know when he had said just enough was very much to the fore in the series of speeches he made welcoming the President in half a dozen places.”<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, Holt’s insufficient political nous would not be challenged by the “none-too-smooth” Calwell, a leader who allegedly left many of his supporters disenchanted.<sup>182</sup> The extensive media coverage ensured that the Johnson visit

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<sup>179</sup> <http://aso.gov.au/chronology/1960s/>, (accessed 19 April 2013). The Royal Tour was much longer; Australia had, and continues to have, a constitutional relationship with the Queen. Moreover, there was much excitement and it was not the occasion for political protest, unlike the Johnson visit. For Menzies, there was political capital in the “feel good” factor of the visit; for Holt, there was political capital in the relationship between Australia and the US, as represented by the visit.

<sup>180</sup> Lowe, *Menzies and the “Great World Struggle”*, p. 170.

<sup>181</sup> Ian Fitchett, ‘Did Mr Holt ally himself too closely with President?’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1966.

<sup>182</sup> John F. Lawrence, “Johnson’s recent Australia visit could top this week’s elections”, *WSJ*, 21 November 1966.

was broadcast internationally. This brings us to a previously unexplored area of research: the British perception of the Johnson visit.

The Johnson visit confirmed for some in the British Parliament the gradual shift in Australia's allegiance. The British Opposition Leader, Lord Carrington, met with the Commonwealth Secretary to discuss his recent visit to Australia. Carrington "had been shocked by the change in Australian attitudes towards ourselves [the British] and the Americans over the last year."<sup>183</sup> Britain was looked upon "with complete indifference"; whereas "the attitude towards the US was now nauseatingly sycophantic."<sup>184</sup> During his visit, Johnson "had not missed a trick", using a "crude public relations campaign" which was "completely swallowed by the Australian public and most of the Ministers."<sup>185</sup> One such Minister was Holt, whom Carrington described as having been transfixed by the President. Holt "had been so much under the spell of President Johnson that he could hardly talk of anything else" during their meeting.<sup>186</sup> Though not in government, it seems plausible that Holt was reminding Carrington that were the British to follow its expected path out of the region, Australia was now, more than ever, closely aligned to the US. However, Lord Carrington did not see the presidential visit as the only factor that influenced the shift in Australia's ties with the two nations. Rather, Johnson's visit had "crystalized and accelerated a change which had in fact had been going on for some time."<sup>187</sup> Carrington believed the retirement of Menzies influenced Australia's closeness to the US and distance from the UK. Though, as the *Financial Times* reported, when viewed from Great Britain, the "shift in outlook was to some extent obscured by the personality of Sir Robert Menzies. Though he realised what was happening, he yet

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<sup>183</sup> UKNA: DO 169/343, minute from Forster to Pritchard, 17 November 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 915.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

clung to the British connection.”<sup>188</sup> This summation is correct, as in chapter two we saw that the Australian government much preferred the development of US bases on Australian soil as opposed to British bases.

On the other hand, Downer believed that the presidential visit *was* an important factor shaping Anglo-Australian relations.<sup>189</sup> Meeting with the Commonwealth Under-Secretary of State, Sir Saville “Joe” Garner, to discuss the proposed changes to Commonwealth immigration laws, Downer warned that the British were “running a grave danger of alienating Australia”, particularly in light of the “number of influences affecting the warm relations between our two countries.”<sup>190</sup> One influence identified by Downer was Johnson’s inaugural visit, which demonstrated that Australia was not without powerful friends. Later, Downer wrote that he thought the welcome organised for the President was excessive. Observing events from London, Downer believed “Harold overplayed his hand.” In Melbourne and Sydney, “the celebrations seemed to exceed anything previously for a royal visit.”<sup>191</sup> However, while undertaking his diplomatic duty, the High Commissioner kept these thoughts to himself. In his meeting with Garner, Downer warned, rather melodramatically, that if Britain continued to ignore Australia, “even the position of the Queen would be gravely affected.”<sup>192</sup> Of course, Australia’s link with the Monarchy was unquestionable at this time, yet, some did feel that the presidential visit would affect any immediate Royal tours in the immediate future.

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<sup>188</sup> “Voting for the US connection”, *Financial Times*, 28 November 1966.

<sup>189</sup> UKNA: DO 175/163, minute from Garner to Pritchard, 21 November 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 778.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p.75.

<sup>192</sup> UKNA: DO 175/163, minute from Garner to Pritchard, 21 November 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 778.

Both Lord Carrington and Rayner advised against a Royal tour in the short-term due to the enormity and overwhelming response to Johnson's visit. Rayner reported that:

If there is any single conclusion to be drawn from the Presidential Tour it is this—no Royal Tour of Australia should take place for at least a year. There is no doubt that both Press and crowds, after having been exposed to the free-wheeling displays and organised informality which occurred in October this year, will never again be the same.<sup>193</sup>

Lord Carrington provided a franker reason as to why the Royal Family should avoid Australia for the next twenty-four months.<sup>194</sup> It would be “impossible and inappropriate for them [the Royal Family] to copy President Johnson's glad-handling and the contrast would be too marked.”<sup>195</sup> What was being observed at the time was a growing “Australian nationalism”: an understanding that Australia was playing a part in the global community, and was not merely a member the Commonwealth. A study of Australian attitudes towards the monarchy, undertaken by Sir Charles H. Johnston,<sup>196</sup> noted that “Australian nationalism” was growing, in part, because of Britain's proposed entry into the Common Market, and its non-commitment to Vietnam, which had “hastened this process by suggesting that the Mother Country and the Australian ‘British’ were gradually moving apart.”<sup>197</sup>

When examining the relationship between Johnson and Holt, it becomes evident that the two appreciated each other's company; but the two leaders did not share a

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<sup>193</sup> NAA: AA1980/735. 690, H. R. Rayner, report: Visit to Australia of President Johnson of USA, undated.

<sup>194</sup> UKNA: DO 169/343, minute from Forster to Pritchard, 17 November 1966, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 916.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Sir Charles Hepburn Johnston served as the British High Commissioner to Australia from 1965-71.

<sup>197</sup> UKNA: FCO 49/78, letter from Johnston to Garner, 26 January 1967, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the UK*, p. 918.

deeper, conversational relationship. In somewhat inflated terms, Zara Holt described the affiliation between Holt and Johnson as “perhaps Harry’s most spectacular friendship.” She wrote that this was a “pure friendship” that “simply exploded between him and President Johnson.”<sup>198</sup> Despite her grand description of the friendship, Waller also noted that the two men did share a kinship. In an oral history, Waller stated that of the three prime ministers he served, Johnson was most intimate with Holt.<sup>199</sup> They were men of the same age and had entered politics at very similar stages in their lives, he noted. However, as the minutes from Holt’s meeting with Johnson in Washington, and Johnson’s meeting with the Australian Cabinet confirm, there was very little substance to their relationship. What can be observed is a conversation rich in rhetoric but devoid of an exchange of ideas relevant to the region and the issues faced. Due to Johnson’s constant recalling of Ambassador Clark back to Washington, Waller had come to spend some time with the President. Thus, he was privy to a level of exposure to the President than an Ambassador would not normally receive. Waller “got to know the President very well ...”—estimating to have spent hundreds of hours in the President’s company—“... though knowing him well was not the same as being intimate with him.” Despite this time spent together, Waller “never had a conversation with him.” The President would ask questions and listen intently to the response, but that is where the communication stopped.<sup>200</sup> This, too, was true for the association between Holt and Johnson. Waller noted that “they were quite similar, and they hit it off instantaneously, though in an odd way neither ever really listened to the other.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Zara Holt, *My Life and Harry*, p. 150.

<sup>199</sup> Sir Keith Waller Oral History Interview I, recorded by Joe B. Frantz, for the LBJ Library, 1 December 1969, p. 10.

<sup>200</sup> Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Similarly, Hasluck noted that the two leaders enjoyed each other's company, but their relationship was not profound. In his opinion, it was due to Johnson's friendliness that Holt misconstrued his own role in international affairs and, in particular, his role in developing the Australian-American alliance. Holt mistook "the lubricating oil for fuel." Hasluck wrote that Holt believed that the "chief cause" and "chief instrument" of the Australian-American alliance was the cordial relationship between the President and the Prime Minister.<sup>202</sup> Holt was unable to, or chose not to examine his relationship with Johnson objectively. He "basked in the warmth" of their friendship and "seemed to forget that the President was also a professional politician, or that he might have some motives and interests that did not coincide at all points with his pleasure in Harold's company."<sup>203</sup> In his frankest remark on this "special relationship", Hasluck wrote that Holt:

Let his confidence that Lyndon Johnson regarded Harold Holt as his closest confidante and dearest friend among all foreign heads of government—and I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that Holt had this belief—obscure the facts of Australian-American relationships and the possibility that American national interest and Australian national interest had to be observed, measured and reconciled.<sup>204</sup>

Hasluck's critique that Holt did not fully comprehend Australian national interests is somewhat unfair, as his strong public posture was directed at advancing Australia's most important post-war alliance. Yet Holt's exuberant support for American policies in Vietnam left him vulnerable to claims of subservience. Holt himself alluded to the importance of his relationship with Johnson and its benefit to Australia. As Benvenuti

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<sup>202</sup> Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, p. 135.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7.

noted, Holt had told Sir Charles Johnston, the British High Commissioner to Australia, that he felt “personally far closer to Harold Wilson”, but “Johnson probably means more to me and my country.”<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, he was advocating the policies that stemmed primarily from Hasluck’s own department: a department in which Hasluck believed policy was the domain exclusively of the Minister. Conversely, Downer appreciated Holt’s role in furthering Australia’s alliance with the US. One of Holt’s notable achievements in his short time as Prime Minister, Downer argued, was his role in strengthening the Australian-American alliance via his close friendship with Lyndon Johnson and his strong support for the war in Vietnam.<sup>206</sup>

In late October, the leaders of South Vietnam’s military allies travelled to the Philippines for the Manila Summit Conference.<sup>207</sup> The summit was held under the banner of SEATO, yet representatives from the UK, France and Pakistan were not present. Though presented as a meeting to examine the social problems facing Asia, the conference focussed on the military situation in Vietnam. Australia was strongly represented at Manila, with Holt, Hasluck, and Fairhall accompanied by eleven top advisers from the DEA, Defence, the Treasury, and the Prime Minister’s Department, as well as Ambassadors Waller, Stewart, and Border.<sup>208</sup> President Johnson, too, surrounded himself with substantial diplomatic figures, such as Secretary of State Rusk, Governor W. Averell Harriman, William P. Bundy, Leonard S. Unger, and General William C. Westmoreland.

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<sup>205</sup> Andrea Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australia Relations and the “Turn to Europe”, 1961-1972* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Press, 2008), p. 89.

<sup>206</sup> Downer, *Six Prime Ministers*, p. 104.

<sup>207</sup> The Manila Summit Conference was held from 23-25 October 1966. The nations represented at the conference were: Australia, US, NZ, Republic of Korea, Thailand, South Vietnam, and the host nation the Philippines.

<sup>208</sup> “‘Big guns’ off to Manila”, *Melbourne Sun*, 13 October 1966. F. H. Stewart served as the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, and L. H. Border as the Australian Ambassador to South Vietnam.

An examination of the cables between the DEA and Australian Embassy, Washington, in the lead-up to Manila, reveals that US wished to direct the conference from the outset, despite it technically being a meeting of equals, chaired by President Marcos. As mentioned previously, Bundy had been expected to accompany Johnson to Australia; however, he headed directly to Manila for the pre-conference discussions. The Foreign Ministers from the seven nations conferred for three days of preliminary discussions before the leaders arrived in Manila. Regarding Bundy's inclusion in Rusk's travelling party, the Washington mission noted: "the strengthening of the team which Rusk will take with him indicates the importance which the Americans attach to the pre-conference discussions in Manila." However, the Johnson administration did not view these discussions as an important forum for productive, worthwhile exchanges. Rather, it can be said that they served a different, strategic purpose, evidenced by a cable from the Australian Embassy to the DEA:

Unger said that the Filipinos were coming forward with "all sorts of suggestions" for matters to be discussed at the meeting. Many of these were too detailed to be handled in a heads of government conference, and would have to be got out of the way beforehand.<sup>209</sup>

Attached to the cable was a draft joint communiqué—likely to be raised at the conference. Though described as "a very preliminary draft" by Unger, the communiqué indicated the United States' desire to dictate the conference from the initial meeting of the foreign ministers.<sup>210</sup> It contained twelve points, many of which were included in the final official communiqué.

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<sup>209</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 14 October 1966.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

Controlling the summit, Johnson pressured his military allies to further commit to the defence of South Vietnam. According to the renowned Filipino journalist, Amando Doronila, Johnson dominated the discussions between the leaders. Having obtained the official audio recordings of the meetings of the leaders, Doronila wrote that Johnson “thumped the oval desk, around which the heads of state were clustered, while he chided the US allies who proposed a soft line.”<sup>211</sup> This was contrary to Moyers’ reports that Johnson was calm and restrained during the discussions.<sup>212</sup> Johnson, noting the Filipino government’s small contribution to Vietnam, told Marcos that he should follow the recommendations of the Americans during the conference, as Johnson had the best possible diplomatic team at his disposal. However, this can also be seen as a subtle hint to Marcos that as the US was the major combatant aiding the South Vietnamese, Marcos and the other leaders should not challenge the proposals of the Americans. Johnson was recorded as saying: “If you can have a better diplomat than Dean Rusk or a better treaty writer than [W. Averell Harriman], and if you can produce better peace proposals than we have, then I will follow you.”<sup>213</sup> On a separate occasion, Johnson told Marcos and Park that they could not “sit in the rocking chair while American soldiers are dying.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20081023-167958/Johnson-bullies-Marcos-in-Manila-summit>, (accessed, 02 January 2012). Actions such as thumping tables during meetings were all part of the “Johnson Treatment”. This was Johnson’s personal style of diplomacy that was physical, loud, brash and sometimes bewildering for those in caught in LBJ’s crosshairs. Evans and Novak wrote that Johnson’s “tone could be supplication, accusation, cajolery, exuberance, scorn, tears, complaint, the hint of threat. It was all of these together. He moved in close, his face a scant millimetre from his target, his eyes widening and narrowing, his eyebrows rising and falling.” “Mimicry, humour, and the genius of analogy made the Treatment an almost hypnotic experience and rendered the target stunned and helpless.” Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power* (New York: The New American Library, 1966), p. 104.

<sup>212</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20081023-167958/Johnson-bullies-Marcos-in-Manila-summit>, (accessed, 02 January 2012). However, given Johnson’s tactile, aggressive style of diplomacy, his performance in Manila was nothing out of the ordinary.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* Park Chung-Hee served as President of South Korea from 1963-1979 following his assassination.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

Like Johnson, General Westmoreland called for an increased effort from the allied leaders and told them that “more troops were needed” to ensure victory.<sup>215</sup> In a private discussion with McNaughton, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Westmoreland said that he “shudders” at the thought of stopping the American carpet bombing campaign, “Rolling Thunder”, as it was their “only trump card—our only pressure on the North.”<sup>216</sup> During the first closed session, Holt asked Westmoreland about the possible effects that large numbers of foreign forces would have on the Vietnamese, to which Westmoreland “admitted the political, psychological and economic risks, but explained how friction was minimized by careful orientation of the troops of all nations.”<sup>217</sup> Holt’s question is interesting as it queried the worth of a strong military presence in the region. Besides his question to Westmoreland, there is no other reference to Holt’s involvement in discussions at Manila. In Johnson’s memoir, Holt is only mentioned as a participatory leader. On Holt’s role at Manila, Hasluck recalled that he “saw at close hand very obvious signs of Johnson’s impatience with Holt and poor regard of his opinion, even though he counted on his friendly support.”<sup>218</sup> Given Hasluck’s remarks, and the omission of Holt in Johnson’s memoirs, it is again apparent that though Johnson may have personally enjoyed Holt’s companionship, he did not consider him a political equal.

Contrary to what was asserted by Holt and later Johnson, the drafting of the official communiqué was not a seamless exercise. Upon arrival in Australia, Holt stated it was “remarkable that seven nations could reach such unity quickly.”<sup>219</sup> Denying what Ramsey called “persisting reports” that the conference had been “bogged down in

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<sup>215</sup> Alan Ramsey, “Manila allies stand firm on Viet”, *Australian*, 25 October 1966.

<sup>216</sup> Memorandum from McNaughton to McNamara, 26 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68: Volume VI, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 784.

<sup>217</sup> Telegram from Westmoreland to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Wheeler, 27 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68: Volume VI, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 788.

<sup>218</sup> Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>219</sup> Wallace Crouch, “No Vietnam increase until vote”, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1966.

drafting disputes”, Holt “insisted that there had been no differences of substance.”<sup>220</sup> Moreover, in his memoir, Johnson wrote that the leaders “reached agreement easily at Manila, because it was quickly apparent that we shared similar views about the future.”<sup>221</sup> However, the conclusion of the conference was delayed by five hours due to heated exchanges between Johnson and Marcos regarding the wording of the final communiqué. According to Doronila, “Marcos tried hard to put conciliatory words [in] the communiqué, to which Johnson and some of the hard-liners objected. They considered the draft communiqué ‘too mild’.”<sup>222</sup> Marcos and his advisers were troubled by the absence of a clear declaration that any future actions would be undertaken in accordance with the individual “constitutional processes” of the nations involved.<sup>223</sup> Without this phrase, this Filipinos feared that they would be bound to an automatic commitment if the war escalated. The issue went to a vote, with the Filipinos outvoted six to one, as the opposing leaders believed “constitutional processes” was implied in the communiqué.<sup>224</sup>

The most notable inclusion in the document was a declaration that if the North Vietnamese ceased hostilities with the South, and retreated to its territory, allied forces would be “withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months.”<sup>225</sup> One would expect that this statement would have disturbed the Australians as it was a clear challenge to its “forward defence” policy. In essence, if the war were to end in the manner outlined in the communiqué, the increased US presence that had mounted

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<sup>220</sup> Ramsey, “Manila allies stand firm on Viet”, *Australian*, 25 October 1966.

<sup>221</sup> Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 362.

<sup>222</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20081023-167958/Johnson-bullies-Marcos-in-Manila-summit>, (accessed, 02 January 2012). The draft communiqué mentioned by Doronila is not to be confused with the draft communiqué presented by Unger to the Australian Embassy, and later cabled to the DEA.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Paragraph 29 of the Manila Summit Conference Joint Communiqué, drafted and signed by all participating leaders, 25 October 1966. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27958>, (accessed 16 March 2013).

during the conflict would be lost. Prior to the summit, the Australian government had not been made aware of the US desire to vacate Vietnam within six months of the conclusion of hostilities. Regarding withdrawal, Unger's earlier draft communiqué stated that an end to the war would only "reaffirm the readiness of the parties to withdraw their troops when security was restored."<sup>226</sup> McNaughton informed McNamara that the proviso of withdrawal of foreign forces in six months "had to be negotiated by the President himself."<sup>227</sup> McNaughton added: "I'll tell you the tale later."<sup>228</sup> McNaughton's reasons for not documenting what occurred are a matter of speculation. However, given that Johnson had to personally bring about the change suggests that he faced some degree of opposition from his allies, possibly Holt. In *The Frightened Country*, Renouf noted that the reference to a withdrawal of troops within six months of the cessation of war "marked the first, albeit slight, relaxation in the US diplomatic posture."<sup>229</sup>

Johnson's Pacific tour served as a campaign tool for the US mid-term elections; yet this tactic proved unsuccessful. With the elections to be held on 8 November, Johnson ignored the traditional campaign activities of attending fundraisers and making public appearances in support of contenders or incumbents. Instead, he opted for a top-down approach in the form of a large-scale foreign policy offensive.<sup>230</sup> Savage wrote that Johnson gambled much of the election outcome on the Manila Conference, and a highly publicised visit with American troops in Vietnam, in the hope it "would restore ... consensus on his Vietnam policies."<sup>231</sup> Due to other factors, including the Republican

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<sup>226</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, cable, Australian Embassy, Washington, to DEA, 14 October 1966.

<sup>227</sup> Memorandum from McNaughton to McNamara, 26 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68: Volume VI, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 783.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 211.

<sup>230</sup> Sean Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 274.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5.

Party's shift away from ultra-conservatism, Johnson's approach did not prove fruitful. The Republicans gained three Senate seats, eight governorships, and 47 House seats.<sup>232</sup> However, the "Johnson treatment" would appear to have more success when the Australian electorate went to the polls later that month.

Following the triumphant visit of President Johnson and the Manila conference, the focus shifted again to the federal election. The election was to be fought on the issue of Vietnam. As discussed earlier, many believed the election to be a foregone conclusion following the rousing turnout during Johnson's state visit and the widespread support for Australia's efforts in Vietnam. John Lawrence believed "President Johnson's coattails ... could prove to be surprisingly long on Saturday, the day Australians go to the polls."<sup>233</sup> During Johnson's visit, Holt had assured the President that his government "would not hold back" in its efforts to combat regional communism.<sup>234</sup> This was shown by that "lively political issue": conscription.<sup>235</sup> Holt "wanted to be able to say that the people had endorsed the policy", and he "hoped for an impressive endorsement."<sup>236</sup> However, the Opposition Leader, Arthur Calwell, felt that opinion polling had shown "strong support for the government on Vietnam, but rising opposition to conscription."<sup>237</sup> Indeed, a November Gallup poll showed that although 61 per cent favoured Australia's involvement in Vietnam, 52 per cent opposed the use of conscripts.<sup>238</sup> Moreover, Calwell "did not think the President's visit would greatly affect

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<sup>232</sup> <http://whitehousetapes.net/exhibit/jfk-lbj-midterm-elections-1962-and-1966>, (accessed 22 March 2013). This election also heralded the arrival of two future US Presidents, Ronald Reagan, (who won the Californian gubernatorial race), and the newly elected Congressman, George H.W. Bush.

<sup>233</sup> Lawrence, "Johnson's recent Australia visit could top this week's elections", *WSJ*, 21 November 1966.

<sup>234</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, Cabinet minute—meeting with President Johnson, 21 October 1966.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* For a contemporary analysis of the conscription issue, see Henry Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia: the Impact of Vietnam and Conscription* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1970). For the public opposition to conscription, see Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 76-85. For Labor's opposition to conscription, see Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 133-38; Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, pp. 156-60; and Pemberton, *All The Way*, pp. 335-38.

<sup>236</sup> NAA: A1838, 250/9/9/13, Cabinet minute—meeting with President Johnson, 21 October 1966.

<sup>237</sup> John Stubbs, "Holt hints at bigger war role", *Australian*, 22 October 1966.

<sup>238</sup> Horne, *A Time of Hope*, p. 53.

the election result.”<sup>239</sup> The deployment of conscripts to Vietnam was announced by the Prime Minister in March that year; however, the then Minister for the Army, Malcolm Fraser believed that Holt was never comfortable with the government’s introduction of conscription. He later recalled: “Harold himself hated the idea of conscription. I’ve got no doubt: he really hated it. He just believed it was necessary and I think he really worried about sending conscripts into war.”<sup>240</sup> Fraser, on the other hand, “thought it was the only solution. The decision had to be made and therefore the decision was made, and there is not a great deal of purpose lying awake about it at night.”<sup>241</sup>

Calwell, and some in the ALP, recognised that their only chance of victory lay in running on an anti-conscription, anti-war platform. In May, the ALP’s position was to immediately withdraw conscripts, and after consultation with the Americans, regular Australian forces would be removed. However, as Murphy wrote, Calwell “shifted to the left of this position.”<sup>242</sup> In the final weeks of the campaign, at a press conference at Adelaide Airport, Calwell announced that he would withdraw Australian forces from Vietnam if he was elected prime minister. The Opposition leader declared: “We will withdraw them [the Australian troops] ... We will not be taking part in a dialogue with the American as to whether we should or should not withdraw ... That is our business. That is our right.” Furthermore, he had told Johnson this when he was in Australia, to which Johnson responded that the decision would not damage the alliance between the two nations. “America is pursuing her own interests ... We are not telling America to withdraw her troops”, said Calwell. Given that Holt was expected to carry the election comfortably, it is unlikely that Calwell’s proposed withdrawal would have alarmed

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<sup>239</sup> Stubbs, “Holt hints at bigger war role”, *Australian*, 22 October 1966.

<sup>240</sup> Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: the Political Memoirs*, (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2010), p. 137. Consistent with this, Fraser recollected that Menzies had said some years later that Holt “was a nicer man than the Prime Minister sometimes needed to be.”

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>242</sup> Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 158.

Johnson. Calwell also questioned the validity of Australia's defence pact with the US, claiming that had the Japanese not attacked the Americans, the US would have allowed them to overrun Australia, as "America follows her own interests always."<sup>243</sup>

A day before the 1966 federal election, the opposing leaders' final election pledges were carried on the front page of the *Age*. Both Calwell and Holt reinforced the importance of ANZUS, but the leaders differed on the worth of SEATO. According to Calwell, a Labor victory would not mean the end of ANZUS, as "this is the only defence treaty that really joins us with the US because SEATO is not worth a cracker."<sup>244</sup> Holt, on the other hand, applauded both ANZUS and SEATO, arguing that they enhanced Australia's security and provided a "shield behind which we can build for a bigger future".<sup>245</sup> Though this "shield" strengthened Australia's "defensive association with Great Britain and other allies", Australia's alliance with the US was "the centre piece of this shield".<sup>246</sup> Again, Holt reiterated that a Labor victory would compromise this important relationship and leave Australia to "go it alone."<sup>247</sup> An election victory proved elusive for the embattled Calwell. The ALP suffered a decisive defeat with the L-CP increasing its majority in the House from twenty-two to forty, whilst Labor's share of the primary vote declined by more than five per cent.

Following the L-CP's landslide victory, Johnson publicly congratulated Holt on his success. The short message read: "With steadfast devotion we will stand by your side as long as freedom is being challenged and peace is being threatened. We know we stand with a man of conviction, integrity and wisdom. We know we stand with a

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<sup>243</sup> "How Lab. would quit Vietnam", *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1966.

<sup>244</sup> Arthur Calwell, "The leaders sum up", *Age*, 25 November 1966, p.4.

<sup>245</sup> Harold Holt, "The leaders sum up", *Age*, 25 November 1966, p. 4.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

friend.”<sup>248</sup> This led Calwell to question Johnson’s involvement in Australian politics. Johnson’s earlier intrusion into the Australian political sphere had been “bad enough”; although now, the “tenor of his remarks reduces the importance of Australia to that of a protected power and not an independent nation, and lowers the importance of the Australian Prime Minister to that of a State Governor of the US.”<sup>249</sup> But with the election comprehensively decided, Calwell’s claims fell on deaf ears. Moreover, it was not uncommon for the leaders of the two nations to congratulate each other upon election, as Menzies had congratulated both Kennedy, and Johnson. Holt privately thanked Johnson for the message, writing:

My fellow Australians and I take encouragement from your warm assurance of continuing American association as we face together challenges to peace and freedom. I believe, as you do, that our firmly based American-Australian friendship will make a growing contribution to security and progress in Asia. I deeply appreciate what you have said about me personally.

Your friend, Harold Holt.<sup>250</sup>

The phrasing of Holt’s reply to Johnson contained, as expected, the customary political rhetoric; however, this final line is telling. It confirms that Holt valued highly the relationship between Johnson and himself, both at a political and personal level.

Overwhelmingly, most scholars believe that the Johnson visit assisted the L-CP in carrying the election by such a healthy margin. Pemberton argued that “It cannot be doubted that his visit and the American alliance in general had an important bearing on

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<sup>248</sup> “LBJ: We stand by your side”, *Melbourne Sun*, 29 November 1966.

<sup>249</sup> “Holt defends LBJ telegram”, *Melbourne Sun*, 30 November 1966.

<sup>250</sup> NAA: A7854/1, letter from Holt to Waller for Johnson, 30 November 1966.

the landslide victory of the government in the elections.”<sup>251</sup> Murphy claimed that the Johnson visit placed the Labor Party with an insurmountable problem: it did not want to appear anti-American, but it wished to voice its opposition to the war in Vietnam. Thus, Calwell had to attempt to balance “the conflicting forces” of the ALP.<sup>252</sup> “He was condemning the Vietnam War and appealing to his support on the left while trying to avoid its anti-Americanism.”<sup>253</sup> Edwards also believed that the Johnson visit influenced the electoral result; though in a slightly different way from other scholars. The passion of those opposed to the Australian involvement in Vietnam had not caught the heart and minds of the electorate in 1965 and 1966. Thus, he suggests, “the tactics used by the more radical protesters during the Johnson visit and the election campaign probably increased the size of the government’s majority.”<sup>254</sup> However, Williams noted that those who have claimed there to be a causal relationship between the visit and the election result “have failed to provide any evidence other than the anecdotal.”<sup>255</sup> Using a five-pronged quantitative method that tested for causality, he determined that there was no statistically significant relationship between Johnson’s visit and Holt’s victory. Rather, the landslide was a culmination of the “electorate’s overwhelming support for Holt and his government’s policies of conscription and military involvement in Vietnam.”<sup>256</sup> Of course, it is difficult to assess accurately or definitively the level to which Johnson’s visit assisted Holt at the polls. However, given the weight of evidence that suggests that Johnson’s visit reflected positively on Holt’s electoral result, coupled with the complete absence of evidence in the contrary, one must contend that the visit, at the least, did not

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<sup>251</sup> Pemberton, *All The Way*, pp. 335-6.

<sup>252</sup> Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 156.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 138.

<sup>255</sup> Paul D. Williams, “Holt, Johnson and the 1966 Federal Election: A Question of Causality”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 47 (3), 2001, p. 370.

<sup>256</sup> Williams, “Holt, Johnson and the 1966 Federal Election”, *AJPH*, p. 366.

diminish, and probably helped, Holt's chances of an election victory. With the election comfortably won, the Holt government could now return to governing the nation.

Australia's alliance with the US was exemplified by the two nations' efforts in Vietnam. Expectedly, Australia's future role in the conflict was widely discussed by the leaders of both major political parties in the period immediately prior to and following Johnson's visit. The day before Johnson's arrival in Canberra, in the House of Representatives, Calwell asked whether the Prime Minister would be announcing an imminent increase in Australia's commitment to the war in Vietnam. Reports circulated in the Australian press that government was on the verge of doubling its commitment to the conflict, bringing Australia's presence in Vietnam to 9,000 troops. Holt did not categorically rule out an increase, responding that it was common practice to review Australia's role in the battle, and that such reviews "produce a variety of things."<sup>257</sup> Politicising the exchange, Holt stated that Calwell wanted to withdraw Australia's commitment, whereas he was of the opinion that "with no lull in the Vietnam struggle", Australia was not going to "turn her back on her allies halfway through a task."<sup>258</sup> In the days after Johnson's visit, Holt stated that this review would not take place until after the election.<sup>259</sup> At the conclusion of the Manila Conference, the *Washington Post* columnist, Marquis Childs, claimed that Holt had assured Johnson that Australia would send an additional 3,000 men to Vietnam if he carried the election by a healthy margin.<sup>260</sup> Childs also reported that this proviso had been discussed during Holt's visit to Washington in the middle of the year. Calwell picked up on this, proclaiming that

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<sup>257</sup> See Harold Holt, *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 20 October 1966, p. 1989; and "Holt guarded on more Viet troops", *Sun*, 21 October 1966.

<sup>258</sup> "Holt guarded on more Viet troops", *Sun*, 21 October 1966.

<sup>259</sup> Garry Barker, "Holt: 'Viet force review after poll'", *Sun*, 26 October 1966.

<sup>260</sup> Michael Clowes, "3000 more diggers for war claimed", *Australian*, 26 October 1966.

Holt had made a secret agreement with the President during the “Manila war conference.”<sup>261</sup>

Renouf wrote that Holt’s decision to review Australia’s force level came “without specific US pressure”; however, it appears that the Americans expected the Australians would be offering additional assistance after the federal election, thus were not overly forceful regarding the matter.<sup>262</sup> Westmoreland noted in a telegram to the Chairman of the JCS, Wheeler, that at the Manila Conference he had found time for discussions with the delegations of Australia, and NZ. During these conversations, he left with the impression that “we [the US] may get additional troop contributions after their elections next month.”<sup>263</sup> Less than a fortnight before the federal election, William P. Bundy disclosed to Rusk that both Australia and New Zealand would send additional forces to Vietnam following the elections, stating: “If the elections come out right, both will do more.” Bundy added that the two governments “need no urging” to do more in Vietnam, and a proposed visit from Rusk to Australia following the elections “would be badly misconstrued.”<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, following the election, Ambassador Ed Clark cabled the State Department noting that Holt was confident that an Australian increase was imminent. Holt had indicated to Clark that “Cabinet should consider on [an] urgent basis what more [the] GOA [government of Australia] can contribute to Vietnam.”<sup>265</sup> This would take place once the new Cabinet had been confirmed, and Sir John Wilton, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, had returned from Saigon.<sup>266</sup> Concurrently, Waller had received suggestions from members of the administration that an additional increase

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<sup>261</sup> “How Lab. would quit Vietnam”, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1966.

<sup>262</sup> Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 260

<sup>263</sup> Telegram from Westmoreland to Wheeler, 27 October 1966, *FRUS: 1964-1968, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p 788.

<sup>264</sup> Memorandum from William P. Bundy to Rusk, 15 November 1966, *FRUS: 1964-1968, 1968, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 845.

<sup>265</sup> Telegram from Ambassador Clark to the Department of State, 1 December 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII: Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs*, p. 48.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

would be warmly welcomed. He cabled the DEA, noting that the Embassy's contacts within the Pentagon, State Department and White House had hinted that an increased military contribution from Australia would be "greatly appreciated by the administration".<sup>267</sup>

Without adequate consultation with defence personnel, Holt authorised a review of Australia's role in Vietnam in mid-December 1966. According to Howson, Holt bypassed the Minister for Defence, Allen Fairhall, and contacted the Department's Secretary, Edwin Hicks, who was also the Chairman of the Defence Committee, and instructed him to commence the review.<sup>268</sup> The Defence Committee's report concluded that Australia could best be of assistance by deploying a third battalion as it would almost double Australia's operational capacity.<sup>269</sup> However, the Committee warned that this would disrupt Australia's other commitments, particularly its role in the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR) in Malaysia.<sup>270</sup> This was a substantial increase in comparison to Australia's existing commitment. Earlier, the DEA had expected that if the Americans were to ask for additional contribution from the Australians, "only a token force would be sought."<sup>271</sup> In Cabinet on 14 December, Howson recalled that he and others had managed to persuade Holt against the commitment of a third battalion.<sup>272</sup> Rather, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet agreed to deploy 940 ground troops, a RAAF squadron of eight Canberra bombers, and a new Navy destroyer, HMAS Hobart.<sup>273</sup> The decision pleased Howson, who wrote earlier that he felt the government should send "the least expensive [commitment] with the biggest 'public relations'

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<sup>267</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, cable, Waller to Hasluck, 1 December 1966.

<sup>268</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 253.

<sup>269</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 140.

<sup>270</sup> The official title of the CSR was the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve.

<sup>271</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, cable from the DEA to the Australian Embassy, Washington, 29 September 1966.

<sup>272</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 253.

<sup>273</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 141.

image.”<sup>274</sup> On 17 December, Ambassador Waller was informed that the government had agreed to deploy additional ground, air and sea units, bringing the entire Australian commitment to approximately 6,300, with the Army’s contingent comprising some 5,200 soldiers.<sup>275</sup>

Holt’s insistence on sending a third battalion at this time has been the subject of conjecture for many scholars in this field.<sup>276</sup> This is due, in part, to comments by Howson. In his diaries, Howson, bemused by Holt’s eagerness to deploy a third battalion, wrote that he and others supposed Holt had “given a secret undertaking to LBJ.”<sup>277</sup> However, as Edwards wrote, there is no definitive evidence to support this claim.<sup>278</sup> Renouf also took a cynical view of the issue, stating that Holt’s determination to send an additional battalion occurred because Johnson had, in a political sense, “seduced” the Prime Minister during his visit.<sup>279</sup> Coral Bell, on the other hand, proposed a more considered hypothesis, which posited that it was likely that Holt had misconstrued his comprehensive election victory as a mandate to escalate Australia’s role in Vietnam.<sup>280</sup> Similarly, Pemberton suggested that the 1966 election had “impressed on Holt the great domestic political importance of the US alliance.”<sup>281</sup> However, he also maintained that Holt was “very anxious to please the Americans”, hence his desire to send a third battalion to Vietnam.<sup>282</sup> Edwards believed that the Holt government had few answers to its two pressing international issues, Vietnam and

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<sup>274</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 253.

<sup>275</sup> See NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, cable, DEA to Waller, 17 December 1966; and NAA: A1209, 1965/6299, part 3, cable of text of Holt’s statements regarding increased Australian forces, from DEA to the Australian Embassy Washington, and High Commission, London, 22 December 1967.

<sup>276</sup> Sources that suggest that the third troop increase was instigated by Holt include: Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, p. 253; Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 140-1; Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 324; Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 260; and Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 77.

<sup>277</sup> Howson, *The Howson Diaries*, pp. 252-53.

<sup>278</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 141.

<sup>279</sup> Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 264

<sup>280</sup> Bell, *Dependent Ally*, p. 84.

<sup>281</sup> Pemberton, *All The Way*, p. 324.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

Britain's withdrawal "east of Suez"; therefore, they simply reaffirmed the policies that had brought them electoral success, leading to the commitment of additional forces just weeks after the election victory.<sup>283</sup> While there is no extant evidence to support the claim that Holt had privately assured Johnson that he would deploy an additional battalion to Vietnam following the election, we have seen that some US administration officials expected that the Australian government would be increasing its commitment following the election. And undoubtedly Holt believed that the Australian electorate strongly supported Australia's efforts in Vietnam, thus providing him with an opportune window during which to add to Australia's contingent.

The events examined throughout this chapter highlight a developing closeness between Australia and the US, which became most evident between June to December 1966. Throughout this period, senior figures in the Cabinet, notably Holt and McEwen, declared on several occasions the importance of Australia's association with the US. However, where McEwen was frank, Holt was exuberant. Holt clearly understood the importance of the Australia's alliance with America, but he lacked the political skill to voice his support without appearing subservient or obsequious. The clearest indicator of the strengthening alliance between the nations was President Johnson's visit. The unprecedented exercise in public relations, a month before the federal election, helped assure the L-CP of victory. The visit was a tangible demonstration of the strengthening bond between the two nations that Holt's rhetoric had so often referred to.

Holt's relationship with Johnson was driven more by the pursuit of national interests, than by his friendship with the President. Rather unfairly, Hasluck believed that Holt's rapport with the President obscured his ability to view objectively the leaders' friendship or the countries' interests. Evidence does suggest that the two men

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<sup>283</sup> Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 139-40.

shared a unique friendship often absent in heads of government; however, Holt never lost sight of Australian national interests. In his correspondence with Johnson, both in this and earlier chapters, he often noted the duality of Australia's regional defence commitments, and the need to maintain a British presence "east of Suez", whilst continually praising the role of the US in regional affairs. As Downer concluded, Holt played an important role in strengthening the Australian-American alliance due to his friendship with the President and his unwavering support for the administration's policies in Vietnam. Publicly, Holt was "All the way with LBJ", but doctrinally, so too was his government. The events of mid-to-late 1966 indicated a strong relationship between the two nations; however, the following chapter will demonstrate that at a policy level, Australia was very much left on the outer.

## Chapter 5: “... Come what may.”<sup>1</sup>

As the US was central to Australia’s defence strategy, it was imperative to the Australian government that the channels of communication between the two nations were as open as possible. Such openness would enable the monitoring of the United States’ moves towards peace and convey Australian thoughts on the acceptable conditions for peace. Motivated by its “forward defence” policy, the possibility that the United States’ bombing pauses during the Christmas and New Year period would lead to hastily conceived peace that could jeopardise this tactical policy was of concern to the Australian government, particularly Foreign Minister Hasluck. This chapter examines and compares the levels of consultation between Australia and the US during the bombing pauses of 1965-66 and 1966-67, with an extended focus on the latter truce. It will be argued that during the 1965-66 bombing pause—with the US requiring both an additional commitment, and public endorsement of the resumption of bombing from the Australians—Hasluck believed the levels of consultation between the two nations were adequate. However, a year later, following Australia’s exclusion from “Marigold” (a clandestine attempt to bring the US and North Vietnam to the negotiating table), and the approaching *Tết* bombing pause, Hasluck, through Ambassador Waller in Washington, strove for greater consultation between the two nations to guard against the US offering conditions for peace that would be detrimental to Australian national interests.<sup>2</sup>

At their most basic level, Australia’s overseas embassies and high commissions seek to “protect and promote Australia’s national interests.”<sup>3</sup> During Holt’s tenure Australia’s two most important overseas missions were Australia House in London, and

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: MacMillan Publishing, 1979), p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> *Tết* is the Vietnamese name given to the Buddhist New Year period celebrated in Vietnam.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Harris, *Review of Australia’s Overseas Representation 1986* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986) p. xiv.

the Australian Embassy in Washington. However, all Australian missions, regardless of size or location, endeavour to execute three important tasks: to represent the diplomats' home nation; to partake in negotiations that eventuate; and to gather intelligence and report on the information collected.<sup>4</sup> On the third role, diplomats will also report on the issues faced by their host nation that affect Australian national interests, whilst providing potential courses of action to manage these issues.<sup>5</sup> However, Gyngell and Wesley concede that it is difficult for Australian representation to greatly influence other administrations as host governments are more sensitive to the concerns of the electorate or their own government as opposed to those of foreign officers and foreign governments.<sup>6</sup> It is these domestic pressures that will "play on the government Australia is trying to influence far more forcefully than any persuasive power Australia can bring to bear."<sup>7</sup>

The Department of External Affairs' early recruits were placed under banners on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum: the "realists" and the "optimists". The realists believed that international affairs were dictated by "power relations" and favoured the practice of alliance diplomacy.<sup>8</sup> Waters noted that many of the Department's recruits who rose to senior positions in the Australian public service in the post-war years were realists; these included Alan Watt, James Plimsoll, Arthur Tange, and of course Hasluck.<sup>9</sup> By promoting those of like mind, the Department developed

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<sup>4</sup> David Vital as cited in Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe, with Garry Woodard (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Gyngell and Allan Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy* (second edition) (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Waters in Beaumont, Waters, Lowe, with Woodard (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats*, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

uniformity in opinion and policy.<sup>10</sup> Like Hasluck, Sir Keith Waller was a realist.<sup>11</sup> Upon leaving Washington, Roy McCartney of the *Age* described Waller as “more pragmatist than ideologue.”<sup>12</sup> Though a less vocal advocate of the realist framework than Hasluck, Waller did believe in the dominant Cold War paradigm and, in particular, the domino theory. After visiting Saigon with the Foreign Minister in 1964, Waller left with the impression that if the North Vietnamese forces overran the South then *Konfrontasi* “would have created a very different situation.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, with the instability in South Vietnam, Waller “felt quite strongly” that the Americans had to “do something to stop the rot.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite possessing ambassadorial experience, having served in Thailand and the Soviet Union, Waller was not Menzies’ first choice to head the Washington mission. Waller recalled that upon his appointment, Menzies said: “I’ll tell you quite frankly that this is a position in which I would prefer to have a Cabinet Minister, but the ones I

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<sup>10</sup> Murphy identified a turning point under Percy Spender’s short tenure as Minister for External Affairs. He attributed the development of a Department of like minds to “Spender’s policy views” and the replacement of the Department’s permanent head, John Burton—an idealist—with Sir Alan Watt. Australia’s conservative Cold War policy that would span the 1950s and 60s—“a Cold War division of the globe, a profound mistrust of Asian nationalism and a reliance on regional defence pacts over United Nations negotiation—were all established” at this time. John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Waters in Beaumont, Waters, Lowe, with Woodard (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats*, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Roy McCartney, “A Craftsman in the Foreign Office”, 29 January 1970, *Age*, p. 7. Waller, a much neglected figure in the many studies of Australia’s involvement in Vietnam, possessed impressive credentials during his career. In his early years in the DEA, he undertook various roles in a variety of overseas missions, including three years in Washington as the Australian Counsellor to the British Ambassador to the US. As Sir Alan Watt recalled, this was an experimental post which was not repeated following Menzies’ decision in 1939 to establish autonomous Australian missions abroad. During the 1940s, Waller spent three years in Chongqing, two years in Rio, approximately a year in Washington, and two years in Manila as Counsel-General and later Charge d’Affaires. He then spent almost two years in London as the External Affairs Officer at Australia House before returning to the DEA. After four years in Canberra, he was appointed to his first ambassadorial post in Bangkok. Following his three years in Thailand, Waller then moved to the Soviet Union, where he served in the same capacity from 1960-62. Returning to Canberra, he was then dispatched to Washington in 1964. After six years in the US, he and Plimsoll traded roles, with Plimsoll heading to Washington, and Waller returning to Canberra to serve as the Secretary of the DEA from 1970-74. Waller also had the obscure honour of having part of Antarctica (Waller Hills) named in his honour. See NAA: A9749, WALLER K, biographical note on J.K. Waller, and Alan Watt, *Australian Diplomat: Memoirs of Sir Alan Watt*, (Cremorne: Angus & Robertson, 1972), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Sir Keith Waller, *A Diplomatic Life: Some Memories* (Nathan: Griffith University, 1990) p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

consider suitable I can't spare and the ones I can spare are not suitable."<sup>15</sup> According to Peter Howson, John Gorton had been selected for the post, but at the last minute Menzies reversed the Cabinet's decision.<sup>16</sup> On this decision, the Treasurer, William McMahon, told Howson – presumably in jest – that this was “because Dame Pattie [Menzies] thought Mrs Waller would do a good job there!”<sup>17</sup> Waller's appointment broke with tradition as he became the first career officer to be appointed to the position of Australian Ambassador to the US—a post previously held by former politicians and one High Court Judge.<sup>18</sup> Once in Washington his first objective was to galvanise his staff. “If you can get the staff of an Embassy working as a team, you can achieve a great deal”, he later commented.<sup>19</sup> He endeavoured to facilitate an environment of transparency by introducing weekly meetings in which he and the members of the embassy would discuss the tasks on which they were working. These meetings also served to sharpen the focus of the messages presented by the embassy staff to their Washington counterparts. Waller believed it essential that embassy personnel “worked out a common strategy, so that everyone spoke with the same voice.”<sup>20</sup> He believed that in Washington, if five Australians relayed the same information, its efficacy was increased tenfold.<sup>21</sup> He again elaborated on this method in his contribution to *Australia in World Affairs*.<sup>22</sup> With the top foreign ministries recording their conversations with foreign diplomats, and in turn, circulating them throughout the embassy, Waller

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics* (Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984), p. 229.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* For the importance of diplomatic partners, see Beaumont in, Beaumont, Waters, Lowe, with Woodard (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats*, pp. 173-81; and Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, pp. 51-2. Indicative of the era in which he inhabited, Waller believed a diplomat's wife's skills were most useful as a host in the diplomatic social circles.

<sup>18</sup> Beaumont in Beaumont, Waters, Lowe, with Woodard (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats*, p. 158.

<sup>19</sup> Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Keith Waller in W.J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980), pp. 384-401.

believed an overseas post could make a “tremendous impact” if communications were made simultaneously.<sup>23</sup>

Though Waller’s managerial style was quite different to Hasluck’s, the two shared a positive working relationship. Adjectives such as “pedantic”, “abrasive” and “rude” have long been associated with Hasluck; however, Waller described him as a “delight to deal with overseas.”<sup>24</sup> He observed Hasluck first-hand in Washington some eight or nine times and found him to be a “very competent performer”; a “thorough professional” who exhibited “tremendous skills” as Foreign Minister.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, it is evident from the cables between the two that Hasluck trusted Waller to fulfil his role as Ambassador—high praise from the Foreign Minister. Waller often found Hasluck in agreement with his assessments and suggested courses of action during the bombing pauses. Hasluck’s biographer, Robert Porter, proposed that Hasluck was more affable with Australian diplomatic personnel posted overseas than those who surrounded him in Canberra. This he attributed to Hasluck placing more value on those who were entrusted with the actual implementation of policy, such as the Australian government’s representatives abroad.<sup>26</sup>

In December 1965, the Johnson administration, in part concerned about its international image, declared a halt to its bombing of North Vietnam. The 37-day pause spanned the Christmas and New Year period of 1965, concluding at the end of January

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>24</sup> Waller in Robert Porter, *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1993), p. 277; and Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont in, Tom Stannage, Kay Saunders and Richard Nile (eds.), *Paul Hasluck in Australian History: Civic Personality and Public Life* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998), p. 150

<sup>25</sup> Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>26</sup> Porter, *Paul Hasluck*, p. 277. However, Hasluck recalled his discontent with many of the diplomats that he worked with as Foreign Minister and later as Governor-General. He wrote that he was, “frequently disappointed at the narrowness of the curiosity, the inability to give precise information and the lack of skill in political analysis among the general run of senior officers.” National Library of Australia (NLA), MS 5274, Box 37: Paul Hasluck, *Papers on Government: 1932-89*, Submission made by Hasluck to the Royal Commission on Australian government administration at a session held in Perth, 24 March 1975, p. 6.

1966. In a practice of good diplomacy, the Johnson administration made a conscious effort to keep Australia, its recent ally on the ground in Vietnam, informed of the administration's "peace offensive", headlined by the bombing pause. However, this was a strategic move on the part of the administration. As we saw in chapter three, at this time Johnson had been pressing the Australians for an increased commitment to the war in Vietnam. Early in January, he wrote to Menzies to provide additional information on the "peace offensive". Through Ambassador Waller, the administration had endeavoured to keep the Australians informed of various aspects of the pause, but now Johnson wanted to give Menzies his "own view of where we stand" and wanted his "counsel on the decisions we may face a little down the road".<sup>27</sup> The letter summarised the efforts towards peace undertaken by Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, and Ambassador-at-Large, Governor W. Averell Harriman, but did not pose any questions to which Menzies could respond.<sup>28</sup> The latter of these US diplomats, Harriman, was currently embarking on a global tour to garner support for the "peace offensive".<sup>29</sup> Johnson also proposed that Harriman, who would be in Japan in the coming days, could stop by Australia before heading back to Washington. A week later, the Menzies government received the Governor, who provided them with further information on the "peace offensive", and predictably, probed the Australians for an increased commitment to the conflict.

Harriman touched down in Canberra on the evening of 9 January. Greeted by Menzies, the two appeared together in a cordial press conference. Menzies declared

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<sup>27</sup> Department of State (RG 59) *Subject Numeric File*, POL 27 VIET S, Telegram 1882, box 2976, letter from Johnson to Clark for Menzies, 4 January 1966.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur Goldberg served as the US Ambassador to the UN from 1965-68. In his letter to Menzies, Johnson noted that Goldberg was seeking the assistance of Pope Paul VI to gather the support of Communist nations. Rusk had been in discussion with the Hungarians with hopes that these talks would filter through to the Soviets. Department of State (RG 59) *Subject Numeric File*, POL 27 VIET S, Telegram 1882, box 2976, letter from Johnson to Clark for Menzies, 4 January 1966.

<sup>29</sup> Harriman met with various heads of government in eleven capital cities throughout Europe and Asia.

Harriman to be “his oldest living American friend.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Harriman said that “there was no head of government in the world whose advice was of greater value than the advice of Sir Robert Menzies.”<sup>31</sup> The truthfulness of this statement, however, is difficult to confirm. The Governor met with the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee to discuss the current situation in Vietnam, with particular focus on the bombing pause. The government strongly indicated its support for the American efforts in Vietnam. One Cabinet member went so far as to say that, from an Australian perspective, the US had “gained stature throughout much of the world as a result of its operations in Vietnam”, and “should not necessarily feel apologetic about its role there.” Those in Cabinet also expressed their concerns that the lull in bombing would be beneficial to opposition forces. The Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee’s report of its meeting with Harriman stated that the Australian Ministers “urged that time was on the side of Peking, and that it was therefore extremely important to break the Viet Cong as quickly as possible.” In the opinion of the Australian Cabinet, the most effective way to achieve this end was to recommence the shelling of North Vietnam.<sup>32</sup>

At the mid-point of the meeting, Harriman provided the Australians with a copy of a report prepared by the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk. Entitled “The Heart of the Matter in Vietnam”, the document provided a chronology of the conflict, a brief outline of the previous endeavours towards peace by the US, as well as a reprint of Rusk’s readily available “Fourteen Points” towards peace, as envisaged by the administration.<sup>33</sup> The report, however, contained no information that could be regarded as enlightening or valuable to the Australians. Rather, as Rusk had indicated in the report itself, much of

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<sup>30</sup> “Envoy arrives from US on Vietnam peace mission”, *Age*, 10 January 1966, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> NAA: A5828/1, Volume 5, Cabinet minute, FADC no. 1473, report of discussions with Governor Harriman, 10 January 1966.

<sup>33</sup> Rusk’s Fourteen Points were published in a variety of American newspapers on 29 December 1965. All Fourteen Points can be found in Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: The Full Story of US Involvement in Vietnam from Roosevelt to Nixon* (London: Granada Publishing, 1970), pp. 293-4.

the information in the document was already on the public record.<sup>34</sup> Also absent in the report was any information regarding Australia's role in any possible negotiations. According to the State Department's Chester L. Cooper, the document had been prepared "in considerable haste" to be used by Harriman during his global tour.<sup>35</sup>

During his visit, Harriman also met privately with Menzies. It was in this setting that Harriman told the Australian Prime Minister that he had "a bunch of hawks in the Cabinet urging escalation" of the bombing of North Vietnam. To this, Menzies responded that most in his government recommended caution and "approved 100 percent present U.S. policies not to take dangerous action in North Vietnam." However, Menzies did urge "maximum pressure" to dismantle and weaken the Viet Cong in the South, "even at the cost of more casualties." He assured Harriman that "the Australian people are prepared for losses" in Vietnam. Menzies' rhetoric was strong throughout the meeting, and he asked Harriman to inform Johnson that Australia was not "walking out on Vietnam." Regarding the halt in bombing, Menzies said that he approved the pause and hoped that it would be "played to get maximum benefit of world opinion, and that it will be continued until after *Tết*, with resumption if possible after some sort of provocation." It is clear from this statement that Menzies saw the truce as a purely strategic tool to be used to gather support for the US, rather than an avenue towards peace. He hoped that the North Vietnamese would break the truce to demonstrate to the global audience that they were the aggressors. In his report to Johnson, Harriman said that Menzies had "very much appreciated the confidential information I had given him

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<sup>34</sup> NAA: A4940, C4305, report prepared by Dean Rusk entitled: "The Heart of the Matter in Vietnam", created on 27 December 1965, presented to the Australian government by Harriman on 10 January 1966.

<sup>35</sup> Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 293. Cooper served in many different capacities for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), State Department, and National Security Council during his career. He was the Assistant Deputy Director at the CIA from 1947-62. In 1956 he was stationed at the Egyptian Embassy as hostilities erupted between the British and Egyptians. During the Cuban Missile Crisis he was dispatched to the UK to present photographic evidence of Soviet missile installations to Prime Minister Macmillan. Joe Holley, "Diplomatic Insider Chester L. Cooper", *Washington Post*, 3 November 2005.

personally.” The Prime Minister saw the visit as “timely, useful and handled just right.”<sup>36</sup> Harriman’s stop-over in Australia presented an image of unity between the nations, in both the fields of combat and diplomacy.

Foreign Minister Hasluck harboured concerns that the “peace offensive” could jeopardise the government’s key strategic aim of securing a US military presence on the Asian mainland. In a message to the Permanent Head of the DEA, James Plimsoll, Hasluck wrote that Waller and Sir Patrick Shaw, the Australian Ambassador to the UN, should be thanked for their efforts thus far in keeping the DEA informed of developments on the “peace offensive” from the American end. However, the two men needed to be reminded of the “critical importance at this stage of keeping us closely informed of all trends in American thinking.”<sup>37</sup> It was fundamental that the Johnson administration would come to view the “surrounding difficulties” of the conflict—its international image and increasing defence expenditure—as more pressing than the “stark central fact” that Vietnam was a battleground in the larger war against aggressive Chinese communism.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, wrote Hasluck, the Australian government needed to be “concerned at any sign that they [the US] are starting to feel that the only prospects are either peace at once, or a long and profitless war”.<sup>39</sup> A short war that resulted in the US and its allies acquiescing to the demands of the North Vietnamese, or at the very least allowing the National Liberation Front (NLF) to remain active in the region, would have been viewed in Canberra as a victory for regional communism. This outcome would have been unthinkable to the Foreign Minister, who saw regional

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<sup>36</sup> Telegram from Harriman to Johnson and Rusk, 12 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from Waller to Plimsoll, 17 January 1966.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the DEA to Waller, and repeated to Shaw at the Australian Mission to the UN (NYC), 21 January 1966.

communism as the foremost threat to Australian security.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, a short war would hinder the development of a larger US military presence on the Asian mainland. On the other hand, a long, drawn-out war had the potential to embroil Australia in something larger than initially envisaged. The Australian diplomatic corps had to approach this theme tactfully. Thus, Hasluck stressed that Waller needed to ensure that the Americans did not see Australia as “motivated not so much by an assessment of the overall situation, as by a policy to keep the US physical presence on mainland South East Asia”.<sup>41</sup> In essence, this was an accurate summation.

Despite his apprehension regarding the “peace offensive”, during the 1965-66 bombing pause, Hasluck was satisfied with the channels of communication between Australia and the US. Before the bombing pause commenced, Waller told Hasluck that it was “opportune that we should let the Americans know whether we envisage an active or a passive role should a conference eventuate.”<sup>42</sup> Approximately two weeks later, Hasluck wrote that he did not “want to make over[ly] much of [the] question of consultation, but simply to keep it in [the] Americans’ minds.”<sup>43</sup> As the bombing pause continued, Hasluck’s instructions remained unchanged. He asked Waller to ensure that his staff did not “overdo” their “high-level representation in Washington.”<sup>44</sup> Rather, he instructed the Ambassador to direct the embassy’s diplomatic efforts towards the “routine but important activity of exploration and discussion of the issues involved in

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<sup>40</sup> For chapters that focus on Hasluck’s tenure as the Minister for External Affairs and his belief that Chinese communism was the greatest threat to Australian security, see Beaumont, Waters, Lowe, with Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats*, pp.138-42; Albinski in Stannage, Saunders and Nile (eds.), *Paul Hasluck in Australian Society*, pp. 170-81; and Porter, *Paul Hasluck*, pp. 226-264. For an examination of Hasluck’s views on Soviet communism as opposed to Chinese communism, see Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont, “Paul Hasluck as Minister for External Affairs: Towards Reappraisal”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 52 (1), 1998: 63-75.

<sup>41</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the DEA to Waller and Shaw, 21 January 1966.

<sup>42</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 20 December 1965.

<sup>43</sup> NAA: A1209, 1965/6299 Part 1, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 4 January 1966.

<sup>44</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the DEA to Waller and Shaw, 21 January 1966.

the US position on negotiations”, whilst continuing to “interject cautionary comment.”<sup>45</sup> These instructions sum up very well the Foreign Minister’s trepidation regarding the “peace offensive” and its potential consequence on Australian national interests. The exploration of American thinking was to be carried out by the likes of the Australian Embassy’s Charge d’Affaires, Robert W. Furlonger, whom Hasluck noted had, since mid-November, begun “detailed exchanges” with Leonard S. Unger, a career diplomat who later served as the Embassy’s main liaison, alongside William P. Bundy, during the 1966-67 bombing pause.<sup>46</sup> Hasluck outlined three areas to pursue with the Embassy’s contacts: obtaining an elaboration of Johnson’s statement on a ceasefire; the role of the NLF in possible negotiations; and the structure of elections in South Vietnam.<sup>47</sup> The final of these three points was mentioned in Rusk’s “Fourteen Points”; although, given that the issue had been reduced a single sentence, Hasluck understandably sought further clarification.<sup>48</sup> However, none was forthcoming and the issue remained of great interest to Hasluck during the Christmas and New Year truce twelve months later.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the DEA to Waller and Shaw, 21 January 1966. Furlonger later served as the inaugural Director-General of the Office of National Assessments from 1977-81. Prior to this, he was Director of the Joint Intelligence Organisation. Leonard S. Unger first entered the State Department at the outbreak of WWII. After two decades of service he was appointed to the post of US Ambassador to Laos in 1962. From Vientiane, he returned to Washington as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Simultaneously he served as Chairman of the State Department’s Vietnam Coordinating Committee from 1965 to mid-1967. Unger then spent the next twelve years in Asia, as the Ambassador to Thailand from 1967-73, and Ambassador to the Republic of China from 1974-79. In his memoir-come-political-history, former State Department Foreign Officer, Perry Stieglitz, described Unger as “a career diplomat par excellence.” Stieglitz twice worked under Unger, in Laos in the early 1960s, and again in the early 1970s in Thailand. Perry Stieglitz, *In a Little Kingdom: The Tragedy of Laos, 1960-80* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the DEA to Waller and Shaw, 21 January 1966.

<sup>48</sup> The ninth point read: “We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice.” *The Lost Crusade*, p. 293. During the *Tét* truce in 1967, Rusk elaborated on these points; however, the additional information was, again, vague. Point eight now read: “We do not desire to retain US troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured: We seek no permanent military bases, no permanent establishment of troops, no permanent alliances, no permanent American ‘presence’ of any kind in South Vietnam.” Point nine now read: “We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice: We support the development of broadly based democratic institutions in South Vietnam. We do not seek to exclude any segment of the South Vietnamese people from peaceful participation in their country’s future.” NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, elaboration of Rusk’s Fourteen Points, 9 February 1967.

In his first exchange with Holt, President Johnson informed the newly appointed Prime Minister that the US was days away from resuming its bombing of North Vietnam. The President felt that Australia, as the United States' "major ally and companion in arms" in aiding South Vietnam, was "entitled to know in advance of this decision." Naturally, Johnson expected that this information would be held in the "utmost confidence."<sup>49</sup> Holt had been afforded what appeared to be an exclusive level of consultation by the President in their preliminary exchange. However, a State Department memorandum revealed that the US had concurrently sent a similar circular message to various other nations confirming the scheduled resumption of bombing. The message was sent to "all countries with which we [the US] have had any meaningful exchanges", noted Bundy. This included lesser engaged nations, such as Japan, Pakistan, Poland and Hungary.<sup>50</sup> In his reply to Johnson, Holt wrote that the government would, after the fact, "declare our strong support for your decision." He assured the President that this opinion signified "very much more than a public posture." It represented the "strong belief" held by himself and his government, that the decision to recommence bombing was "the right conclusion."<sup>51</sup> Publicly, Holt called the decision "realistic and necessary" as North Vietnam could not "be permitted to remain a haven immune from military risk", free to mount attacks against Australian soldiers.<sup>52</sup> These comments pleased Bundy, who told Waller that "It was invaluable to have these

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<sup>49</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, message from Ed Clark to Holt, text of letter from President Johnson, 30 January 1966.

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum prepared by William Bundy, 28 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, 1966, Vietnam*, p. 170. For an examination of the efforts of Poland and Hungary during the 1965-66 bombing pause, see James G. Hershberg, "Peace Probes and the Bombing Pause: Hungarian and Polish Diplomacy During the Vietnam War, December 1965-January 1966", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 5 (2), 2003: 32-67.

<sup>51</sup> NAA: A7854, 1, cable from Bunting to Waller, text of letter from Holt to Johnson, 1 February 1966.

<sup>52</sup> NAA: M4295, 21, press statement by Prime Minister Holt on the resumption of bombing of North Vietnam, 1 February 1966.

things said by another government.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Holt’s statement “would be of great use in dealing with Congress.”<sup>54</sup> This was Australia’s role in its alliance with the US: to provide public support for US policies in Vietnam and thereby demonstrate that the US was not alone in Vietnam. Bundy had predicted that Holt would vigorously support the resumption of bombing. Five days before Holt’s reply to Johnson, Bundy had told the President that, in the context of the war as whole, “the Australians are solidly aboard.”<sup>55</sup> The extended cessation of bombing had not brought the opposing forces any closer to the negotiating table; however, in the weeks before the 1966-67 bombing pause, Washington and Hanoi agreed to meet for preliminary discussions to such an outcome.

In Saigon in mid-November 1966, the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, met with the Polish diplomat, Janusz Lewandowski, to discuss the possibility of bringing together the Americans and North Vietnamese at the negotiating table. The peace-feeler, code-named “Marigold”, was the result of six months of diplomatic efforts by the Poles, Americans, and North Vietnamese.<sup>56</sup> Lewandowski, a member of the International Control Commission (ICC), then went to Hanoi where he spent ten days discussing the proposal with North Vietnamese officials.<sup>57</sup> Upon his return to Saigon he again met with Lodge, this time, in secret in the Italian Embassy in Saigon. It was here that Lewandowski informed Lodge that Hanoi was prepared to

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<sup>53</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/10/1/2 Part 2, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 2 February 1966.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum prepared by William Bundy, 28 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, 1966, Vietnam*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>56</sup> “Marigold” was held in great secrecy in Washington. By mid-November only six members of the State Department were on the information distribution list regarding the peace effort. They were: Dean Rusk Nicholas Katzenbach, W. Averell Harriman, Chester L. Cooper, William P. Bundy, and Leonard S. Unger. David Kraslow and Stuart H. Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> The ICC was created to uphold the 1954 Geneva Accords. The ICC comprised of members from Poland, Canada, and India.

begin clandestine exploratory talks with the Americans.<sup>58</sup> Lodge was also presented with a document containing ten points and principles prepared by the North Vietnamese which outlined their terms for peace. It was suggested that representatives of the governments of both the US and North Vietnam meet in Warsaw in early December.<sup>59</sup> The sixth of December was set aside as the date on which the Warsaw-based Ambassadors of North Vietnam and the US would meet; however, given the speed of events, coupled with errors in communication, no contact was made.<sup>60</sup>

The peace-feeler remained precariously poised as a result of American military indiscretions in the days prior to the scheduled meeting. On the second and fourth of December, airstrikes were carried out on targets in close proximity to Hanoi. The Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki, relayed Hanoi's disappointment at these events to Washington's envoy in Warsaw, John Gronouski. Summarising the events of the first week of December, Rapacki said: "the US did a lot of harm in December and it would be good if no more harm is done in future."<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, Rapacki's comments came on the day that the US embarked on a 48-hour bombing campaign of the North. Three days later, Ambassador Gronouski responded to claims from the North Vietnamese that the 13-14 December strikes signified an escalation in the war. He argued that the raids were part of "the same pattern as before, with no significant changes in intensity,

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<sup>58</sup> John M. Hightower, "Bombers held from Hanoi 4 months, but peace try ignored", *Gadsden Times*, 3 May 1967, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Telegram from the US Ambassador to Poland, John Gronouski, to the Department of State, 13 December 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 934.

<sup>60</sup> At this time, John Gronouski was the US Ambassador to Poland, with Do Phat Quang, the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Poland. In chapters six and seven of *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam*, James Hershberg detailed the miscommunication surrounding the setting of a date on which the two ambassadors would meet. On 6 December, for hours, Do Phat Quang waited in his embassy for Ambassador Gronouski to make contact with him, whilst Gronouski waited for Quang in his embassy. See Hershberg, *Marigold*, pp. 292-6.

<sup>61</sup> Telegram from the US Ambassador to Poland, John Gronouski, to the Department of State, 13 December 1966. *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 935.

proximity to Hanoi or type of targets.”<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the strikes had occurred at this time due to unforeseen “variations”.<sup>63</sup> The scheduled strikes, he explained, had been delayed due to unsuitable “weather conditions and other technical factors”.<sup>64</sup> The high level secrecy that the administration had attached to “Marigold” had also meant that those who authorised the strikes were unaware of the peace-feeler.<sup>65</sup>

On Christmas Eve 1966, the US government again halted its bombing of North Vietnam. This was “a very major step”, stated Ambassador Gronouski, as the Americans did not seek reciprocal action from Hanoi.<sup>66</sup> However, the bombing of Hanoi in the first two weeks of December was, for all intents and purposes, Marigold’s death knell. On 30 December, Johnson’s National Security Advisor, Walt Rostow, forwarded a telegram from the American Embassy in Warsaw that suggested as much.<sup>67</sup> Rostow’s short note accompanying the document simply read: “We are at the end of a phase, if not at the end of the line with ‘Marigold’. We shall now have to pause and consider [our] next steps.”<sup>68</sup> The clandestine peace-feeler had failed, but only those involved

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 954. The strategy, “Rolling Thunder 52”, called for a series of airstrikes directed at eight major power plants with the JCS expecting that such ventures would diminish military and civilian support for the North Vietnamese. David Milne, *America’s Rasputin: Walt Rostow and the Vietnam War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), p. 184.)

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 953. Additionally, as Milne wrote, the plan had also been held back due to the mid-term losses suffered by the Democrats as well as the sudden interest in peace talks exhibited by the North Vietnamese in the last months of 1966. David Milne, *America’s Rasputin: Walt Rostow and the Vietnam War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), p. 184.

<sup>65</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, (Melbourne: MacMillan Publishing, 1979), p. 220.

<sup>66</sup> Telegram from Gronouski, forwarded by Rostow to Johnson (sent to his Texas ranch), 30 December 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 984.

<sup>67</sup> Rostow had been promoted to the role of National Security Advisor at the beginning of April 1966. It was in this role that he unfairly became the “whipping boy” of the administration’s anti-war opponents, believed Patrick Anderson. As Anderson noted, the decisions to escalate the war, in terms of both personnel and bombs, had been made before Rostow entered the position. David Milne, on the other hand, wrote that following Rostow’s appointment, the bombing of North Vietnam increased substantially. Though this was not solely attributable to Rostow, Milne noted, it was he who “provided both a compelling rationale for escalating the Vietnam War and the most influential blueprint for ‘victory’.” For both author’s arguments, see Patrick Anderson, *The President’s Men: White House Assistants of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 382-83; and David Milne, *America’s Rasputin*, pp. 9-12.

<sup>68</sup> Telegram from Gronouski, forwarded by Rostow to Johnson (Texas ranch), 30 December 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966*, p. 983. Despite the impartial wording of his message to Johnson,

knew of its existence. However, following a series of leaks by the Poles within the UN headquarters in New York, Robert H. Estabrook of the *Washington Post* broke the story in two articles, the first of which appeared on 2 February 1967.<sup>69</sup>

Following the examination of numerous sources from both Australian and American archives, it appears as though the Australian government learnt of “Marigold” *after* it emerged in the American press, *not* before, as had been previously stated by both Renouf and Cooper.<sup>70</sup> Cooper wrote that the Australian government had been informed of “Marigold” in early January 1967. He recalled that the Australian Charge d’Affaires, Furlonger, whom Cooper described as “normally a placid and understanding man”, burst “angrily” into the State Department demanding to be briefed on the apparent peace talks about which he heard from the Canadian Ambassador to the UN, George Ignatieff.<sup>71</sup> According to Cooper, Furlonger was “given a complete briefing on the talks, the reasons for the secrecy, and the rationale for the bombing.”<sup>72</sup> However, it appears that Cooper may have inadvertently recalled the outburst and subsequent meeting as having taken place with Furlonger, when it appears more likely that it, in fact, took place with the Canadian Ambassador to the US, Charles Ritchie. James Hershberg has written of a meeting between Rusk and Ritchie that seems identical to the supposed meeting between Furlonger and the members of the State Department described in Cooper’s *The Lost Crusade*. According to Hershberg, on 2 January 1967, a “contentious conversation” took place between Rusk and the Canadian Ambassador to

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Milne wrote that Rostow has called the demise of “Marigold” “not something to mourn.” Rostow personally felt that Hanoi would not make the required concessions to bring about a peaceful solution to the war. Furthermore, he believed that serious negotiations could not arise through the use of an intermediary, as had occurred during “Marigold”. See Milne, *America’s Rasputin*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>69</sup> For a syndicated version of the article, see Robert H. Estabrook, “Hanoi had agreed to peace talks”, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 4 February 1967, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Renouf wrote: “Australia knew nothing of Johnson’s secret diplomacy, even after the event, except once when an Australian diplomat complained without being told to do so”, which seems to suggest that the story had yet to reach the press. Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: MacMillan Publishing, 1979) p. 279. Also see Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 341.

<sup>71</sup> See Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 341; and Hershberg, *Marigold*, p. 558.

<sup>72</sup> Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 341.

the US, Charles Ritchie. The topic of conversation was “Marigold”.<sup>73</sup> Ritchie told Rusk that the Canadian government had been made aware of the peace-feeler when Ottawa’s Ambassador to the UN, George Ignatieff, met with the UN Secretary-General, U Thant. As Hershberg noted, it was possible that Cooper had confused Ritchie with Furlonger as the classified record, observed and referred to by Hershberg, stated that Australia was informed of “Marigold” on 4 February.<sup>74</sup> The hypothesis that Australia was not made aware of “Marigold” until February 1967 is also supported by evidence as to when Waller and others were first briefed on the peace-feeler.

On 6 February, the DEA’s Assistant Secretary of the South-East Asia branch and former Ambassador to Saigon, H.D. Anderson, met with Doyle V. Martin of the US Embassy, Canberra, during which Martin asked if the Australians were aware of Estabrook’s article in the *Washington Post*. Answering in the affirmative, Anderson was told that the Australian government would “shortly be receiving more detailed background from Washington.”<sup>75</sup> On 12 February, Bundy presented Waller with a report on the peace-feeler. However, as Waller noted to Hasluck, the report was vague.<sup>76</sup> Rusk had earlier authorised Bundy to inform Australia and NZ of the peace-feeler on 14 January 1967, expecting that the British, who evidently knew of the peace-feeler, would discuss “Marigold” with the governments of Australia and NZ.<sup>77</sup> Bundy instructed Washington’s Canberra and Wellington envoys to do so; however, this was

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<sup>73</sup> James Hershberg with L.W. Gluchowski, “Who Murdered ‘Marigold’? New Evidence on the Mysterious Failure of Poland’s Secret Initiative to Start US-North Vietnamese Peace Talks, 1966”, Working Paper 27, Princeton University, Cold War International History Project, April 2000, p. 77.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77 (n); and Hershberg, *Marigold*, p. 558. Though Hershberg proposed what seems to be the likely scenario in a working paper on the peace-feeler, he did not mention this in his published study of “Marigold” twelve years later. Whether he now believed Cooper’s recollection to be correct and felt no need to restate this, or this was simply an oversight is unclear.

<sup>75</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, DEA record of conversation between Mr H.D. Anderson and Mr Doyle V. Martin, Counsellor, US Embassy, 6 February 1967.

<sup>76</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>77</sup> Hershberg, *Marigold*, p. 558.

not done until 4 February, two days after the publication of Estabrook's first article.<sup>78</sup> Further evidence suggesting that Australia did not know of "Marigold" until the first week of February was that two months after the fact, Unger met with members of the Australian Embassy for what Waller noted was their first meeting focussed on "Marigold" on 20 February 1967.<sup>79</sup> At the meeting, Unger outlined the ten points that Lewandowski had earlier presented to Hanoi. The exchange also confirmed Hasluck's suspicion that Hanoi's sudden interest in negotiations had "caught the Americans somewhat unprepared and that they are now belatedly endeavouring to clarify their own position on the issues involved."<sup>80</sup> Developing an understanding of the concessions that the US would be willing to make to secure a settlement to the war proved both elusive and troublesome for the Australians. Exacerbating this was Waller's conviction that the Americans did not yet have a firm position since the State Department had not yet "thought through" just how a "ceasefire and a political settlement are to be wedded with each other", as they had been caught off-guard by Hanoi's unexpected interest in talks in December 1966.<sup>81</sup>

Rusk's expectation that the British would discuss "Marigold" with the Australians provides an insight into how the administration viewed Australia on the larger stage of world players. It highlights a wider tendency by some in the administration to homogenise Australia and its two traditional allies, Britain and NZ. In an examination of the NZ-American alliance under Holyoake and Johnson, Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, noted the American propensity to speak of Australia and NZ as if they were one entity.<sup>82</sup> Even Lyndon Johnson had referred to the nations as if they were

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 20 February 1967.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, "Dead Beef and Live Soldiers: Lyndon Johnson, Keith Holyoake, and US-New Zealand Relations in the 1960s", *Journal of Agricultural History*, Vol. 78 (1), 2004: 50-77.

extensions of one another. In 1964, during a meeting with the NZ Minister for Agriculture, Brian Talboys, Johnson recited the line that he used often during his visit to Australia, that no place in the world resembled his beloved Texas more than Australia, with “its people, its economic structure, its individuality, and its style of life.”<sup>83</sup> This is a bemusing comment given that he spent time in both nations during WWII, and what should have been an unmistakable fact that the two are separate sovereign nations.

Though the Australian government did not learn of the Polish initiative until February, in Saigon in early December there had been speculation that Poland would be acting as a facilitator of the Christmas and New Year truce. M.A. Rahman, the Indian delegate to the ICC, had told members of Australia’s Embassy that the Poles were “negotiating” the ceasefire; however, the Embassy dismissed this comment as they “had absolutely no, repeat, no indication that would confirm what seemed a far-fetched idea.”<sup>84</sup> Members of the South Vietnamese government had also told the Australians that the US Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, had met with Lewandowski at the Italian Embassy, suggesting that Giovanni D’Orlandi, the Italian Ambassador, was acting as an intermediary between Lewandowski and Lodge. However, when questioned about this, the Poles were “phlegmatic and non-committal”, noted Moore of Australia’s Saigon Embassy; although as we saw before, this gathering did indeed take place. Philip Habib, the political counsellor assisting Lodge in Saigon, “expressed surprise” when this was raised with him, describing Rahman as a “conniver.” However, Moore added: “Whether we should take this American denial at face value is perhaps also open to question.”<sup>85</sup> On 14 December, the second day of the ultimately telling bombing campaign, Moore cabled the DEA regarding an emergency meeting of the ICC, held at the behest of the

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>84</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 18, cable from Moore of the Australian Embassy, Saigon, to the DEA, sent 5 December 1966 (received, as stamped: 14 December 1966).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Polish delegation during which the Polish representatives took up a markedly different approach towards the Americans.

The meeting had been called to discuss the bombing of Hanoi during the first week of December. During the assembly, with “Marigold” teetering, the Poles expressed their displeasure with the actions of the Americans. The Australian Embassy noted that the Polish Commissioner’s “decision to raise one side of a contentious issue in this way appeared to be a change in policy” from his statements made at recent meetings in which he “urged moderation on the part of all of us.” Seeking advice from the DEA on the matter, the embassy proposed that Australia’s representatives could stand behind the US by stating that the Americans were not signatories to the 1954 Geneva Accords, thus making this a question of principle, not legality.<sup>86</sup> The Saigon Embassy had recognised that something was amiss, but it would have been difficult to draw a definitive conclusion as to why the Poles were so evidently frustrated with the Americans’ actions.

It appears as if one’s opinion of the lack of consultation between Australia and the US during “Marigold” differed depending on the government with which one was aligned. Chester Cooper was buoyed by the administration’s ability to restrict the knowledge of “Marigold” to a select few. He wrote that what, if anything, “Marigold” had demonstrated was that “officials in both Washington and Warsaw could maintain secrecy if they tried hard enough.” Neither America’s allies in Vietnam nor the South Vietnamese government had been informed of the discussions between the Poles, Americans and the North Vietnamese.<sup>87</sup> Though American actions brought about the

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<sup>86</sup> NAA: A1838, 3014/9/4/PART 28, telegram from Moore of the Australian Embassy, Saigon to the DEA and repeated to the Australian High Commission, New Delhi, 14 December 1966.

<sup>87</sup> Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 340.

end of the peace-feeler, at least the peace-feeler was not compromised by leaks.<sup>88</sup> It was not until “Marigold” had well and truly wilted that the Poles leaked the story.<sup>89</sup> Renouf, on the other hand, viewed American secrecy in a critical light. He felt that under Johnson, Australia had been “left very much in the dark”, citing “Marigold” as an example of this.<sup>90</sup> He presented a cynical view of this and other peace efforts under Johnson, arguing that the secrecy Johnson demanded meant the US “was not really serious about negotiations.”<sup>91</sup> However, he was also critical of the Australian government’s approach to managing its diplomatic relationship with the US. Renouf argued that Australia’s unyielding support for the US, and the “selfish pursuit” of “forward defence” had damaged the levels of consultation between the two nations by as early as 1965.<sup>92</sup> “Australia, by subservience”, he continued, “had sacrificed the right to be informed”.<sup>93</sup>

As the Australian government had no prior knowledge of “Marigold”, Hasluck believed the best way to manage any unwanted attention from the press was to deflect questioning on the grounds of the importance of maintaining secrecy during exploratory discussions. In a message to Plimsoll, he wrote that “we should forestall them [the press] as far as possible and the best way to do this is an immediate, brief statement in Canberra in my name.” The opening lines of that statement read: “Questioned on recent reports and speculation about peace feelers in respect of Vietnam”, Minister Hasluck “said that the Australian ambassadors in relevant world capitals had kept him informed

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<sup>88</sup> Cooper was looking for positives in an otherwise dire turn of events. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that Cooper’s recollection was published in 1970, as the war continued.

<sup>89</sup> Conjecture surrounding “Marigold” spread throughout the UN Headquarters after the Poles informed U Thant of the peace-feeler. In late January, Denmark’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Hans Sølvehøj, told Ambassador Goldberg that the Poles had informed him of “Marigold”. Hershberg, *Marigold*, p. 555.

<sup>90</sup> Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 266. Renouf noted that the Americans actively sought Australian counsel after the commencement of the *Tét* Offensive in 1968. The *Tét* Offensive had produced “a strange and welcome reaction in US-Australian relations”, he wrote. It was on 4 March that the “US asked for better consultations with Australia, especially about the future.”

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

of various possibilities as they emerged.” It is true that cables arrived regularly from Australia’s overseas missions regarding efforts towards peace; however, none of the documentation from Saigon, Washington, or any other mission, suggested prior knowledge of “Marigold”.<sup>94</sup> The statement continued: “He [Hasluck] intended to respect strictly the confidence reposed in Australia in giving this information”, since “for any soundings to have a chance of success, the less said the better.” Hasluck instructed Plimsoll that he could inform Waller, and Holt (who was in NZ at the time) of the statement, presumably out of courtesy and formality, as he believed there was no need to wait for their response before releasing the statement. The message to Holt explained that the statement was being used to “hold the position” until the Prime Minister “had a chance on his return to Australia to see information received during his absence.” Hasluck also authorised that the acting Prime Minister, John McEwen, could be informed of the Minister’s actions regarding the matter.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, Plimsoll forwarded the message to Holt, McEwen, Waller, and Ambassador Border in Saigon.<sup>96</sup>

The failed peace-feeler was fleetingly mentioned in the 7 February editions of the *Age* and *Canberra Times*, but the articles did not question whether the Australian government had any role in, or knowledge of, the peace-feeler.<sup>97</sup> As the story of “Marigold” emerged there were other, more visible, active efforts towards peace. During the *Tét* pause, Harold Wilson and the Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin,

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<sup>94</sup> During the bombing pause, cables flowed from Australia’s missions in Washington, Saigon, London, Moscow, Paris, Belgrade, Phnom Penh, Tokyo, Manila, New Delhi and elsewhere. Often these cables contained conjecture on various publicised soundings towards peace or verbatim copies of pertinent press articles from the host nations.

<sup>95</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, teletype message from Hasluck to Plimsoll, 6 February 1967. The document was erroneously dated 26 February 1967. Plimsoll’s reply to Hasluck’s cable was dated with the correct date, 6 February 1967, and refers to Holt being in NZ at the time.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* L.H. Border replaced H.D. Anderson as the Australian Ambassador to South Vietnam on 7 July 1966.

<sup>97</sup> See Roy McCartney, “N. Vietnam ‘not interested in peace talks’”, *Age*, 7 February 1967; and “Hopes rise over Vietnam”, *Canberra Times*, 7 February 1967, p. 2.

met in Moscow to discuss and develop a conceivable formula to end the war.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, days earlier, conjecture surrounded Robert Kennedy's visit to Europe, which included a meeting with the French diplomat, Etienne Manac'h, in Paris.<sup>99</sup> In its 10 February editorial, the *Age* paraphrased Hasluck's statement, coupled it with remarks made by Walt Rostow, and concluded that there was, indeed, a dialogue between the US and North Vietnam. Hasluck's statement had served its purpose. The paper described it as a "guarded" statement, and did not question whether Canberra had been kept abreast of developments.<sup>100</sup>

Publicly, the Australian government advocated a political settlement in Vietnam. The government's official posture supported the process for peace as outlined in the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Manila Conference in October 1966. At the summit, the leaders of the seven nations declared that they were "prepared to pursue any avenue which could lead to a secure and just peace, whether through discussion and negotiation, or through reciprocal actions by both sides to reduce the violence."<sup>101</sup> The document also stated that if the North Vietnamese ceased hostilities with the South, and retreated to its territory, allied forces would be removed within six months.<sup>102</sup> When asked about the avenues towards peace, Holt responded similarly to Hasluck, directing reporters to comments made by himself and the Foreign Minister in

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<sup>98</sup> For more on the Wilson-Kosygin talks, see Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 253-55.

<sup>99</sup> On 2 March 1967, Robert Kennedy addressed the US Senate and called for a peaceful solution, mediated by the UN, which would result in the formation of a coalition government. Kennedy said: "Under the direction of the United Nations and with an international presence gradually replacing American forces, we should move towards a final settlement which allows all the major political elements in South Vietnam to participate in the choice of leadership and shape their future direction as a people." NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, paper on possible Parliamentary question on Senator Kennedy's views on a settlement, prepared by Plimsoll for Hasluck, undated.

<sup>100</sup> "Approach to peace", *Age*, 10 February 1967, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, draft paper on Vietnam negotiations, undated.

<sup>102</sup> Paragraph 29 of the Manila Summit Conference Joint Communiqué, drafted and signed by all participating leaders, 25 October 1966. Transcribed by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27958>, accessed 16 March 2013.

Parliament, and standing by the pathway to peace as outlined in Manila.<sup>103</sup> Those on the other side of the Australian Parliament questioned the integrity of the government's stance on the issue. The outspoken critic of the war, Dr Jim Cairns, asked whether Hasluck truly believed that there must be a political solution in Vietnam. Predictably, Hasluck responded that he believed a negotiated solution would be the best possible outcome to end the conflict. He stated that he and the government believed that "the eventual outcome must be a political settlement ... that gives some prospect of being an enduring settlement and should be a just settlement."<sup>104</sup> In an address to the Parliament on 28 February 1967, the newly appointed Opposition Leader, Gough Whitlam, argued that the Australian government had taken a hard-line approach to the conflict and strongly advocated the sustained bombing of North Vietnam. Speaking on the two pauses that had occurred during Holt's tenure, Whitlam declared that whenever there is a lull in the bombing, the "Australian government refuses to welcome the suspension." But "as soon as the bombing is resumed the Australian government is the first to endorse the resumption."<sup>105</sup>

The complete absence of consultation between Australia and the US during "Marigold", combined with the approaching *Tét* bombing pause, prompted Hasluck to call for Australia's Washington Embassy to be more informed of American thinking regarding a negotiated solution. In doing so, he sought to develop a greater understanding of the possible concessions the Americans would be willing to make to secure a peaceful solution in Vietnam. Hasluck, through his representatives in Washington, pressed for greater transparency between the two nations, not to assist the

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<sup>103</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the DEA, Canberra, to the Australian Embassy, Washington, 22 March 1967.

<sup>104</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, cable from DEA, Canberra, to the Australian High Commission, London, Australian Embassies in Saigon and Washington, and the Australian Mission to the UN, New York, 7 March 1967. For the full text of the question and Hasluck's subsequent response, see Paul Hasluck, *Hansard*, Senate, 7 March 1967, p. 378.

<sup>105</sup> Gough Whitlam, *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 28 February 1967, p. 205.

Americans in their efforts towards peace, but to ensure that Australian national interests were not placed at risk during the process. He feared that the US might hold out “concessions of substance” during the exploratory phase to which it would be subsequently bound to uphold.<sup>106</sup> The subjects of greatest significance to Hasluck were: the administration’s thinking on detailed arrangements for a cease-fire; the number of current or former NLF members that the administration would allow to partake in a post-war South Vietnamese government; and the prospects of the NLF being permitted to undertake political activity in a post-war South Vietnam.<sup>107</sup> It is evident from these points that the Foreign Minister’s main concern was that a post-war Vietnamese government would include communist representation—an issue that had remained unanswered since the 1965-66 bombing pause.<sup>108</sup> On the first day of the pause, Waller left a meeting with Harriman under the impression that the Governor was open to the idea of including possibly two members of the NLF in a coalition government.<sup>109</sup> Twelve days later, Unger also added that it “might be possible ... to agree that a new party (not the NLF as such) might be recognised and given token cabinet positions pending elections.”<sup>110</sup> While it appeared the administration would be willing to allow these token positions, Waller advised that Hasluck should not be “unduly concerned about the possibility of American acceptance of a coalition government on terms dangerous to our interests.”<sup>111</sup>

During the 1966-67 bombing pause there was to be no lengthy ceasefire as had been the case the year before, with the truce limited to only four days during the traditional Western festive season and four days for *Tết* celebration from 8-12

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<sup>106</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 21 February 1967.

<sup>107</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable, Hasluck to Waller, 22 February 1967.

<sup>108</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 1 February 1967.

<sup>109</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, cable from Waller to the Hasluck, 8 February 1967.

<sup>110</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 20 February 1967.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

February.<sup>112</sup> The shortened pause demonstrated the administration's belief that the NLF would capitalise on an extended pause, leading it to make tactical gains. The North Vietnamese had unsuccessfully proposed a week-long pause over *Tết*, citing religious and traditional reasons. The JCS, however, believed that this was to "complete a major re-supply operation without interference."<sup>113</sup> Johnson felt that the North Vietnamese had taken advantage of the 37-day hiatus and he did not "want to be caught again."<sup>114</sup> Conversely, Waller noted that there were "persistent" press reports that McNamara and others in the Pentagon were not "averse to a cessation of bombing."<sup>115</sup> On the day of the agreed end of the *Tết* pause, Waller noted that although "a few senior people" in the administration—presumably McNamara and McNaughton—did not share the "firmness" of Johnson and Rusk, the "danger of a face-saving American sell-out" in Vietnam had "greatly diminished."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> The four days were Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

<sup>113</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 1 February 1967.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* In the lead-up to the 1965-66 bombing pause, Johnson expected that a lengthy halt in bombing would benefit the North Vietnamese. In a meeting with his most trusted advisers, Johnson said that the military had told him that a pause would undo the efforts of the allied forces thus far. McNamara responded: "That's baloney—and I can prove it." To which, Johnson countered: "I don't think so. I disagree. I think it contains serious military risks. It is inaccurate to say suspension of bombing carries no military risk." Additionally, in discussion with Australia's Embassy staff in Paris, Harriman said that he believed the Americans had been "duped" during the two previous bombing pauses, which allowed the North Vietnamese to take military advantage of the pause. See notes of a meeting between President Johnson, Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, Clifford, Ball, Alex Johnson, Abe Fortas and Jack Valenti, 18 December 1965, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, p. 658; and NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 18, cable from Walker of the Australian Embassy, Paris, to the DEA, 7 December 1966.

<sup>115</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 1 February 1967.

<sup>116</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967. John T. McNaughton was the US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and one of McNamara's closest advisers. Resigning from this post in July 1967, McNaughton was poised to become the US Secretary of Navy, but died in a plane crash before being sworn in by the Senate. His place among the "hawks" and "doves" in the administration is difficult to define. McNaughton strongly supported US military intervention in Vietnam, only to later continually warn McNamara that the war was destined to fail. In March 1967, Rear-Admiral Crabb noted that McNaughton was "one of the most outspoken 'doves' in the Pentagon." Crabb had been made aware of this by Vice-Admiral Mustin of the JCS. NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Crabb to Hicks, 3 March 1967. For more on McNamara's dissatisfaction with the war, as witnessed by McNaughton, see Benjamin T. Harrison and Christopher L. Mosher, "The Secret Diary of McNamara's Dove: The Long-Lost Story of John T. McNaughton's Opposition to the Vietnam War", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 35 (3), 2011: 505-34.

The day before the publication of Estabrook's first article that publicised "Marigold", Waller assessed the administration's current attitudes towards peace. He wrote that in light of the apparent division in the administration, he could not categorically rule out the possibility that a "suspension of bombing would in fact be traded for private talks with Hanoi"; however, he did not expect this course of action to be adopted.<sup>117</sup> Somewhat optimistically, Waller suggested that the Australians could sway American thinking on the matter. The disharmony within the administration meant that "the outcome of the debate could be closely balanced and it may be that if we have any strong views on the subject we could influence the result", he wrote. Though he recognised that Australia's influence was diminished as it was not involved in air operations over North Vietnam, preliminary talks could pave the way towards the subsequent settlement of the "Vietnamese question". Therefore, it was crucial that Australian thoughts were presented to the Americans and the possibility of trading the bombing pause for preliminary discussions was countered.<sup>118</sup> Hasluck's reply directed Waller to not "convey any firm Australian view to the State Department at present" as there could be "dangers in going on record with gratuitous advice" as the bombing pause was in place.<sup>119</sup> However, he outlined four points for the Ambassador to present if approached for an Australian opinion on the matter. The points were predictably pessimistic and implied that the North Vietnamese could not be trusted. Hasluck noted that there was no "dependable assurance" that an unconditional end to bombing lead to talks. Additionally, if any such talks failed—through North Vietnamese stubbornness or

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<sup>117</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 1 February 1967.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 9 February 1967.

stonewalling—the subsequent resumption of bombing could be presented by Hanoi as an attempt by the Americans to secure concessions by force.<sup>120</sup>

On the final day of the *Tết* pause, Waller outlined to Hasluck the significant discrepancies in American thinking that the Embassy had yet to clarify regarding the Polish initiative and the “Vietnamese question”.<sup>121</sup> First, Bundy’s report on “Marigold”, presented after the publication of Estabrook’s articles, did not explain how the future electoral processes in Vietnam had been presented to Hanoi, nor did it detail any differences in the Polish and American interpretations on US withdrawal as offered to the North Vietnamese.<sup>122</sup> Second, the NZ Embassy had told the Australians that Bundy had suggested that it was possible that the US government would stop its bombing campaign, and not reinforce its troop levels, if the North Vietnamese ceased its infiltration of the South.<sup>123</sup> Third, contradictory evidence circulated between the Australian Embassy’s contacts over whether the administration would be willing to discuss its conditions for peace with the North Vietnamese. According to Waller, the State Department had stated firmly that it would not agree to an unconditional ceasefire, but the Embassy had been informed that the Americans “would be prepared to talk about conditions for a ceasefire” with the enemy.<sup>124</sup> The word “conditions” was heavily underlined in a DEA copy of the cable, presumably because the Department still did not know what these conditions were or might be. As Waller noted, and his cable supported, the Australian government had not yet gained “any clear view” from the Americans as

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Waller had gone in to such great detail as he felt it important that Canberra should understand that there could be “a problem of communication and consultation over the coming months.” But as to why he believed this to be the case he did not say. NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>122</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original. Two versions of this document were sighted, with one containing a type-written underline of the word, and the other containing a heavy underline in pen.

to what these conditions would entail.<sup>125</sup> A departmental report on the matter further stated that the “objectives and attitudes of the US towards a negotiated settlement are less clear cut than those of North Vietnam.”<sup>126</sup> Even harder to determine was the likely negotiating position the Americans would adopt, or its objectives in a final settlement.<sup>127</sup> Finally, the paper noted that the administration’s preferred outcome was observable, but the minimum concessions the administration would make were “far more difficult to speculate.”<sup>128</sup>

Unlike the Americans, Hasluck had a clear formula for an armistice. The Foreign Minister believed that an acceptable ceasefire, adhered to during preliminary discussions, could only occur in three successive steps: a suspension of activity, de-escalation, and finally, an end to hostilities. In addition, both sides needed to agree to the cease-fire, as it did not serve as a “mere lull in shooting while the ammunition boxes are being replenished.” He envisaged that such formal agreement would, in turn, lead to further discussions which, hopefully, would not “prevent our achieving the kind of settlement which would be acceptable.”<sup>129</sup> As the *Tết* bombing pause drew to a close on 12 February, the administration announced a last-minute decision to extend the pause until dawn on 14 February. The truce had passed without the renewal of earlier peace efforts; however, Hasluck’s continued search for enlightenment from the Americans continued.

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 19, DEA draft report entitled: “Problems of Negotiations and Peaceful Settlement”, from H.D. Anderson to Jockel, 20 March 1967. The 57-page report was marked as a draft document; however, the document was in its final stages, as Anderson’s note to Jockel read: “Hasluck’s report on ‘Problems of Negotiations and Peaceful Settlement’. I have got to draft a final section of conclusions to draw it together, but before doing so would appreciate any comments you or SEA (Southeast Asian) Branch may have.”

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 22 February 1967.

Hasluck's desire to be fully informed of the administration's policy regarding a political settlement was born out of a fear that the US would act in haste and jeopardise Australia's strategic policy of "forward defence". However, he was mindful of the need to not leave the Americans with the impression that the government was driven solely by this policy, true as it may have been. In a cable to Waller, he wrote that Australia's influence had been "thrown against the making or offering by the US of concessions we would consider dangerous, and this is likely to continue to be the case." Given this, he noted that he was "conscious of the need to avoid leaving with the Americans the impression that our reaction to new initiatives will invariably be negative or censorious."<sup>130</sup> Therefore, the approach that he advocated was to avoid simplifying the issue as a matter between Hanoi and Washington. The Americans needed to appreciate that "behind the local situation is the world situation", wrote Hasluck. Hence, Waller and his staff were to reinforce the strategic thinking that the seemingly isolated conflict in Vietnam had regional and even global ramifications. Most importantly, the administration needed to understand that the end of the war in Vietnam was "not synonymous with American military withdrawal from Asia."<sup>131</sup> In what Hasluck saw as an unstable region, the US was *the* stabilising factor; therefore, it would be "dangerous" if "influential Americans" viewed America's future presence in the region otherwise.

It was imperative that the war ended in a manner beneficial to Australia. Emphasising this, Hasluck wrote: "We want this to end in a way that makes it unlikely that we will either have to do the same job over again, or face an alternative that means we have given the life of our men for nothing that is worth having." He added that, "Unless we uphold our purpose of fighting to establish a peace and security that has some prospect of being just and enduring, and unless we believe we will achieve that

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 21 February 1967.

goal we might as well give the game away now.”<sup>132</sup> In Hasluck’s opinion, the communist menace must be stopped, or at the very least contained, before Australia found itself engaged in a region-wide battle fought along ideological lines.

Waller anticipated that the State Department, through Bundy and Unger, would now inform the Australian Embassy of any meaningful developments towards negotiations. In correspondence with Hasluck, Waller proposed that the question needed to be faced “as to how far Australia can reasonably press its right to be consulted about the full detail of American thinking” regarding the administration’s conditions for a negotiated solution.<sup>133</sup> The Australian government need not be informed of the intricacies of every exploratory channel used; however, it was entitled to be taken into confidence when these channels produced developments of significance. Hasluck agreed, adding that Australia claimed “a right to American confidence if the feeler leads to talking.”<sup>134</sup> Waller added that he expected that the State Department would keep the Embassy informed of any substantial developments that emerged.<sup>135</sup> The Ambassador was confident that Bundy appreciated the need to do so, as he had earlier assured Waller that if any such efforts produced “clear evidence of a serious change in Hanoi’s position”, Australia would be “fully informed.”<sup>136</sup> Waller wrote that his inclination was “not to press the matter further at this stage since I am hopeful that our wishes will be

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable, Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>134</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 21 February 1967.

<sup>135</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* Waller later revealed that his principal contact during his time in Washington was the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, William P. Bundy. Waller described Bundy as “not a great Assistant Secretary”, but a man who did “run his own shop”. In a separate recollection of his years in Washington, Waller wrote of an unnamed Under Secretary of State—most probably Bundy—whom he “liked” and worked “closely” with during his tenure. This relationship was built on the “basis of a high degree of mutual trust and confidence” which Waller valued highly as a key tool in diplomacy. In the same piece, Waller wrote, “If an Ambassador and the staff of his embassy are liked and trusted, people will, and do, talk to them freely.” See Waller, *A Diplomatic Life*, p. 39; Waller in Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, pp. 390-91.

broadly met in the weeks ahead.”<sup>137</sup> Ten days later, Waller reported that the State Department had been “responsive” to his request for greater collaboration.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, Unger had previously told Furlonger that the State Department was willing to meet the Embassy’s request for closer consultation, which Waller expected would become a “continuing dialogue” focussed on a political solution to the “Vietnamese question”.<sup>139</sup> However, in his next meeting with Bundy, the Assistant Secretary implied that if US peace probes proved productive, Australia, again, would not be consulted. Bundy stated that private talks moved quickly, making it difficult for the administration to keep its allies informed as discussions advanced. If clandestine discussions were launched again, the administration “would have ‘very tricky’ problems in handling relations with Australia and others”.<sup>140</sup>

What the Polish initiative had confirmed to Hasluck was that the Americans could engage in exploratory contacts for considerable periods of time before being brought to Australia’s attention. Also troubling was that other nations, in this case, Italy and Poland, “whose interest in the problem is peripheral”, were privy to this information from a very early stage.<sup>141</sup> Elaborating on this, Hasluck wrote:

We cannot afford, therefore, to neglect any of the various soundings the US may be making. And it may become necessary to indicate to the State Department that while we appreciate the delicacy of the enquiries being made, we expect to be informed when such enquiries reach the stage of

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<sup>137</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>138</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1 PART 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 20 February 1967.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 22 February 1967.

<sup>141</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Hasluck to Waller, 21 February 1967.

exchanges on matters of substance, or when “third” or “fourth” governments become involved whose discretion cannot necessarily be relied upon.<sup>142</sup>

With “peripheral” nations engaged in the preliminary efforts towards negotiations, they had the capacity to advise certain courses of action that would be in Australia’s detriment. To Hasluck it was “insupportable in Australian politics that others should be given higher [a] measure of confidence than ourselves”, given its close ties to the US, and its unwavering support for American efforts in Vietnam.<sup>143</sup> “Marigold” came just months after the visit of President Johnson and the Federal Election. The L-CP had based much of its election platform on its role in Vietnam, fighting alongside its strongest ally, the US; however, “Marigold” had challenged this relationship.

Earlier, Waller, like Hasluck, expressed his displeasure regarding the manner in which Australia had been treated during “Marigold”, especially in light of Australia’s role in Vietnam. In a cable to Hasluck he wrote that:

We are a significant belligerent in Vietnam and have a right to be fully informed as the situation develops. We have already indicated to the State Department that there are areas of American policy ... on which it would be helpful if Australia could be taken more fully into their confidence.<sup>144</sup>

However, Australia was *not* a significant belligerent in Vietnam; at least not in pure quantitative terms. Australia’s commitment paled in comparison to that of the Republic of Korea (ROK).<sup>145</sup> By October 1966, Korea’s 45,000 men outnumbered Australia’s

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 12 February 1967.

<sup>145</sup> The Koreans had also expressed displeasure with the levels of consultation between itself and the US at this time. Before returning to Washington from the Guam Conference in March 1967, Unger travelled to Seoul to meet with members of the Korean government. He did this because the Koreans were perturbed that they had been excluded from the Guam Conference. Furthermore, they were “concerned that they might be left out of preliminary talks with the Communists and of [an] ultimate Geneva type

contribution tenfold.<sup>146</sup> Waller's statement highlights a wider Australian tendency to cast itself—a middle-power—as a larger world player than it really is.

Consultation between the members of Australia's Washington mission and the Johnson administration increased in the weeks after the *Tét* bombing pause. However, many questions still remained unanswered for the Australian government. On the troublesome question of concessions that might be made by the US, Waller believed that the Americans did not yet have a steadfast position on the issue. As we saw earlier, two months after the fact, Unger provided Waller with a summary of "Marigold", which outlined the ten points that Lewandowski had earlier presented to Hanoi. Waller believed that the State Department had not yet "thought through" just how a "ceasefire and a political settlement are to be wedded with each other", as they had been caught off-guard by Hanoi's unexpected interest in talks in December 1966.<sup>147</sup> Waller's meeting with Unger confirmed for the Ambassador that Hanoi's sudden interest in the possible negotiations had "caught the Americans somewhat unprepared and that they are now belatedly endeavouring to clarify their own position on the issues involved."<sup>148</sup> Unger continued to consult with his Australian counterparts, presenting Furlonger with a report that briefly summarised his office's thoughts on achieving a political settlement in Vietnam.

Prepared by the Far Eastern Affairs Bureau of the State Department, the six-page document condensed and reworked earlier contingency planning that itemised the complications faced in achieving a negotiated settlement. The East Asian Bureau's report included an obligatory line regarding the assistance of the United States' military

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conference." NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the NZ Embassy, Washington, to the Secretary of the NZ Department of External Affairs, 31 March 1967.

<sup>146</sup> NAA: 1838/346, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Australian Embassy, Saigon, to the DEA, Defence, and PM's Department, 21 October 1966.

<sup>147</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Waller to Hasluck, 20 February 1967.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

allies in Vietnam assisting in the peace process that read: “Ceasefire arrangements themselves would, in some form or other, involve the GVN (government of South Vietnam), North Vietnamese, US, and Viet Cong, with consultations being carried on by our side with other troop contributor nations in South Vietnam.”<sup>149</sup> However, given the events of “Marigold”, and Bundy’s recent comments that it would be difficult to keep Australia informed as matters transpired, this hardly served as a guarantee that the Australian government would not remain on the periphery of American decision-making. Though Unger asked that the report not be circulated beyond the Embassy’s walls, Waller forwarded copies to Canberra and Saigon, but asked that the source remained anonymous.<sup>150</sup> Waller valued Unger’s transparency as he had been “very forthcoming in sharing the thinking of the East Asian Bureau.”<sup>151</sup> Of course Unger, an experienced diplomat, must have expected that the Ambassador would share the report with his colleagues. As Waller later said on the subject of information sharing between envoys and their governments, “to pretend that the diplomat is not going to report what has been said to him is manifestly silly.”<sup>152</sup> Clearly this also extended to documents.

Waller viewed the report as nothing more than a contingency document that was not suitable to Australian interests. In his opinion, it threatened South Vietnamese independence and did not coincide with Hasluck’s three steps towards a ceasefire outlined a fortnight prior. With these factors in mind, he believed that he and his staff should continue to “most emphatically” argue the steps outlined by Hasluck and “oppose anything in the nature of a ceasefire or a stand-fast at this time.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, text of the report “Problems with a Ceasefire in Vietnam”, 7 March 1967.

<sup>150</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 7 March 1967.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Waller in Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, p. 391.

<sup>153</sup> NAA: A1838, TS696/8/8/1, Part 2, cable from Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 7 March 1967.

Additionally, he suggested that in their continuing discussions with the Americans, the Embassy staff should clearly assert that the terms outlined in the document were not a “satisfactory way of ending the war.”<sup>154</sup>

As members of the Johnson administration and the South Vietnamese government met in Guam towards the end of March 1967, the North Vietnamese disclosed an exchange between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh. Contact had been initiated by Johnson, who sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh via Hanoi’s Moscow embassy at the beginning of the *Tết* truce.<sup>155</sup> Like “Marigold”, this diplomatic exercise had been carried out without Australian input, and again, Canberra’s source of discovery was the press. When questioned about the letters, the Australian government’s approach was to once more respond in a guarded manner that did not necessarily indicate whether the government had advanced knowledge of the diplomatic efforts of this in Washington.<sup>156</sup> When asked about the letter in a press conference, Holt said: “It would not be helpful, and indeed could endanger the success of any moves, if I were to say anything publicly at this stage, or even to confirm that a particular sort of approach was being made or was in contemplation.”<sup>157</sup>

As the Australian government had learnt of aspects of US diplomacy through the news media, its Embassy once more raised the issue of consultation with the State Department. As Bundy was completing a political tour of Europe and Asia, Furlonger met with Chester Cooper to discuss Johnson’s letter to Ho Chi Minh.<sup>158</sup> Furlonger explained to Cooper that certain difficulties arose when, as had happened with

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> For transcripts of the letters between the leaders, see Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, pp. 593-96.

<sup>156</sup> The letters emerged as members of the US and South Vietnam governments concluded a conference in Guam focussed on military strategy and the future of the conflict. “Guam Conferees Pledge Joint War-Peace Moves”, *St. Petersburg Times*, 21 March 1967, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the DEA, Canberra, to the Australian Embassy, Washington, 22 March 1967.

<sup>158</sup> During this period, Cooper oversaw Bundy’s usual contacts with the Australian Embassy.

“Marigold”, the government first learnt of important developments from the press. Cooper responded that he understood Furlonger’s concerns, but believed that throughout the entire exercise in Vietnam, Australia “had been kept informed whenever there had been a change of substance in the US position.”<sup>159</sup> Furlonger countered, stating that Johnson’s proposal for both sides to agree to not increase their force levels was one such example of substantial change that directly influenced Australia and other troop-contributing nations. Cooper defended the administration’s actions, stating that the communication between Johnson and Ho had been initiated under the utmost secrecy with only the highest ranking members of the State Department aware of the letter.<sup>160</sup> However, Cooper revealed that the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, had also been made aware of the exchange as it coincided with his discussions with the Soviet Prime Minister, Kosygin.<sup>161</sup> Again, the British had been informed of Johnson’s secret diplomacy, whilst Australia was left in the dark. Furlonger stated that Australia possessed an “excellent record for preserving secrets passed to us by the Americans, and our discretion could be relied on if we were more fully taken into American confidence before, and not after, the event.”<sup>162</sup> However, as had been the case with “Marigold”, this was a clandestine venture that did not require vocal support from the Australians; thus, there was no need to inform them of the initiative.

As Renouf later argued, in the broader context of the Vietnam War, Australia’s subservience to the US had voided its right to be involved in meaningful policy

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<sup>159</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 22 March 1967.

<sup>160</sup> In a separate cable regarding the same meeting, the Australian Embassy reported that Cooper had identified those who had prior knowledge of the letter as: Secretary Rusk, Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow, Governor Harriman, Assistant Secretary Bundy, and Cooper himself. He could not definitively say if Unger also had knowledge of the letter. NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 23 March 1967.

<sup>161</sup> NAA: A1838, 3020/11/161/2, Part 20, cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the DEA, 23 March 1967.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

discussions with the Americans whether it be to escalate or de-escalate the war.<sup>163</sup> On at least two occasions early into Australia's involvement in Vietnam, William P. Bundy stated that Australia's support for the US was unwavering. In 1964, with only Australian military advisers in South Vietnam, Bundy bluntly outlined his understanding of the relationship between the two nations which positioned Australia as the compliant partner in the alliance. In a statement that should have caused alarm in Canberra, Bundy, responding to an Australian complaint that Britain was better informed than Australia, said: "We have to inform the British to keep them on side. You are with us, come what may."<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, as we saw earlier, in a memo to Johnson days before the end of the 1965-66 bombing pause, Bundy expected that the Australian government would support the resumption of bombing as they were "solidly aboard."<sup>165</sup> A month later, Vice-President Humphrey returned from Australia under the same impression. Meeting with Johnson, he stated that the "Australian government is with us 100 per cent."<sup>166</sup> It was most of the Western world, not Australia, whose support the administration needed to attain. On the lessons learned from America's treatment of Australia during Vietnam, Malcolm Fraser recently said: "I wouldn't want to go to war alongside America unless I had somebody in the war councils in Washington."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 279.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Memorandum prepared by William Bundy, 28 January 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, 1966, Vietnam*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>166</sup> Notes of a meeting drafted by Valenti and Bromley, 24 February 1966, *FRUS: 1964-68, Volume IV, 1966, Vietnam*, p. 256.

<sup>167</sup> Malcolm Fraser in Paul Ham's *All The Way: Australia V America in Vietnam*, screened on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), 6 June 2013. The comments of Renouf and Fraser, men who served as government officials during Australia's Vietnam campaign and noted revisionists, have been made with the benefit of hindsight, very much like the revised stance of the US Defence Secretary, Robert McNamara. Fraser claims to have pushed the Minister for Defence, Allen Fairhall, to confront the Americans on the lack of consultation between the two nations. Fraser later recalled such a discussion in his memoirs: "I can remember saying to him, 'For heaven's sake, Allen. You say you agree with me with what I'm saying about Vietnam. Why don't you go to Washington and express these concerns in the strongest possible way? Why don't you try to have an Australian input into the policies? We don't really know what we are doing. The overall American strategy we know nothing about, really, and where their plans might lead and what they regard as their options. Now, if we are a fairly full partner in the war, we should be having an input.' And Allen would say, 'Oh yes, oh yes', but he never wanted to stir himself. It

After two months of exploration, Hasluck, through Waller, could not obtain a conclusive understanding of the concessions the Johnson administration would be willing to make to secure a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. Nevertheless, this was not the end of Australia's efforts to further understand the concessions the Americans might make. As part of the Embassy's everyday activities, further information steadily flowed to Canberra regarding possible peace-feelers and the indications of the attitudes towards peace from both sides. The DEA continued to collate files and prepare reports on the possible outcome of negotiations; however, by April, with the next foreseeable bombing pause some nine months away, the Department's attention shifted towards Australia's other major concern on the international stage: Britain's planned withdrawal "east of Suez". As we saw in chapter two, in mid-April 1967, Washington hosted the ANZUS and SEATO Council meetings, where Britain's future in the region was of primary importance to the Australian delegation.

When examining and comparing the two bombing pauses, it is evident that the Johnson administration regarded Australia less as a diplomatic partner and more as a mouthpiece ready to offer unquestioning support to US policies in Vietnam. The Americans consulted with their Australian counterparts during the 1965-66 bombing pause because they required assistance from Canberra, both in terms of men and rhetorical support. However, a year later, when undertaking exploratory efforts towards peace—primarily "Marigold" and, to a lesser extent, Johnson's letter to Ho Chi Minh—the administration chose not to inform the Australian government of these endeavours as neither required public support. Furthermore, Australia had been a strong advocate of adopting a hard-line approach in Vietnam; therefore, its counsel on issues pertaining to peace may not have been as valuable or legitimate as say, for example, the British

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would have been an unpopular thing to do anyway. The Americans wouldn't have appreciated it." Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: the Political Memoirs*, pp. 149-50.

government, which at times had been critical of American actions in Vietnam. This leads us to another important point alluded to by Renouf, that posits that Australia's subservience voided its right to be consulted on the more sensitive matters of diplomacy. By late 1966, the administration trusted that the Australian government would support almost any development in US policy. Furthermore, unlike the Australian government, whose support was guaranteed, the administration endeavoured to persuade the British of the legitimacy its cause in Vietnam. Therefore, the British government was informed of both "Marigold" and Johnson's exchange with Ho Chi Minh as a means of demonstrating to the British that the Americans were attempting to end the war in a peaceful manner.

One constant theme throughout the two pauses is that the Australian government was strongly opposed to a hastily conceived peace, fearing that it would be to the detriment of Australian national interests. Australia's involvement was a strategic quid-pro-quo; thus it was imperative to policy-makers such as Hasluck that Australia's efforts were rewarded quid pro quo. Hasluck's instructions to Waller following the events of "Marigold" articulated this. In the wake of the 1966-67 bombing pause and the events of "Marigold", Hasluck was not instructing Waller to push for greater consultation between the two nations in order that this assisted the Americans. Rather, he sought to understand the concessions the Americans to guard the approval of any unwelcome concessions, such as, a quickly conceived peace that led to an American withdrawal from the Asian mainland, or the formation of a coalition government in the South that included communist elements. The Australian government was well within its rights to be piqued that it had not been informed of "Marigold". Yet given its subservience and its predictable, self-interested posture on negotiations, it could not

justifiably view this marginalisation as an affront to the relationship between the two nations.

## Conclusion

Framed within an Australian perspective, this thesis examined the Australian-American alliance during the 23 months of the Holt government. Specific attention was given to the alliance management strategies of the Australian government in light of three important policy matters: the British defence review, Australia's continuing role in Vietnam, and the consolidation of its policy of "forward defence". The most important finding of the thesis was that Australia's alliance with the US was consistently and significantly influenced by the uncertainty surrounding Britain's future in the region. This entanglement of alliances was attributed to Australia's policy of "forward defence": a defence posture wholly reliant on the positioning of American and British forces in advance of Australia's mainland borders, with a substantial US presence serving as the linchpin of this strategy. Furthermore, this thesis also addressed relevant historiographical gaps by providing a thorough examination of Johnson's 1966 visit, as well as confirming Australia's complete absence from and ignorance of "Marigold". The investigation of the events of "Marigold" and the bombing pause a year prior revealed that, in the field of diplomacy, Australia was demonstrably the junior in its partnership with the US.

The overarching theme of this thesis is that Australia's alliance with the US—its most valuable strategic partnership—was not only influenced by bilateral factors, but also by Britain's revised defence strategy. Given the importance attached by the Australian government to the role of the US in Australia's defence strategy, it was unavoidable that any challenges to the policy of "forward defence" would be inextricably linked to Australia's alliance with the US. Through a systematic examination of the reports, cables and files from various Australian government

agencies from this period, whether pertaining to matters involving Britain, the US, or both nations, it has been shown that the need to further, or at the very least preserve, the policy of “forward defence” was ever-present. There was unanimity of opinion from those in the DEA, Defence Committee, Joint Planning Committee, and Cabinet that acknowledged the importance of securing a US military presence on the Asian mainland, and the need to shape policy accordingly. However, the Australian government was only willing to provide a token commitment in return for this “shield”, as Holt described it.

Wanting maximum gain for minimum output, the Australian Government also exploited its close ties with the US and UK to rebuff calls for further assistance from both nations by highlighting to each the duality of Australia’s regional responsibilities. The Australian government adopted this strategy when it hosted Harriman in January, in February as Harriman accompanied Vice-President Humphrey, and again when it welcomed the British Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, just weeks before Humphrey’s visit. When members of the Johnson administration sought an additional military contribution from the Australians in late 1965 through early 1966, the Australian government remained guarded, stating that the uncertainty surrounding Britain’s future in Southeast Asia would also affect Australia’s prospective role in the region. On the other hand, when the Wilson government called for greater assistance from the Australians to remain “east of Suez”, government representatives stressed the difficulty of aiding the British as Australian forces were engaged in Vietnam and it was likely that they would be required to increase their presence in the conflict.

Just as Australia hoped to call on American military strength if faced with a direct threat, so it invoked the diplomatic might of the US in an attempt to forestall Britain’s withdrawal from the region. It judged, correctly, that the Johnson

administration was capable of exerting levels of diplomatic pressure that the Australians could not. Recognising this, the Australian Government strongly advocated quadripartite discussions and, in this setting, Australia and NZ aligned themselves behind the US and denounced any proposals for a scaling down of British installations “east of Suez”.

The second key finding of this thesis is that the diplomatic dimension of the Australian-American alliance mirrored the military aspect of the alliance, with Australia serving as the Americans’ junior. This was evidenced by the levels of consultation during the 1965-66 and 1966-67 bombing pauses. At this time, meaningful consultation between the two nations was dependent on the transparency of the Americans and the role that the Americans envisaged the Australians would play. During the 1965-66 pause, the administration made a conscious effort to inform the Australians of the various aspects of the “peace offensive” because they were pressing for a greater commitment from the Australians, as detailed in chapter three and mentioned in chapter five. Towards the conclusion of the bombing pause, Johnson notified Holt of the administration’s decision to resume bombing in advance of the recommencement. He did this because the US required the vocal support of a Western nation for its unpopular bombing campaign. However, a year later, the US government neglected to inform the Australians of its sensitive exploratory efforts towards peace: “Marigold” and, later, Johnson’s exchange with Ho Chi Minh. The Australians were not consulted on these matters as the initiatives were not escalations of the war that required Australia to act as a mouthpiece for US policies.

This thesis has filled several historiographical gaps concerning the alliance between Australia and the US under Holt. These historiographical gaps include the Johnson visit, the Australian government and “Marigold”, and the subsequent efforts of

Hasluck, through Waller, to push for greater consultation between the two nations on matters pertaining to peace. As we saw in chapter five, the Polish initiative involved Hasluck primarily because he feared that without the counsel of the Australian government, the Johnson administration would agree to conditions for peace that endangered the geo-strategic benefits that the Australians had hoped to achieve by fighting in Vietnam. The other major historiographical gap addressed was Johnson's visit to Australia in October 1966. This visit symbolised on a global scale the strengthening alliance between the two nations. It was a visual display of the rhetoric so often used by Holt during the early stages of his prime ministership, most notably during his first visits to the US and UK at the mid-point of 1966 and confirmed to many that Australia's allegiance now stood closer to Washington than to London.

In regards to the relationship between Holt and Johnson, this thesis put forth an assessment contrary to that of Holt's contemporaries, Hasluck and Renouf, who suggested that Holt's warm relationship with Johnson had clouded his judgement. Whilst it is apparent that the two leaders shared an affable relationship, to suggest that Holt acquiesced to Johnson is too crude a view of their relationship. A cordial relationship between the two was beneficial to both. Johnson required steadfast support for his government's policies in Vietnam, whereas Holt endeavoured to more closely align Australia with the US for security. Furthermore, with Britain's role in a forward capacity in jeopardy, Australia's alliance with the US was ever more vital. We have seen that in all of his dealings with the President, be they in a public or private setting, Holt had Australian national interests strongly in mind: he was playing his part in bringing the two nations closer. However, on occasion, he was guilty of lacking the subtlety required in international diplomacy, and consequently blurred the lines between ally and underling.

From this thesis, openings for further research emerge. Due to constraints of word length and availability of archival sources, this study was approached from a predominantly Australian perspective. Where possible, the Johnson administration's calculation of its alliance with Australia has been provided; however, a greater illumination of the relationship from the American end would be valuable to a fuller analysis of the alliance. This could be conducted as part a larger examination of the tripartite nature of Australia's alliance with the US during this period in light of the shifting British defence policy by also embracing sources from the British Foreign Office. Such a study could, again, legitimately focus on the consistently under-researched analysis of consultation between Australia and the US during the Vietnam War. Prior to this thesis there had been no substantial investigation of either the levels of consultation between the two nations during the tentative festive truces, or Australia's marginalisation from "Marigold". This thesis has also provided some understanding of the function of Australia's Washington Embassy, and the role it played in handling the alliance in these specific years. However, there is further scope to focus more generally on the role of the embassy as the conduit between the two nations.

When Holt assumed the prime ministership, he inherited two pressing foreign relations issues—the war in Vietnam and Britain's planned withdrawal from the region—that impinged on Australia's defence posture and influenced Australia's alliance with the US. Driven by a self-interested policy of "forward defence", and the desire to secure a substantial US presence to consolidate this policy, the Australian government adopted a policy that emphasised a strong alignment with the US. Although this strategy of "forward defence" was in place well before Holt took office, the importance of the role assigned to the Americans was amplified by the British government's intimation, and later confirmation, that it would drastically scale down its

military commitment in the region. Throughout this thesis, we have seen that the Australian-American alliance was a reciprocal relationship with much emphasis on both nations' involvement in Vietnam. As Australia was America's most prominent Western ally in the war, US interest in Australia was derived from the need for unstinting support for its Vietnam engagement. Australia, on the other hand, having entered the conflict for strategic purposes, gravitated towards the US in order to realise a long-held strategic aim: obtaining a substantial US military presence on the Asian mainland. As the US was the linchpin of Australia's defence posture during Holt's prime ministership, any challenge to this policy, such as Britain's withdrawal from Southeast Asia, further shaped the character of the Australian relationship with the US.

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