

5

‘Mr Necessity’: Sir Howard Beale, 1958–64¹

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Howard Beale was appointed Ambassador to the United States in 1957 at a critical time in American and indeed world history. The Cold War was well underway and tensions between the US-led West and Soviet Russia made the prospect of a ‘hot war’ with all its awful consequences a real possibility. Moved mainly by the inherent strategic limitations of ‘massive retaliation’, the US increasingly focused on winning ‘hearts and minds’ in former colonial territories in the Middle East, Asia and Africa during the 1950s and thereby stopping the spread of global communism.² This broadening of the policy of containment, based on a continuing belief that communism was monolithic, found its most pertinent manifestation for Australia in the signing of the Manila Pact in September 1954. The pact, which established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), committed the US to the defence of signatory countries in the event of communist aggression or subversion. Taken together with the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), signed three years earlier, SEATO reinforced Australia’s identification of the US as its primary great power protector.

1 For their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this chapter, I would like to thank David Lowe, David McLean, Neville Meaney, Colin Milner and especially James Curran, who was kind enough to give me a large number of key documents from the John F Kennedy Library in Boston.

2 See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, chs 6–8.

The expectation of closer, if not indeed intimate, US–Australia ties had been openly articulated by Beale’s predecessor, Percy Spender, who said shortly after arriving in Washington in 1951 that ‘putting flesh on the bones of ANZUS’ was one of his key aims.³ It was a strategic objective shared by Beale, who worked hard and mostly successfully to forge close and continuous associations with power-brokers in Washington during his six-year tenure in an effort to promote the primary objective of binding Australia’s defence needs in the Asia-Pacific with American Cold War priorities. While this led to Australia’s steady association with US aims and objectives in Southeast Asia, manifested most importantly in Australian long-term involvement in the war in Vietnam, it did not produce the culture of obligation or close consultation that Canberra so desperately sought from the US. On the contrary, the foremost problem for Australia during Beale’s term – Indonesia and its policy of ‘Confrontation’ in West New Guinea and Malaysia – demonstrated both the limitations of ANZUS as a vehicle for achieving Australian objectives and the unrealistic expectations that both Beale and senior policymakers in Canberra placed on the alliance.

The parson’s son: Early life, worldview and political career

Oliver Howard Beale was born on 10 December 1898 in Tamworth, then a relatively large township of 15,000 people at the foot of the New England tablelands in northern New South Wales. The son of a Methodist minister, young Howard moved frequently according to the needs of Joseph Beale’s flock. From Tamworth the family moved to Lismore, on the north coast, where they spent three years; from there to Penrith, west of Sydney; from Penrith to Wagga Wagga, a hub town in the Riverina; and from there to Willoughby, in north Sydney. In 1910, when Beale was 11, his father died of pneumonia.⁴ This had a terrible effect on the family, perhaps aggravating what Beale referred to as a ‘delicate’ constitution – but what was later diagnosed as rheumatic fever – and consigning the family to a life of struggle on a Methodist widow’s ‘very small’ pension. They moved to Croydon, then an outer

3 David Lowe, *Australian Between Empires: The Life of Percy Spender*, Pickering & Chatto, London, 2010, pp. 145–46.

4 Howard Beale, *This Inch of Time: Memoirs of Politics and Diplomacy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 4, 10.

suburb of Sydney, where his mother attempted to rebuild. Knowing that 'we only had ourselves to depend on', as Beale would later recall, she exhorted Howard and his three older brothers to 'work and work'. Following the outbreak of World War I, all three brothers joined the Australian Imperial Force. Howard attempted to enlist in 1918 but was rejected because of complications caused by the rheumatic fever. He went back to Sydney University, completed a law degree and was admitted to the Bar in 1925.⁵

Inspired by the resilience of his mother, who imbued him with a deep respect for the liberal-conservative values of hard work, individual initiative and a sense of social responsibility, Beale nevertheless had 'no regard at all' for the United Australia Party, which he dismissed as 'reactionary'.⁶ Nor did the Australian Labor Party (ALP) appeal to him. Though conceding that his family background could easily have taken him into the ALP – 'the traditional party of social reform' – Beale was uncomfortable with its emphasis on the idea of community defined by class. He was especially perturbed when the Labor Government of Ben Chifley moved to not only extend wartime controls but also nationalise private institutions such as banks, the insurance industry and the medical profession. It was a defining moment for Beale, who felt that 'those who wanted a future for Australia along different lines ought to get down into the arena'.⁷ So when in 1945 Robert Menzies reorganised the country's anti-Labor forces and established the Australian Liberal Party on a platform of abolishing wartime controls and promoting the values and aspirations of middle Australia – the so-called 'forgotten people' for whom Beale had developed such a strong regard – he gave himself fully to the cause. The retirement in 1946 of Frederick Stewart from the blue-ribbon Liberal electorate of Parramatta, west of Sydney, provided an opening to federal parliament and Beale won the seat later that year.⁸

Almost 50, Beale had no intention of sitting passively on the backbench and was unusually boisterous for a new parliamentary member. As Jo Gullett, the Liberal member for the Victorian seat of Henty, wrote his wife at the time, 'Beale the new member is a tiresome fellow

5 Mel Pratt with Sir Howard Beale, interview, 20–21 October 1976, series TRC 121/82, National Library of Australia (NLA), Canberra, p. 8. See also *ibid.*

6 Pratt with Beale, interview, pp. 17–18.

7 Beale, *Inch of Time*, pp. 23, 25.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.

with a colossal opinion of himself'.⁹ As well as taking every opportunity to criticise the government's continuation of wartime restrictions and its socialisation program, Beale took a particular interest in the role of Australia in international affairs. This was the subject of his maiden speech, during which he attacked the government for showing an insufficient appreciation of Australia's close, or more precisely, integral association with the British Empire.¹⁰ In March 1947, he again weighed into the parliamentary debate on international affairs, saying that there was no point in Australia relying on the US (let alone the UN) for its security: 'Let us face the facts. The United States of America is not greatly interested in Australia.' Great Britain, on the other hand, 'has always been interested in our wellbeing', and with that in mind, he urged that 'the central point of Australian foreign policy must be a tight and close relationship with the British Empire'. This should be done not 'in a spirit of jingoism or empty patriotism, or with any desire to wave the flag', but rather 'to back up our White Australia policy' and to disseminate 'the great traditional and moral force of the British Commonwealth that has stood for so many years'.¹¹

When a couple of months later parliament considered a gift of £25,000,000 to 'our kinsmen in the Old Country', as Beale put it, he castigated the government for a contribution that was 'niggardly and mean'; he felt that 'more should be granted' and hoped that 'this bill will be a forerunner of other measures', not only because 'Britain saved the world' during the war but also because 'if England goes we go with it'.¹² The government's introduction of its Nationality and Citizenship Bill to parliament in November 1948 in response to Canada's demands for a local citizenship produced a sharp rebuke from Beale. For him the measure was completely unnecessary because being Australian and being British were indivisible. The essence of the traditional relationship, he argued, employing a peculiar phrase, was 'unforeignness' – the condition of being independent nation-states but sharing a community of culture and (theoretically) interest that bound them together in the Commonwealth. Though many members of the government

9 Jo Gullett to Lady Gullett, 24 November 1946, cited in Allan William Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life, vol. 2, 1944–1978*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p. 61.

10 Howard Beale in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 14 November 1946, vol. 189, pp. 295–99.

11 Howard Beale in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 25 March 1947, vol. 190, pp. 1129, 1131.

12 Howard Beale in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 28 May 1947, vol. 192, pp. 2990–92.

were themselves uncomfortable with the change, prompting Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell to devise legislation that allowed Australians to be both British subjects and Australian citizens, Beale remained dissatisfied: 'We shall not be exactly aliens, but the essence of "unforeignness" will be lost, and the link with the Crown which binds this country to Great Britain will be greatly weakened.'¹³

Thus when Menzies came to power in the elections of December 1949 and Beale was made Minister for Supply, he welcomed any opportunity to assist Britain in this task. A request from Britain to test its newly developed atomic bomb in Australia received wholehearted support from not only Menzies – who inexplicably instructed that the plans initially be kept from his Supply Minister – but also Beale and a series of tests were subsequently held on the Monte Bello Islands (1952, 1956) and at Emu Field (1953) and Maralinga (1956–57). Beale's reasons for supporting the tests, as he later wrote, were moral, sentimental and strategic – a case of 'Atoms Amongst Englishmen' and Australia 'Playing the Empire Card', as historians Alice Cawte and Wayne Reynolds have put it. He thus argued that Britain's possession of the bomb would 'be a supplement to American nuclear deterrent power'; that it would reinforce the 'intimate partnership between Britain and Australia'; and that any refusal by Australia to meet the request would be 'against our own interest, and brutally ungenerous as well'. Taking up a line that would dominate his thinking in Washington, Beale argued that providing this small assistance to Britain allowed Australia to contribute in its own way to the Cold War objectives of its great power ally: 'There are times when a nation must stand up and be counted; for Australia this was such a time.'¹⁴

13 Howard Beale in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 23 November 1948, vol. 200, pp. 3313–14.

14 Howard Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 87. See also Alice Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, 1992, ch. 4; and Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000, ch. 6.

‘Not grown up’: Appointment and early observations of US society, politics and culture

After Beale’s appointment as Minister for Supply in 1950, he had refrained from talking at length about international affairs and naturally focused on the manifold responsibilities of running a department. While his position as Supply Minister had brought him into frequent contact with members of the American defence establishment, Beale, unlike Spender, had shown no burning desire to place US–Australia relations on a firmer footing. Thus it came as something of a surprise when in July 1957 Minister for External Affairs Richard Casey offered him the Washington post. After lengthy deliberation, Beale accepted. Paul Hasluck, a Cabinet colleague, reflected that he probably ‘felt he had had a good spin out of politics’ and that ‘the Washington post in succession to Spender was attractive’.¹⁵ And yet, Beale’s willingness to abandon a promising political career – he was widely touted to replace outgoing Defence Minister Philip McBride – might suggest that he had other reasons for accepting the Washington post. As he himself often noted, his relations with Menzies were strained. Shortly after winning government, according to Beale, Menzies had taken a noticeable dislike to him; the Prime Minister’s decision to keep him out of the loop over British nuclear tests in Australia was perhaps an early indication that Beale would never be a ‘teacher’s pet’ like Eric Harrison or Athol Townley.¹⁶

The hostility may have stemmed partly from Beale’s personality – the ‘colossal opinion of himself’ referred to by Gullett in 1946. Hasluck, who confessed to liking Beale because he was ‘one of the very few colleagues who had read the same books, picked up the same literary and historical allusions and spoke the same words as I did’, also noted ‘a sort of self-regard’ that ‘just fell short of self-satisfaction’. This was compounded by a tendency to score points in debates ‘with too great a sense of triumph and too evident a pleasure in his own accomplishment’. He was profoundly conscious of rank, ‘did things with an air’ and was one of the few ministers ‘who stood up to Menzies’, a characteristic that

15 Paul Hasluck (ed. Nicholas Hasluck), *The Chance of Politics*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1997, p. 70.

16 Pratt with Beale, interview, p. 50. The reference to ‘teacher’s pet’ is Hasluck’s. See Hasluck, *Chance of Politics*, pp. 62, 89.

must have gone down like a lead balloon with the Prime Minister.¹⁷ When in 1957 Beale had openly objected to a piece of draft legislation on divorce law that enjoyed the Prime Minister's support, Menzies told him to back down or he would 'take strips off' him. Unperturbed, Beale replied, 'Well, Bob, when we get into committee I'll be trying to do the same to you'.¹⁸ Though Beale vehemently denied that Menzies sent him to Washington to get rid of him – indeed, he claimed that his relationship with Menzies was improving by this time – the long history of tension between them almost certainly played a role in his decision to accept the offer, and for that matter, in the making of the offer by Cabinet in the first place.

Having accepted Casey's offer, Beale waited several months for Cabinet to give its formal approval. Another couple of months elapsed before Casey made an announcement, in December 1957, and the Beales arrived in Washington in March 1958. The reception they were accorded at Union Station, especially from fellow British Commonwealth countries, was noted by the Acting US Chief of Protocol as 'quite a show'.¹⁹ Equally impressed with this demonstration of Commonwealth solidarity, the *Washington Post* contrasted the spectacle of Beale's arrival with that of the new Norwegian Ambassador, who 'slipped into Washington quietly a few days ago and is awaiting a call from the White House summoning him to present credentials'.²⁰ Beale, for his part, only had to wait a week to present his credentials to President Dwight D Eisenhower, where the usual pleasantries were exchanged about 'the great and continuing friendship which the people of Australia feel for the people of the United States' (Beale) and 'the close friendship of our countries, born of common service in just causes and sustained by our mutual traditions of freedom and justice' (Eisenhower).²¹ Though Beale was pleased to report that Eisenhower was 'cheerful and friendly and, like every other American I have met here, seems to hold Australia in high regard', any suggestion that Australia was a top-drawer US ally was

17 Hasluck, *Chance of Politics*, pp. 68–69.

18 Pratt with Beale, interview, p. 62.

19 Cited in *Washington Post*, 19 March 1958.

20 Ibid.

21 Beale, 'Remarks upon the Occasion of the Presentation of his Letters of Credence', n.d., and Eisenhower, 'The President's Reply to the Newly Appointed Ambassador of Australia', n.d., both in series A3092, item 221/4/5/1/1, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra.

soon squashed. Eisenhower, mistaking Beale for Casey, commented to him during the ceremony: 'Let me see, you were here during the war weren't you, and then went to the Middle East.'²²

Beale spent the first couple of months familiarising himself with the mission and his new responsibilities. In the embassy building he discovered 'a very pleasant home and establishment', reflecting, he added in a letter to Casey, 'great credit on the gentleman who chose it in 1940!' At the same time, it desperately needed a coat of paint, new curtains and carpets and fresh wall paintings, some of which looked as though 'they had been painted at the bottom of a deep well on a rainy day'. Like many representatives before (and after) him, however, Beale was deeply distressed by official procurement procedures. Despite being 'Her Majesty's Australian Ambassador' and an ex-Minister for Supply 'accustomed to authorising millions of pounds of expenditure', he found he could only approve capital works up to the princely sum of £A10 a month! Beale complained persistently about the location of the 'ambassadorial lavatory', which was a great nuisance where it was: 'when one treks downstairs to the little place under the stairs in the entrance lobby, it is disconcerting to be waylaid by visitors and ear-bashers who have just been told you are not in'.²³ Beale soon had an opportunity to rectify this situation. During a visit from Casey, who happened to be suffering from his 'old amoebic dysentery' and found the location of the toilet inconvenient, Beale presented him with a handwritten authorisation for a new one, which Casey obligingly signed. Treasury, furious at these underhanded tactics, reportedly opened a file on the matter unofficially known as 'Beale's shit-house'.²⁴

By mid-1958, Beale was in a position to offer some insights on the nature of US society, politics and culture. In a long and lucid letter to Casey in July, he enthused that the American people were 'a fascinating study' and it was easy to understand why 'everybody who comes here wants to write a book about them'. They were 'a vital people', he said, drawing on the image of the frontier pioneer made popular by Frederick Jackson Turner:

They play hard, they work hard, and they drink hard. I am constantly being surprised by the number of very old men I meet here with sagging wrinkled faces still working, playing, and enjoying life; some

22 Beale to unidentified recipients, n.d. (c. April 1958), Sydney, series NA1983/1, item 16, NAA, Canberra; and Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 119.

23 Beale to Casey, 14 May 1958, Sydney, series NA1983/1, item 16, NAA, Canberra.

24 Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 121.

of them seem absolutely indestructible. There is a demon of energy in the national character, especially in the north, the east and the west; and it is this demon which has been responsible for the marvellous development of the country.²⁵

At the same time, Beale was greatly impressed by the American disposition for 'spontaneous warmth, a throwing open of their homes, and a real eagerness to make you feel at home'. This was considerably magnified in the case of Australians, according to Beale, because of the perceived similarities of experience and outlook between the two countries. ('We're both close to the frontier', as one American friend explained it to Beale.) For this reason, 'the name Australian is an "open sesame" in most parts of the country'. Beyond that, the US possessed a genuine desire to 'do the right thing by the world', a commitment that was essential with the coming of the Cold War. This willingness to 'accept enormous burdens in helping to sustain the free world' was 'a tribute to America's sense of moral responsibility' and 'a genuine national virtue'.²⁶

And yet, Beale was quick to disavow certain prominent aspects of American life. There was a tendency to indulge in self-righteousness when approaching foreign policy issues and a failure to understand that international politics was 'the science of the *attainable*' (Beale's emphasis). US leaders too often 'made up their mind in some situation as to what *ought* to be done as a matter of right and wrong' and then allowed their policies to be dictated accordingly, 'irrespective of whether it is practicable, or what devastating consequences may flow from pursuing it', or how much it 'gets them and their friends into trouble'. Citing the US role in the Suez crisis of 1956 as a prime example, Beale speculated that this overly moralistic approach to international affairs was attributable to its inexperience as a world leader. There was, he thus observed:

a streak of immaturity in their make-up. Hard boiled and tough though they seem to be, and often are, the word[s] 'not grown up' keep coming to the mind in connection with them. They are naive; they want to be liked; they are grateful for recognition of what their country is doing, and bewildered and hurt when their good works are not appreciated.²⁷

25 Beale to Casey, 7 July 1958, Sydney, series NA1983/1, item 16, NAA, Canberra.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

Americans too often believed their own hype and ‘have shouted from the housetops about their greatness, their cleverness, their goodness, their love of freedom (you’d think they invented the damn thing), so that when events don’t quite work out as they have come to believe, they get all upset’. He often urged his American friends to ‘take a leaf out of Great Britain’s book’. In a somewhat teleological vein, he marvelled at the British Empire’s success in pursuing its own interests while simultaneously ‘creating wealth and health for many nations and people ... keeping the peace for generations, and gradually giving freedom and independence to one colony after another’.²⁸

This rather rosy portrayal of the British Empire’s record in international affairs was consistent with Beale’s pro-British appraisal of the Suez crisis and his quip about the American penchant for claiming the love of freedom as a peculiarly American virtue. At the same time, it demonstrated a typically Australian unwillingness (or inability) to understand US behaviour in the world as a symptom not of inexperience, immaturity or even the nation’s puritan foundations – as Beale suggested in a letter to Philip McBride in November 1959 – but rather of a powerful national myth that identified the US as the avatar of liberty with a moral obligation to spread the ‘universal’ (though, paradoxically, American) principles of freedom and democracy throughout the globe.²⁹ This accounted for the otherwise inexplicable intensity of the US response to Soviet communism, which presented itself as a rival myth of universal redemption. Beale himself – by no means reticent when it came to flaying the Soviets – was shocked by ‘the almost hysterical (and sometimes not “almost”) fear of Communism’ in the US. A creature of his own culture, Beale not only failed to understand the peculiar nature and dynamics of American nationalism but also expressed the lofty hope that US leaders would ultimately defer to ‘a certain Anglo-Saxon reasonableness which, in the last resort, prevents things from being pushed too far’.³⁰

Consistent with these cultural prejudices, Beale was deeply critical of the US constitutional system. As he explained it to Casey shortly after arriving in Washington, those who helped the Executive govern were

28 Ibid.

29 See especially Michael H Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989; and John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2000. See also Beale to McBride, n.d. (c. November 1959), Sydney, series NA1983/1, item 16, NAA, Canberra.

30 Beale to McBride, c. November 1959.

generally drawn from the outside business world and were thus 'ignorant of the processes of popular government and of the needs and aspirations of *people*', while those elected to Congress and therefore responsible for legislating for the people often did so 'without all the facts which the Executive has before it' (Beale's emphasis). This produced 'a sort of rivalry' between the Executive and Congress – 'both sides having great power in their own right' – which often crippled the President's capacity to govern.³¹ This perceived systemic weakness was a constant theme of Beale's missives on what he referred to as 'the crazy political system over here'.³² During the 1960 presidential election campaign between Richard Nixon and John F Kennedy (who Beale hoped 'doesn't win because the Kennedy clan ... are too rich and too anti-British'), he kept up this line of criticism, focusing in particular on the new format of live television debates.³³ So appalled was he by this development that he wrote a terse letter to the *New York Times* under the non-deplume 'Observer', saying that the debates presented viewers with 'tabloid answers', 'no humour' and 'crude and distorting' opinions on international affairs; the whole thing had the appearance of 'a quiz kid show'.³⁴ He told Menzies that 'we should be on our guard against such "Debates" in Australia'.³⁵

Nothing he had seen during the arduous six months of campaigning and saturation of the public with the two candidates had altered his earlier belief that the American political system was 'the craziest in the world'.³⁶ When Kennedy was elected by the slimmest of margins in November, Beale gradually retreated from his earlier hostility, partly because the new President genuinely liked Australians (he had been rescued by one when his torpedo boat was sunk in the Pacific during World War II)³⁷ and partly because he was committed to closer relations with Great

31 Beale to Casey, 7 July 1958.

32 See Beale to Athol Townley, 3 September 1959, cablegram no. 1863, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1959/08, NAA, Canberra.

33 Beale to Holt, 10 March 1960, Sydney, series A1983/1, item 16, NAA, Canberra.

34 *New York Times*, 25 October 1960.

35 Beale to Menzies, 21 October 1960, cablegram no. 2903, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1960/10, NAA, Canberra.

36 Beale to Menzies, 21 October 1960, cablegram no. 2903, and Beale to Menzies, 'Presidential Elections', 9 November 1960, cablegram no. 3075, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1960/10, NAA, Canberra.

37 For details of Kennedy's rescue by Arthur Reginald ('Reg') Evans, who was reunited with the recently appointed President in a ceremony in Washington in 1961, see *Washington Post*, 2 May 1961.

Britain. At the same time, Beale was struck by the quality of Kennedy's senior advisers, telling Menzies in January 1961 that the President had assembled 'an impressive team' around him:

Almost all, if not all, of those on the Cabinet and Assistant Secretary level are university graduates, many with high honours, and including four Rhodes Scholars ... In one field or another, all of them seem to have had considerable administrative experience.³⁸

For Beale, this development was to be welcomed because it brought the US system closer to the British model. As he told Menzies a month later, 'the American system is now showing some slight resemblance to our parliamentary system' while the President was 'looking a little more like a Prime Minister'.³⁹ Though the analogy was somewhat overstated, Beale's new-found admiration for the Kennedy Administration with its focus on experienced ruling elites – what David Halberstam sardonically referred to as 'the best and the brightest' – again demonstrated the extent of his cultural bias.⁴⁰ The Kennedy Administration was now more agreeable not because of the system that had put him there, but on the contrary, because it seemed to circumvent the unbridled populism that many Australian leaders associated with US politics.

'Our first concern': Beale's attitude to ANZUS, Southeast Asian conflicts and 'Confrontation' with Indonesia

Beale's critical observations of the US political and social system were not unusual. Like many Australians, his worldview embodied the accumulated experience and wisdom of the British Commonwealth and his frequently disapproving attitudes towards American society and culture reflected this fundamental orientation. Even Spender, who wore his pro-American colours openly, admitted that his cultural and sentimental views remained firmly wedded to 'the British world'.⁴¹ This perception of the US as culturally and even politically 'foreign' –

38 Beale to Menzies, 24 January 1961, cablegram no. 154, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/01, NAA, Canberra.

39 Beale to Menzies, 2 February 1961, cablegram no. 227, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/01, NAA, Canberra.

40 David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, Random House, New York, 1972.

41 Lowe, *Australian Between Empires*, pp. 154–55.

or, more precisely in Beale's phrasing, as a country lacking the quality of 'unforeignness' that was characteristic of Australia's relations with Britain – was even more pronounced among policymakers at home. The consummate statesman, Menzies nevertheless felt uncomfortable and indeed anxious in the company of US leaders. During a visit to Washington in the mid-1960s, the Prime Minister showed his sweat-covered palms to the then Australian Ambassador, Keith Waller, and remarked: 'I don't know, Waller, why is it that I should be so much more nervous when I see the President of the United States than when I see the Queen.'⁴² For Australians, as David McLean has observed, 'while the US, as the leading Pacific military power and an English-speaking nation, was Australia's natural protector, it was not a "British" society, and Australians therefore could not entertain the same expectations as they had in the case of the United Kingdom'.⁴³

And yet, this was not through want of trying. In strictly strategic terms, Australia identified wholly with the US as its great power protector and worked hard to cultivate such a profound sense of obligation that American policymakers would not only act automatically to defend Australia in the event of a crisis but also meet these commitments without asking Australia for anything in return. In 1959, Cabinet rejected a 'Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy' paper that proposed a greater Australian capacity to operate independently of allies, preferring instead to fall back on the view that 'ANZUS is the most effective Treaty to which Australia is a partner'. Indeed, Cabinet resolved that any Australian undertaking in Southeast Asia 'would depend ... primarily on whether United States forces were committed. The best guarantee we can have that deployment of our forces is judicious is a parallel United States commitment in the area'. This assessment that Australia's interests were best served by close association with the US nevertheless assumed that 'Australian forces available for contribution to a war on the mainland of South East Asia will inevitably be small'. The paper's assessment of Australian action in the event of a crisis between the US and China over Formosa (Taiwan) nicely encapsulated the government's approach to the alliance over the next decade: 'It might

42 Cited in David McLean, 'From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Policy and History*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2006, p. 73.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

be politically desirable, in the interests of close relationships with the United States and to encourage the preservation of its forward position in Asia and South East Asia, to offer a token force contribution.⁴⁴

Embracing this position, Beale was quick to push Canberra for a favourable response when in September 1959 the US requested that Australia contribute to a possible military intervention in Laos. Adopting the key tenet of the Strategic Basis paper, he urged that 'we should perhaps consider to what extent it would be against Australia's best interests if the United States were to carry the full military burden'. At the same time, he assured acting External Affairs Minister Sir Garfield Barwick that the actual military contribution expected of Australia would probably be very small: 'For political reasons they will ask for token forces but I would not be surprised if the Military Commanders did not regard these as more of a nuisance than an effective contribution.'⁴⁵ A couple of days later, Beale, having received word that the government would await the outcome of negotiations for a UN mission to Laos but was nevertheless prepared to plan for a possible intervention, went on the offensive. In a discussion with Deputy Secretary of State Douglas Dillon, he said all the right things. Notwithstanding the UN mission, SEATO should be brought to 'a state of preparedness' and any military action should be 'a joint SEATO effort'. Having said that, he added cunningly, Australia 'realised of course that [the] United States would have to bear the main military burden of any military intervention'. Pressing for maximum advantage, Beale only asked that Australia 'be given sufficient insight into American intentions to be able to develop their own planning along appropriate lines'.⁴⁶

The intervention never happened, largely because the UN mission resulted in an almost immediate easing of tensions. After a US proposal to 'neutralise' Laos led to a ceasefire there and US attention shifted to the growing communist insurgency in the Republic of Vietnam, Beale was again quick to press Canberra for more assistance. Indeed, he did

44 'Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy', January 1959, in Stephan Fruhling (ed.), *A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2009, pp. 258, 261, 272.

45 Beale to Garfield Barwick, 'Laos', 9 September 1959, cablegram no. 1918, Canberra, series A11536, item 10, NAA, Canberra. See also Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, pp. 211-12.

46 Beale to Barwick, 'Laos', 11 September 1959, cablegram no. 1942, Canberra, series A11536, item 10, NAA, Canberra.

not wait for a formal request from the US Administration – sections of which were actually unenthusiastic about bringing foreign military personnel into Vietnam – telling Menzies in December 1961 that something more than verbal support was needed.

I know it is not possible to do much at present, but I hope that after the elections the Australian Government will decide to increase its assistance to South Vietnam, not merely because additional appropriate aid is desirable, if not essential, for the survival of South Vietnam, but also because demonstrable Australian support would make a very favourable impression on the United States Administration.

As with Laos, he did not think that much would be required – some additional military equipment, 'a few groups of jungle and guerrilla fighting experts' for training purposes – but importantly, he claimed that such a gesture would demonstrate that 'support of Vietnam is not merely an American operation'.⁴⁷ When the Pentagon eventually warmed to the idea of introducing foreign advisers, Beale, again anticipating any request from the Americans, urged a pre-emptive commitment on the grounds that it would 'help to make Australia's mark with the United States Administration'.⁴⁸

Beale's urging of Canberra to support US policies in Southeast Asia was founded on classic, if deeply flawed, Australian thinking about the nature and promise of the US alliance. The emphasis here was not on a united Western commitment to 'forward defence' but rather the imperative of maintaining a US presence on the Asian mainland at minimal cost to Australia. By recommending token military contributions to American efforts in Laos and Vietnam, Beale, like policymakers at home, hoped to ingratiate Australia with the US Administration and thereby compel American leaders to underwrite Australian security interests in the Asia-Pacific. This policy of 'defence on the cheap' was perhaps reinforced by the genuinely warm relations between the two countries. But the expectation that the US would blithely act as Australia's great power protector without any kind of qualifying criteria or commensurate benefit to the US was manifestly unrealistic. So, too, was Beale's corresponding belief that if only Australia was willing to meet US expectations in Southeast Asia this would enhance Australia's

47 Beale to Menzies, 5 December 1961, cablegram no. 3007, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/11, NAA, Canberra.

48 Beale to Barwick, 16 February 1962, cablegram no. 357, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1962/02, NAA, Canberra.

ability to influence Washington. The extent of Australia's profound sense of entitlement to US protection and the shortcomings of this thinking were soon apparent in the contradictory policies of the two countries towards Indonesia. Indeed, this problem not only represented the single greatest challenge to the alliance – or at least Australian expectations of it – since ANZUS was signed in 1951 but also dominated Beale's tenure as Ambassador to the US.

Writing in his memoirs many years later, Beale, after emphasising Australia's overall preoccupation with 'the Near North', went on to observe that within this framework:

Indonesia was our first concern. In the government we did not say much publicly about the extent of our interest in the new nation and our concern for what might happen there, but these things were never far below the surface.⁴⁹

While Australia–Indonesia relations were excellent to begin with, largely because of the role Australia had played in supporting Indonesian independence from the Netherlands in the late 1940s, tension soon developed over the status of West New Guinea (WNG). Australia was determined to keep the territory out of Indonesian hands, mainly because of the special strategic significance it attached to the whole island where the Japanese advance had been halted during World War II, and throughout the 1950s Canberra not only encouraged the Dutch to remain at all costs but also attempted to enlist guarantees of military assistance from Britain and the US in the event of hostilities with Indonesia.⁵⁰ The US, though suspicious of Indonesian President Achmed Sukarno, increasingly accepted the need to prevent Indonesia from being lured into the Soviet camp and so began to reconsider its previous opposition to Indonesian control of WNG.⁵¹ By 1961, as Sukarno moved inexorably towards the use of military force, Kennedy wanted a solution. A State Department plan to establish a UN-backed Indonesian trusteeship for the territory received a hostile reception in Canberra. When Menzies

49 Beale, *Inch of Time*, pp. 155–56.

50 See generally Gregory Pemberton, *All the Way: Australia's Road to Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, pp. 70–106.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 81–3.

met Kennedy in Washington in February 1961, he thus told him point-blank that any plan of this kind was 'fantastic' and that 'the ideal solution would be continued Dutch administration under a trusteeship'.⁵²

Beale, who was present at the discussion, agreed with his Prime Minister. When Kennedy pulled him aside after a meeting at the White House and asked how Australia viewed the prospect of WNG going to Indonesia, Beale insisted that 'the whole Australian nation would view it very gravely indeed'. In pressing this case, he emphasised 'the threat to the rest of New Guinea if a Communist Indonesia became our land neighbour'. Kennedy seemed to be satisfied with Beale's arguments, including the contention that 'the sheet anchor to which we should all cling was the principle of self-determination', and the matter was allowed to lapse.⁵³ Secretary of State Dean Rusk was equally sympathetic to Australian views. When, in September 1961, the Netherlands unsuccessfully pushed for the territory to be placed under UN administration – a scheme that Australia now supported in the face of Dutch moves to vacate the territory – Beale urged Rusk to submit a US resolution that would ensure that WNG was kept from Indonesia. Pulling out all the stops, he shrewdly appealed to the very aspects of the American national myth of which he had been so dismissive:

I said that [Australia] would be surprised and very disappointed if United States – whose nationhood was founded on this principle [of self-determination] – could not stand up and be counted on. I said it seemed to me that sometimes ... members of United States Government under-estimated United States influence and moral authority around the world.⁵⁴

Beale's subsequent claim that his meeting with Rusk was the 'determining factor' in the US decision to float its resolution in the UN was no empty boast. According to National Security Council official Bob Johnson, 'the position of the Australians is central to the Secretary of State's thinking', and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy concurred, observing that 'most of the specialists in the area believe that

52 Record of Meeting between John F Kennedy and Menzies, 24 February 1961, John F. Kennedy Library (hereafter JFKL), National Security Files (hereafter NSF), box 8, folder 1/1/61-3/2/61.

53 Beale to Menzies, 6 April 1961, cablegram no. 825, Canberra, series A11536, NAA, Canberra.

54 Beale to Menzies, 15 November 1961, cablegram no. 2832, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/11, NAA, Canberra.

the Secretary's respect for the Australians and dislike of Sukarno has led him to take a position in the UN debate which, if continued, can only help the Communists'.⁵⁵

Any temptation to gloat over Australia's apparent ability to influence the decision-making processes of a great power was soon dispelled when the American resolution was defeated and the US was then forced to vote against an alternative Indian resolution supported by Indonesia. Deeply embarrassed at being forced to take an 'anti-Indonesian' position in the UN, Kennedy and Rusk now surrendered to the arguments of 'the specialists'. Accordingly, in December 1961, Beale was called in to the State Department by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Averell Harriman, to discuss WNG. The absence of Rusk seemed to symbolise the State Department's determination to prevent sentiment from clouding the issue, an objective that was reinforced when Harriman was 'called away' and the grim news was delivered by his deputy, John Steeves. As delicately as he could, Steeves told Beale that with Indonesian threats of force increasing 'it was not now possible to stand still'. While the US sympathised with Australia's position and was committed to its security, it 'was convinced that by force or pressure Sukarno would get Netherlands New Guinea'. When Harriman returned and repeated this line, Beale could only forlornly insist that 'several real choices for the Papuans' be kept open. Too hard-headed to be persuaded by the appeal to principle that had worked so well with Rusk, Harriman replied that any act of self-determination for the Papuans would be a 'farce' and there was no hope of obtaining a real expression of opinion from 'such an ignorant people'.⁵⁶

A couple of days later, after the initial shock of the meeting had sunk in, Beale advised Canberra to develop an exit strategy so as to avoid alienating Australia in the event of a Dutch retreat. Wisely, he urged that the government should 'get prepared, if necessary, to "roll with the punch", i.e. accept the result with the best possible grace *when the time came, before it was too late*' (Beale's emphasis).⁵⁷ But the Australian Government was

55 See Robert H Johnson to Kennedy, 'West New Guinea', 30 November 1961, memorandum, and McGeorge Bundy to Kennedy, 'West Irian', 1 December 1961, both in JFKL, NSF, box 205, folder 11/12/61-11/30/61. For Beale's comment, see Beale to Menzies, 17 November 1961, cablegram no. 2854, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/11, NAA, Canberra.

56 Beale to Menzies, 'Netherlands New Guinea', 19 December 1961, cablegram no. 3136, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1961/12, NAA, Canberra.

57 Beale to Menzies, 21 December 1961, cablegram no. 3163, Canberra, series A11536, item 13, NAA, Canberra.

unwilling to throw in the towel just yet. After a flurry of cables between Canberra and Washington (and other posts) during the first week of January 1962, Barwick (now External Affairs Minister) instructed Beale to approach the Americans again and reassert the Australian position. Beale dutifully approached Harriman and argued the Australian case before asking directly whether the US would intervene in the event of Indonesia using force. To this Harriman replied that 'in his opinion the answer is *no*', and when Beale pressed him by asking whether the US would help Australia if it provided military assistance to the Dutch, he warned that 'it would be against our best interest to intervene'. The most the US was prepared to do, Beale quoted Harriman as saying, was to 'yell its head off' in the UN.⁵⁸ When, in one last throw of the dice, Beale approached Rusk a week later and repeated these arguments, saying that Australia was deeply disillusioned with the US lack of support, the Secretary of State, according to Beale, 'cut back quickly and curtly with a rhetorical question as to whether Australia itself had mobilised, and then went on to say that if I came back again [to say] we had done so it would be more persuasive'.⁵⁹

There was no effective response to such a brutal slap-down and Canberra now accepted the inevitable. As Menzies told Kennedy somewhat ruefully during a visit to the US in June 1962, self-determination for the West Papuans was 'tomorrow's fairy-tale'. Australia, he told Harriman two days later, 'is resigned to having Indonesia as a neighbour'.⁶⁰ There was a sense of betrayal in these comments; that when Australia needed its great power protector, the US had been found wanting. It also encouraged the belief that Sukarno, thus emboldened, would now seek to satisfy his expansionist ambitions elsewhere in the region. This fear soon assumed palpable form following a British proposal to bring Malaya, Singapore and the British territories of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo together in a Malaysian federation. Though initially open to the idea, Sukarno became positively hostile when an Indonesian-backed rebellion in Brunei was put down by Britain with Australian assistance. In January 1963, Indonesia declared a policy of 'Confrontation'

58 Beale to Menzies and Barwick, 8 January 1962, cablegram no. 46, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1962/01, NAA, Canberra.

59 Beale to Barwick, 16 January 1962, cablegram no. 107, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1962/01, NAA, Canberra.

60 Memorandum of Conversation between Kennedy and Menzies, 'West New Guinea', 17 June 1962, JFKL, NSC, box 8, folder 8/1/62-9/6/67; and Memorandum of Conversation between Harriman and Menzies, 'Indonesia', 19 June 1962, JFKL, NSF, box 8, folder 6/17/62-7/3/62.

towards the federation.⁶¹ While Australia discerned a familiar pattern of intimidation, bluff and diplomatic pressure in Indonesian attitudes to Malaysia, the US took a more cautious view. Reprising the main argument advanced during the WNG dispute, Harriman told Beale that every effort should be made to prevent Sukarno from 'taking a false step' and becoming further entangled with the Soviet Union. Indeed, in a thinly veiled dig at Australia, he 'switched suddenly' to WNG and said that 'if a settlement had been reached sooner this debit to [the] USSR would not have been so great and the Indonesian economy would have been in better shape'. There were, he urged, 'lessons to be learnt from West New Guinea'.⁶²

But the only lesson that Australia seemed to draw from the WNG dispute was not that it should channel its resources into meeting the potential and apparently imminent threat from an expansionist Indonesia, but rather that it should seek further guarantees of protection from the US. In Washington, Beale, while somewhat perturbed when Harriman told him that the US was only prepared to commit to Malaysia in the event of 'overt aggression', nevertheless urged Australian support on the now familiar grounds that 'the Americans would be surprised and disappointed if we decided otherwise, as they would consider it in our vital interests to do so'.⁶³ Though the US did subsequently agree to invoke ANZUS in the event of a direct attack on Australian forces in Malaysia, Kennedy himself demanded immediate consultations to clarify expectations on both sides. When in an extraordinary display of defiance Canberra stonewalled the Americans for several months, Kennedy again pulled Beale aside. The Ambassador told him that 'every Australian' believed that in the event of 'some military clash in our part of the world which we can't handle ourselves, then the United States is committed under the treaty and also morally and honourably to come to our aid'. This reading only seemed to reinforce the need from the US perspective for immediate consultations. As Beale humorously told it in his memoirs:

61 See generally John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australia and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-65*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1999.

62 Beale to Barwick, 'Talks in Washington', 2 February 1963, cablegram no. 332, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1963/01, NAA, Canberra.

63 Beale to Barwick, 13 February 1963, cablegram no. 423, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1963/02, NAA, Canberra.

Someone told me that when Kennedy advanced this view of the matter at one of his National Security Council meetings, General Maxwell Taylor said, 'My God! Does that mean that if some drunken digger in a slouch hat gets his ear shot off by an Indonesian sniper we've got to send down the Seventh Fleet?' – to which President Kennedy responded with a smile, 'Well, that's what Beale says'.⁶⁴

For Kennedy, however, it was no laughing matter. During a meeting with Beale and Australian Treasurer Harold Holt in October 1963, he spoke sternly about the Australian Government's stalling tactics and insisted that the proposed talks 'ought to take place quickly'.⁶⁵ More importantly, it became abundantly clear over the course of the conversation that the two countries not only disagreed on how to manage Indonesia but also possessed contrary expectations of the alliance. When Beale urged Kennedy to be 'firm with Sukarno' – a point repeated by Holt, who complained that the Indonesians were 'behaving like juvenile delinquents' – the President bluntly rejected his suggestion that the US should threaten Sukarno with military and economic reprisals:

The President said that the United States had not said anything like that. We have been working on an entirely different track and with considerable success ... We have *not* said 'if you do so and so the result will be war with the United States'. Right now something like that would not, in our opinion, be helpful. He felt that we have done the right thing with Sukarno through persuasion.

But for the Australians this difference of opinion on how to handle Sukarno was the least troubling aspect of the conversation. When it came to the question of US obligations under ANZUS, Beale went for broke. Asked by Kennedy how Australia understood these commitments in Malaysia, the Ambassador blurted out that any attack by Indonesia on Australian forces – even by guerrilla units – would bring ANZUS into play and 'the United States would be automatically engaged'. Though Holt promptly retreated from this position, Kennedy took the opportunity to leave the Australians in no doubt about the limits of US

64 Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 181.

65 Beale to Menzies, 2 October 1963, cablegram no. 2611, Canberra, series A6364, item WH1963/10, NAA, Canberra.

support in Malaysia. 'The Australians felt that if they got themselves involved we would also be obliged to be involved', Kennedy noted, before dropping a bombshell: 'but this was not the United States view'.⁶⁶

This was reinforced a couple of weeks later when Barwick visited Washington and was handed an aide-mémoire containing such strong caveats that any situation that would justify US intervention in Malaysia was virtually inconceivable. Indeed, Kennedy, wanting 'to make sure that the record was straight', told Barwick that the American people 'have forgotten ANZUS and are not at the moment prepared for a situation which would involve the United States' in a war with Indonesia. In response, Barwick could only say in a somewhat wounded tone that 'the United States, through Harriman, had encouraged Australia to support Malaysia'.⁶⁷ It was a remarkable exchange, not only because Kennedy felt such a strong urge to give the Australians a reality check on the nature of the alliance but also because the Australian response demonstrated precisely why such a dressing-down was deemed necessary. The admission by Beale, Holt and Barwick that the Australian Government had only agreed to support Malaysia in the belief that the Americans would automatically become involved – even though Australia had a direct strategic interest in the dispute irrespective of US commitments – was consistent with the Australian Ambassador's numerous missives to Canberra on the desirability of contributing to US efforts in Southeast Asia. Although he sometimes showed a more nuanced understanding of the alliance and its limitations – at the peak of the WNG dispute, for example – Beale could never escape the unrealistic expectations of ANZUS that dominated thinking at home and later prompted senior officials to commit ground troops to Vietnam. Beale had left Washington by the time the Vietnam decision was taken, but many years later he justified Australian involvement in the war with the same questionable assumptions about the alliance. Despite the 'lessons' of WNG, Malaysia and Vietnam itself, he still believed in the 1970s that Australian support for US policies would guarantee American protection in all circumstances:

66 Memorandum of Conversation between Kennedy, Harold Holt, Beale and Roger Hilsman, 2 October 1963, JFKL, NSF, box 8A, folder 8/14/63–10/3/63.

67 Memorandum of Conversation between Kennedy, Barwick and Beale, 17 October 1963, JFKL, NSF, box 8A, folder 10/18/63–11/16/63.

The Australian government believed ... that Australia could not eat its cake and have it too: it could not refuse to give help if called upon in a proper case, and yet expect to be given help when it needed it ... In taking this stand the government was not being a puppet, it was being prudent.⁶⁸

Conclusion

In May 1964, Beale had returned to Australia after six years in Washington. Menzies wanted to replace him with Athol Townley, but that plan died with Townley in December 1963. A scramble to find a suitable Cabinet minister to fill the post proved unsuccessful, and Beale on several occasions offered to remain in Washington until someone was chosen. But Menzies spurned these entreaties. When Beale forced the issue by cabling Menzies directly, the Prime Minister instructed him to relinquish the post and return to Australia. This episode proved that, despite Beale's frequent claims to the contrary, tension between the two men remained strong. Indeed, when Menzies visited Washington a few weeks after Beale's departure, Alan Renouf, who was acting head of mission, asked him why he had refused Beale's offer to stay. Menzies replied by saying:

'You know my nickname for Howard Beale?' and I said no. 'Mr Necessity'. And I looked at him and I said, 'What do you mean?' And he said, 'Necessity knows no law'.⁶⁹

It was a comment that reflected the depth of contempt Menzies still felt for Beale. The remark probably got back to Beale, but far from stewing over it, he turned the insult into a compliment by encapsulating his time in Washington with a phrase by Winston Churchill: 'Ambassadors are not sent abroad as compliments, but as necessities for daily use.'⁷⁰

Embracing this role for himself, 'Mr Necessity' dutifully served the Australian Government and people by not only assuming the representative and advocacy roles required of the position but also fulfilling the first rule of diplomacy, namely, keeping the home

68 Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 167.

69 Michael Wilson interview with Alan Renouf, 23 November 1993, Canberra, series TRC 2981/6, NLA, Canberra, pp. 76–77.

70 The section of Beale's memoirs concerned with his time in the US was thus titled 'Necessities for Daily Use'. Beale, *Inch of Time*, p. 113.

government comprehensively apprised of political, strategic and foreign policy developments in the host country. Though not as independently minded or as forceful as his predecessor, Beale by virtue of a gregarious personality probably enjoyed even greater and more continuous access to the highest levels of policymaking in Washington than Spender. One of the striking features of Beale's reporting was the regularity with which he received audiences with the most senior US officials. The intimacy of these personal contacts was confirmed by the US record of conversation between Kennedy, Holt and Beale in October 1963, which ended by noting: 'As is his custom, Sir Howard Beale arranged to speak to the President privately after the Minister had left the room.'⁷¹ Availing himself of this undeniable advantage, Beale worked hard to convey the views of the Australian Government to the US Administration and, conversely, to provide advice to policymakers in Canberra when the current was running against them. Thus he argued fiercely for the Australian position over Indonesian 'Confrontation' in WNG and Malaysia, sometimes with limited success, but advised Canberra to 'roll with the punch' once US policies shifted.

While Australia undoubtedly became more strategically integrated with the US during Beale's tenure, there is no reason to believe that this necessarily entailed a 'switch from British sycophant to American lickspittle', as historian Humphrey McQueen colourfully put it.⁷² Like many Australians of the time, Beale certainly felt some sentimental attachment for the US as an English-speaking, culturally similar country, but his worldview remained an essentially British one. He was deeply critical of the American brand of democracy, only warming to the Kennedy Administration when it seemingly took on Anglo characteristics. He questioned the competence of the US to lead the 'free world', believing that it was not sufficiently 'grown up' and urging his American friends to follow the example set by Britain as a world power. At the same time, Beale's reasons for promoting closer strategic ties with the US showed an acute appreciation of Australian interests and a commitment to using the alliance for Australian purposes. He persistently encouraged Australian policymakers to contribute to US efforts in Southeast Asia not because he possessed feelings of servility

71 Memorandum of Conversation between Kennedy, Holt, Beale and Hilsman, 2 October 1963.

72 Cited in McLean, 'British Colony to American Satellite?', p. 67. This is a common theme of many books that deal with the US–Australia alliance. For a critical appraisal of this literature, see David McLean, 'Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review', *International History Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2001, pp. 299–321.

for America, but on the contrary, because he believed that such support would 'make Australia's mark' with the US Administration and thereby enlarge the American sense of obligation to protecting Australia. The hard-headed nature of this advice was reflected in Beale's frequent assurances that such support would not require a large sacrifice on Australia's part; the US would bear the main burden of any commitment, while Australia's contribution would consist of 'token' military personnel.

This thinking, which reflected rather than influenced attitudes at home, demonstrated the unrealistic expectations that Beale and other Australian leaders attached to ANZUS. It not only overestimated the willingness of the US to do all the heavy lifting in Southeast Asia while Australia sat pat, but also underestimated how fundamental differences of interpretation could subvert Australian hopes for the alliance. They thus expected the US to set aside its own assessment of the strategic priorities in Indonesia, namely, preventing Sukarno from drifting further towards the communist bloc, and provide an open-ended commitment to Australian security in the event of a war with Jakarta over 'Confrontation' in WNG and Malaysia. The most surprising aspect of these disputes was that the US went as far as it did to meet Australian expectations, not only accommodating Australia over WNG until it was no longer possible to reconcile these expectations with American priorities, but also promising to support Australia in the event that its forces were overtly attacked in Malaysia. In the end, this policy of 'guilting' the Americans into supporting Australia's regional security had only limited success. But it did not prompt a fundamental shift in thinking on Australia's part. Beale continued to argue the case for a minimal commitment to Vietnam in the unreal expectation of absolute US loyalty. The decision to commit combat troops to Vietnam came long after his departure, but it reflected the same flawed assumptions. It bred an undue dependence on ANZUS that lasted until the 1970s, preventing Australia from taking a more constructive role in the alliance and embracing a deeper engagement with the countries of its own region.

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