Chapter V

Self-determination and Australian Foreign Policy in the West New Guinea Case

1. Introduction

The previous chapter showed that the Netherlands’ desire to hold on to sovereignty and lead the West Papuans to self-determination brought it in conflict with Indonesia. This chapter will describe how Australia became deeply involved in the dispute, with serious consequences for its relations with Indonesia. The description of Australian policy will particularly focus on the period 1957-1962, and explain what part self-determination for the West Papuans played in the policy. For an account of the main political events the reader is referred to the general introduction to this thesis and the introductory section of the previous chapter.

2. West New Guinea acquires a special position: Australia’s policy

Australia was involved in the West New Guinea conflict from the outset, being a member of the Good Offices Commission, established by the UN Security Council in 1947 for dealing with the decolonisation dispute between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Representing the Republic’s interests in this Commission Australia tried to reach an early settlement on terms favourable to
the Republic’s case.¹ When the future political status of the territory became a stumbling block preventing a settlement of the issue of Indonesia’s independence, Thomas Critchley, Australia’s representative, devised the troublesome formula under which the question regarding sovereignty over West New Guinea was left a matter of future talks between the Netherlands and Indonesia.²

In December 1949 the Labor government was replaced by a more European oriented Liberal Party and Country Party coalition led by Robert Menzies. The incoming government abandoned its predecessor’s policy of diplomatic and political support for the Indonesians and endorsed the idea to leave the matter of West New Guinea undecided for the time being. In practice this meant an indefinite continuation of the presence of a friendly European state in control. Regarding West New Guinea as vital to Australia’s strategic interests, Minister for External Affairs Percy Spender felt that Australia, as a party principal, was entitled to have those interests considered, therefore he demanded participation in any talks about the future of the territory.³ The Australian government ruled out a transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia.⁴

² The Dutch government requested Australian support for such a formula. Minister for External Affairs Evatt, mainly motivated by the consequences for Australia’s defence should Indonesia gain control over West New Guinea, instructed Critchley to exclude West New Guinea from the transfer of sovereignty. See Critchley, Susan, Australian Relations with Indonesia: What went Wrong?, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, Nov. 1992, pp.68 and 73.
Spender, viewing Indonesia with suspicion and fearing that it would only be a matter of time before it would extend its claim to include Australian New Guinea, an area that had proven its importance to Australia’s defence during World War II, had profound misgivings about a transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia, that country being perceived as politically unstable. He specifically disputed geographic contingency as a valid argument for Indonesia to justify inheriting sovereignty from the colonial state. In his argumentation the interests of Australia and the indigenous people were both invoked in an attempt to justify a policy aimed at keeping Indonesia out. A purchase of the area on grounds of ethnic and geographic similarity was considered a possible course. In order to achieve his goal, Spender encouraged the seemingly wavering Dutch government in its opposition to any transfer of sovereignty, pledging Australian support.

Spender received bipartisan support for his policy, as the ALP had also returned to the search for a safety screen with Asia. Herbert Evatt (ALP) wanted friendly relations with Indonesia but

5 Spender’s anti-Indonesian mood was partly fuelled by the communists making headway in Asia. An Indonesian takeover could thus bring communism, and with it the Cold War, to Australia’s northern shores. E.G. Whitlam, ‘Indonesia and Australia: Political Aspects’, in J.J. Fox, R.G. Garnaut, McCawley, and J.A.C. Mackie (eds.), *Indonesia: Australian Perspectives*, Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU, 1980, p.756.

6 In parliament Spender declared: “Quite apart from Australia’s interests.... -- the mainland of New Guinea [is] of vital importance to our security --.... It would be both unreal and unreasonable that any change of status for the territory should occur which disregards the interests of the indigenous population and those of Australia.” *Current Notes*, Vol.21 (1950), pp.416-417.

he opposed a change in West New Guinea's status. Like Spender, he stressed the separate and distinct nature of [West] New Guinea. Australian public opinion also firmly supported solutions entailing either Australian or Dutch control; few people supported an Indonesian takeover.

The future battlelines were thus drawn at an early stage, with the Australian government rejecting Indonesia’s legal claims. Diplomatic entanglements explain the Australian government’s use of legal and ethnic considerations, rather than avowing fear of Indonesian expansionism. Traumatic experiences during the World War II had shown Australia’s vulnerability to an assault from the North and explain the strategic importance attributed to the island of New Guinea. At this stage of the conflict Papuan self-determination played no real role in the decision making process, although it did appear in public rhetoric.

3. West New Guinea in cold storage

8 Critchley, op. cit., pp.i. and 87.
12 ‘Cold storage’ was a term used by the Dutch government and adopted by Casey which implied the need to keep the issue out of the (international) political limelight and preserve the political status quo of West New Guinea, hoping that with the time go by Indonesia would drop its claim to sovereignty.
When negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands failed in 1950, the Department of External Affairs advised its new Minister, Richard Casey, to aim for a continuation of the quiescent status quo, and an extension of administrative co-operation with the Dutch as a means to achieve this goal.\textsuperscript{13} However, as the other part of a twin-track policy, Indonesia should not be alienated; therefore every other opportunity had to be seized to build a cordial relationship with the fledgling neighbour.\textsuperscript{14} The ambiguity in the government’s policy, characteristic of its management of relations with Indonesia and the issue of West New Guinea’s status throughout the dispute, was visible already.

Relying on the support of a great and powerful friend, the position of the United States was of utmost importance to Australian decision makers, but according to Casey the US government itself was not sure how to deal with the problem. It was apparently inclined to support Indonesia’s claim since Indonesian control was essential for its political stability. Casey, however, was told that the US did not want to offend the Dutch and Australian governments.\textsuperscript{15} Realising that American neutrality was the best he could expect, Casey pursued the political

\textsuperscript{13} Susan Critchley claimed that even in the early 1950s some External Affairs officials preferred to concentrate exclusively on preserving friendly relations with Indonesia. Although she fails to provide any evidence for her claim, the presence of supporters of such a doctrine would explain the future prominence of the ‘Indonesia Lobby’, whose role will be discussed in Chapter VII. Critchley, op. cit., p.143. However, since Critchley took her quote from the index of Percy Spender’s book, \textit{Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Colombo Plan}, p.298, her claim is not very convincing.

\textsuperscript{14} At an early stage of his term as minister, Casey had become aware of the pivotal importance of Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular to Australia. However, Indonesia’s claim to sovereignty played havoc with Casey’s intention to build a solid relationship. T.B. Millar (ed.), \textit{Australian Foreign Minister - The Diaries of R.G. Casey, 1951-1960}, London, Collins, 1972, p.37.
status quo. Unlike the Americans, the British government -- Australia’s other great and powerful friend -- with whom he discussed the issue several times, was sympathetic towards his cold storage policy. 16 Casey preferred a continuation of Dutch sovereignty but was prepared to enter into a joint trusteeship. 17 In February 1952 Casey publicly recognised Dutch sovereignty, declaring it a goal to have it continued. 18

Casey was at a much earlier stage in the conflict than the Netherlands guided by a strong awareness of the limitations of his policy due to Australia’s dependence on allies. Therefore Casey persevered with great zeal to keep the issue in cold storage. This aim he hoped to achieve through combined pressure by Australia and the United Kingdom on Indonesia, the Netherlands and the US, which he knew was still wavering in its support. 19 During talks with Sukarno and foreign minister Subardjo in April 1952, Casey put his tactics into practice. He tried to impress his hosts of Australia’s determination, rather misleadingly advancing public opinion in Australia as the driving force behind the policy. 20 Australian public opinion opposed an Indonesian take over of West New Guinea, but to claim that public opinion forced the government to its policy course was incorrect. As the discussion will show, the opportunity for Australian public opinion to be included in the foreign policy making process and hence to affect

16 Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
17 Casey brought up the idea of a joint trusteeship in a conversation with Anthony Eden on 19 January 1952. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
18 Statement made by Casey on 6 February 1952. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
19 Some officials inside the State Department wanted the policy to revert to support for Indonesia. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
the foreign policy making centre was very limited, given the lack of public discussion in parliament. Sukarno probably assessed the origins of Australia’s anxiety correctly as originating in the External Affairs and Defence Departments, and cabinet.

In the second half of 1952 signs from the Netherlands were reassuring, with its new government more firmly committed to holding on to sovereignty. In order to bolster the Dutch, Casey suggested to offer administrative co-operation, an idea cabinet approved. In the years to come administrative co-operation would develop into a major element in the policy to keep the Netherlands in West New Guinea and to synchronise the development of the two halves of the island, allowing for a possible future unification under Australian administration.

External Affairs rejected any defence co-operation, as suggested by the Netherlands' foreign minister Luns. With such commitments Australia would have embarked on a course independent of its powerful allies and this would have been an unacceptable violation of Australia’s traditional security doctrine. Thus prevailing perceptions regarding Australia’s vulnerability in a hostile world required it to stay within the boundaries provided by the safe haven of the alliances with Britain and the US. These perceptions and commitments constituted the margins within which Australian foreign policy makers could select goals and means.

20 Millar, op. cit., pp.57 and 80.
21 Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
22 Luns told the Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Stirling, that the Dutch government was anxious to co-ordinate the defence of West New Guinea with other countries; in June 1953, however, External Affairs found overriding reasons why the Netherlands could not be
Reassured by signs that both the American and Netherlands’ governments wanted to keep the issue in cold storage, Casey agreed with Luns during the latter’s visit to Australia in 1953 that self-government was no more than a long term goal. Casey continued his policy, as advised by his department, of support for the Netherlands’ stand while aiming at cordial relations with Indonesia and assisting in its political, administrative, and economic stabilisation. For the time being these two goals were not yet incongruent, allowing the government to postpone a hard decision on priority among the policy goals.

When Indonesia decided to refer the question of sovereignty to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1954, disappointed over the failure to reach an agreement with the Netherlands, the period of cold storage ended, requiring the Australian government to re-assess its priorities. Casey reconfirmed support for Dutch sovereignty as well as his desire to keep the issue in calm waters. However, the failure of the policy to keep the issue out of the spotlight of international politics, forced the Australian government to find a more appropriate answer to reject Indonesia’s claim to sovereignty, while also minimising damage to its relations with

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23 Inward cablegram I.4705, 9 April 1953, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 5.
24 Luns declared himself in favour of the integration of West New Guinea with Australia’s half of the island, an idea not rejected by Casey. 1 July 1953, Australian Archives, file no. TS45/1/3/15/1/2TS.
25 Aide memoir, 2 July 1953, Australian Archives, file no. TS45/1/3/15/1/2TS. Just how carefully the Australian government manoeuvred is shown by the refusal to grant the Netherlands observer status at SEATO. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
26 Ibid.
Indonesia. Thus the real motives -- fear of having to share a land-border with a potentially unstable Asian neighbour, which could turn communist and bring the cold war to Australia’s doorstep -- had to be covered by a facade of moral concerns over the well-being of the West Papuans.

4. Political support for the Netherlands and the discovery of self-determination

Since the US had remained neutral Indonesia had been unable to put sufficient pressure on the Netherlands in negotiations over West New Guinea’s future political status, which had therefore repeatedly failed. Hoping to capitalise on anti-colonial sentiments amongst the growing number of newly independent states as well as the socialist bloc, Indonesia ushered in a new phase of the conflict by bringing the issue before UNGA in 1954.

Notwithstanding this internationalisation of the conflict, the Australian government remained vehemently opposed to any transfer of sovereignty. As Casey declared in the House: “The Australian government will....oppose not only a transfer of sovereignty but will also vote against any resolution which has transfer of sovereignty as its ultimate objective.”\(^{27}\) Although the importance of security motivations for Australia’s policy had been admitted publicly,\(^{28}\) Casey also expressed his desire to wait until the West Papuans had reached a stage of development

\(^{27}\) Quoted from House of Representatives, 2 November 1954. Australian Archives, file 3036/6/2/1 part 1.
where they could decide their political future. Casey concluded his statement with the wish that the West New Guinea issue would not disturb relations with Indonesia. The Leader of the Opposition, Evatt, recognised Dutch sovereignty and supported the government. His concerns were similar to Casey’s. Without any significant opposition the government could thus proceed with its policy.

With security considerations prevailing over good relations with Indonesia -- the wider implications of Australia’s opposition to Indonesia’s demands were still not understood -- Australia had to give unequivocal support to the Netherlands in its efforts to block a UN resolution demanding a resumption of talks over West New Guinea. Predicated upon the concept of cold storage, continuation of the status quo was the best conceivable outcome for Australia. Since the Australian government could not disclose its Asiaphobic and concomitant security fears as reason for its stand, predominantly legalistic considerations would be devised to defend its position in the UN.

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28 Casey said to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) that the security of both halves of New Guinea was vitally important to Australia. *SMH*, 23 November 1954.
29 House of Representatives, 2 November 1954, pp.2502-2503. In August 1954, in reply to a question by ALP Representative Clyde Cameron, Casey had declared his opposition to a transfer of sovereignty since the Dutch made better administrators. He failed to mention self-determination on that occasion. House of Representatives, 18 August 1954, pp.352-353.
30 Ibid., pp.2503-2504.
31 House of Representatives, 2 November 1954, p.2511. Evatt wanted a better circumscribed plan for the future of West New Guinea, but otherwise endorsed the government’s policy.
Thus when Indonesia introduced a tentative resolution in the Political Committee of UNGA, calling on the Netherlands and Indonesia to resume negotiations, Australia’s representative, Percy Spender, having prepared his counter offensive in close liaison with the Netherlands, rejected Indonesia’s legal, ethnological, and historical claims. Grounded on historical and legal arguments Spender claimed that sovereignty should remain with the Netherlands. Spender also adduced concern over the Papuans’ primitive state as an argument for continuation of Netherlands’ administration: “The indigenous people must not be handed over to any nation....within the terms and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, they shall be permitted to determine their own ultimate destiny.”\(^{32}\) The phrasing showed that an ultimate choice would not be made in the near future.

In the face of failing support, the Indonesian delegation withdrew the draft resolution and replaced it with a more moderate resolution that aimed at bringing the parties together in order to reach a peaceful solution. Even this was unacceptable to the Dutch and Australian governments, given the cold storage and \textit{status quo} concepts. Casey rejected negotiations as pointless since the Netherlands was holding on to sovereignty, which was the only thing Indonesia wanted. Absorption of Dutch New Guinea into Indonesia would also deny the inhabitants of ever having a chance to determine their future.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\) Percy Spender, in the First Committee of the 9th UNGA, 24 November 1954, quoted from a speech by Calwell in the House of Representatives, 24 February 1959, p.204.

\(^{33}\) Department of Foreign Affairs, press release 87, 3 December 1954, Australian Archives, file no. 3036/6/1 part 14.
The resolution failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority in the plenary, and the intense lobbying by the Dutch and Australian delegations seemed to have paid off. Victory proved pyrrhic, however, as the issue refused to go away in Indonesian and international politics. At the 1955 Bandung conference Sukarno managed to get a resolution adopted by the non-aligned nations: “The conference supports the position of Indonesia...[and] urges the Netherlands government to reopen negotiations.” The resolution in turn aroused the anxiety of Luns over the need to come to more definite security arrangements, as he informed Menzies in The Hague in February 1955.

Menzies, although acknowledging the security vacuum, wanted to adopt a stand of wait-and-see, while concentrating on securing US co-operation in the defence of Southeast Asia. Security goals and considerations were thus still on top of his policy agenda. The means to achieve them, namely through a stalemate, had not changed either, in spite of the stronger pro-Indonesian coalition. Prevalent Asiaphobic views would time and again prevent the Australian government from a realistic evaluation of its policy means and goals, making its policy increasingly obsolescent, in the face of growing international support for Indonesia.

During this important phase of policy making, when the means to achieve the goals changed from diplomatic support for the Netherlands behind closed doors, to outright diplomatic

34 Australian Archives, file no. 3036/6/1 part 15.
35 Report on a three day visit by Menzies to the Netherlands in February 1955, Australian Archives, file no. 3036/6/2/1 part 1.
36 Id.
lobbying in the United Nations, parliament, and thus the opposition, was denied a voice in the
evaluation and subsequent deliberation of policy goals and means. Menzies, in a major speech
on foreign affairs in May 1955, did not raise the issue, to the annoyance of the opposition in the
House. On behalf of the ALP O’Connor expressed his frustration, but he was unable to force
Menzies and Casey to engage in a debate.\textsuperscript{37} The House’s own procedures, in combination with
party discipline, prevented it from becoming involved in policy evaluation and deliberation. In
order to explain changes in policy means and goals one must study the direct decision making
environment, that is, advisory bodies and their reports, and decision making processes of
cabinet.

Cabinet debated the West New Guinea issue in June 1955, following a submission by Casey in
which he had explained that the reason for supporting the Netherlands was that, legally,
sovereignty was clearly established. Also the Dutch made good neighbours, and Australia had
an interest in having a non-communist government in control in West New Guinea.\textsuperscript{38} In its
discussion cabinet did not follow Casey’s recommendation to try to persuade the Netherlands
to place the territory under trusteeship. Instead cabinet decided to make the Netherlands more
determined by giving it every possible diplomatic backing. In order to stand a better chance in
the next UNGA, the UK and US needed to be brought into the Australian-Dutch camp. The
legal argument pertaining to the formal question of sovereignty would again be used in the

\textsuperscript{37} House of Representatives, 3 May 1955, p.349.
\textsuperscript{38} Submission to cabinet no.412, 27 June 1955, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 2.
UNGA to justify a continuation of Dutch administration. Unfortunately cabinet minutes never reproduce the actual discussion precipitating any decision, and therefore one can only speculate who opposed Casey’s idea of a trusteeship. The Minister for Defence was a likely candidate, but given the Prime Minister’s domination of cabinet in other decisions regarding West New Guinea, Menzies must have been against the idea as well.

Fearing majority support for Indonesia in the UN, the Australian government was somewhat relieved with West New Guinea’s removal from the agenda of the UNGA in December 1955, when the two opponents settled for talks on terms that made a discussion of the West New Guinea issue possible. With radical and communist forces in Indonesia as the champions of the West Irian cause, Casey hoped that the talks between the moderate Harahap Government and the Netherlands would not be an outright failure.

The Defence Committee, an important advisory body of cabinet, reached similar conclusions: “The Indonesian government lacks both means and experience for firm control and effective administration, and cannot be regarded as a friendly and stable regime yet...it is likely that communist influence will make considerable progress.” The report therefore insisted that [West] New Guinea would remain in the hands of a friendly power. For security reasons Indonesia had to be denied control, but in the interests of moderate forces in Jakarta and the

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39 Cabinet decision no. 482, 28 June 1955, Australian Archives, file no. C508 part 1.
40 Quoted from an unmarked defence paper, December 1955, Australian Archives, file no. 3036/6/1 part 5.
Harahap Government (see Chapter IV), talks between Indonesia and the Netherlands should not result in outright failure.\textsuperscript{41}

When the talks ended in failure the Defence Committee concluded that a communist Indonesia would be a real possibility after 1959, with grave consequences for the security of the whole Southeast Asian region.\textsuperscript{42} Therefore Casey did not share Luns’ delight over the outcome of the talks; events proved him right. In February 1956 the Harahap Government unilaterally abrogated the 1949 Round Table Conference Agreement, a move that further strained relations with the Netherlands. When Sastroamidjojo replaced the moderate Harahap Government, Indonesia veered round to a more anti-Dutch stand. With radical elements and PKI gaining ground in Indonesian politics, a non-peaceful solution with grave consequences for Australia’s security situation became more conceivable, making Australia’s position all the more difficult: how could it remain on friendly terms with an increasingly assertive and radical Indonesia while denying it sovereignty over West New Guinea?

The anti-Dutch measures taken by the Indonesian government in 1956 caused concern in the Netherlands and made Luns more determined than ever to involve Australia in the security of West New Guinea.\textsuperscript{43} Ambassador Winkelman even offered the Secretary of External Affairs,  

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{42} Defence Committee-meeting, 23 February 1956, Australian Archives, file no. 666(57)/5.  
\textsuperscript{43} Luns asked McClure Smith, Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands, that he formally ask to consult Australia prior to taking any significant decision concerning Netherlands New Guinea. Conversation Luns - McClure Smith, 22 June 1956, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
Arthur Tange, a secret treaty under which the Netherlands committed itself not to change West New Guinea’s status, offering Australia a reliable forward defence shield. On each occasion, however, Australian officials played a waiting game, in line with the idea to keep the Dutch committed while not offending the Indonesians by becoming directly involved. On many occasions Indonesian officials tried to convince the Australians of their peaceful intentions and gave assurances that no violence would be used. However inflammatory speeches, especially by President Sukarno, aroused growing suspicion about Indonesia’s future policy.

Australian parliament paid little attention to the West New Guinea issue in 1956. The opposition generally agreed with the government’s policy, as Arthur Calwell’s (ALP) request that the government confirm that it would remain firm in the UN showed. In April 1957 Casey gave the briefest of policy outlines in the House, merely stating that the policy had not changed. On behalf of the ALP group in the Senate, Donald Willesee criticised not the content of the government’s policy, but the way it had over-emphasised its case in the UN. In the House Gough Whitlam (ALP) attacked the government for not promoting the idea of a trusteeship in the UN. As yet self-determination played no role in the considerations of both the government and the opposition, but this was about to change.

44 Conversation Winkelman - Tange, 15 October 1956, Australian Archives, file no. 3036/6/2/1 part 1.
45 House of Representatives, 19 September 1956, p.635.
46 Ibid., 2 April 1957, p.417.
47 “The government has over-emphasised the problem [but] has been correct in its diagnosis...” Quoted from Senate, 4 April 1957, p.355.
In 1957 a special External Affairs study identified Australia’s contemporary interests in West New Guinea; security issues dominated. Concluding that the territory should not fall into the hands of a potentially hostile country, Indonesia was ruled out as an acceptable power since it might become communist, which would turn West New Guinea into a part of Australia’s forward defence problem. The territory was also said to serve Australia’s political interests as a buffer with an unstable Indonesia, although the issue admittedly strained relations with that state. Australian control over East New Guinea brought with it special interests in developments in the western half of the island. In this respect communism, nationalism, anti-white feelings, and Asian migration were feared.

As possible courses to safeguard aforementioned interests the study suggested:

[To] continue to give full support to the Netherlands in its present policy, while avoiding any unnecessary provocation of Indonesia... [to] continue to emphasise that [Australia] has direct and essential interests in Netherlands New Guinea; to take account of Australia’s objectives in New Guinea as a whole in examining Australia’s future policies towards West New Guinea -- eventual unification would serve these interests best; [to] continue to oppose UN intervention or mediation; in order to be successful [Australia should] emphasise that the principle of self-determination has been accepted by the Netherlands; [to] expand administrative co-operation with the Netherlands; [that] Australian policy over the longer term should aim at development of eastern and western New Guinea along similar lines.

48 House of Representatives, 11 April 1957, p.810.
49 The unmarked study, most likely conducted by a group of External Affairs officers under the chairmanship of W.D. Forsyth, was submitted in August 1957. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 5.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
The text shows that Australia’s public support for self-determination in reality served as a means to muster enough international support to prevent Indonesia from acquiring a two-thirds majority in the UN. The authors still believed that continuation of Dutch presence would ultimately allow for a unification of the two halves under Australian administration.

Ambassadors directly involved in Australia’s policy were requested to comment on the study, giving them an opportunity for direct impact on the development of the policy plan. Ambassador to the Netherlands McClure Smith agreed on the strategic importance attributed to the area and hence the need to keep the Netherlands in place. He suggested to intensify administrative co-operation on that account.\(^52\) Laurence McIntyre, Ambassador to Indonesia, disagreed with the long term solutions proposed, and wanted to know how strong the desire was to keep Indonesia out.\(^53\) Both Ambassadors accepted the objective of a united New Guinea in the long run. Percy Spender, however, expressed concern about pursuing this course since it could provoke Indonesia to claim all of New Guinea.\(^54\)

Thus diplomatic posts gave contradictory advice. A continuation of the present policy served best to keep the centrifugal forces at bay. Like the Dutch cabinet, the Australian policy making centre was close to indecisiveness. The easy way out was a continuation of muddling through, in an attempt to postpone hard choices regarding long term goals and means. The same

\(^{52}\) Memo no.627, The Hague, 15 August 1957, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 25.
\(^{53}\) Memo no.1494, Jakarta, 22 August 1957, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 25.
\(^{54}\) Record of a meeting on the future of Australia’s policy, 7 November 1957. Ibid.
international environment that was eroding the government’s unity would ultimately force it to make a choice. For the time being the Australian government would continue to give the Netherlands diplomatic support in the UN and intensify administrative co-operation, but even a diplomatic victory was unlikely to silence Indonesia, nor would closer administrative co-operation. How to achieve that result no one seemed to know.

A secret report for the cabinet prepared by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) -- a principal assessment authority regarding intelligence, chaired by a Deputy Secretary of External Affairs with a mixed interdepartmental civilian and Service Intelligence membership\(^55\) -- estimated as unlikely the chance of Indonesia gaining control over Netherlands New Guinea by the end of 1962. Even with large scale communist assistance Indonesia would probably not launch an attack.\(^56\) The report played down the military threat, and makes the government’s careful continuation of policy understandable.

The administrative agreement signed between the Netherlands and Australia on 6 November 1957, just prior to the next UNGA, was a smart compromise intended to satisfy the Netherlands’ desire for Australian support while not overtly offending Indonesia. The agreement was tactfully phrased so as to impress the UNGA with the laudable intention of the shared administrative policies of the Netherlands and Australia. The press statement announcing the

\(^{55}\) Jeffrey T. Richelson & Desmond Ball, *The Ties that Bind: Intelligence Co-operation between the UKUSA Countries -- the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1985, pp.52-53.
agreement said that the two countries based their policies “on the interests and inalienable rights of [the] inhabitants in conformity with the provisions and spirit of the UN Charter.” The statement went on to mention the ethnological similarities between West and East New Guinea and indicated the intention to increase administrative co-operation: “[We are] determined to promote an uninterrupted development of this process until such time as the inhabitants of the territories concerned will be in a position to determine their own future.”

In the UNGA, Australia subsequently lobbied vehemently against a resolution which invited “both parties to pursue their endeavours to find a solution of the dispute in conformity with the principles of the UN Charter,” and requested the Secretary-General “to assist the parties concerned as he deems it appropriate in the implementation of this resolution.” Using the administrative agreement to convince UN members of their sincerity to prepare the people for self-government in conformity with Article 73 of the UN Charter regarding non-self-governing territories, Australia and the Netherlands scrambled through with just enough votes to defeat the resolution.

The administrative agreement had not changed the Australian government’s policy itself, rather had self-determination been promoted to the forefront as a public relations instrument. The

56 Minute by the Defence Committee in Canberra based on JIC report no.13/1957, 19 September 1957, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 25.
57 Department of External Affairs, press release 108, 6 November 1957, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1/1.
58 Ibid.
59 Australian Archives, file no. 915/9 part 46.
predominance of the executive over the legislature in the West New Guinea policy had not altered either. The policy making centre could thus conceal its growing concerns and divisions over policy. In the House, Casey once more denied Evatt the opportunity of a debate on the issue, on the pretext that the case had just been brought before the First Committee of the UN. In December, Casey’s statement in the House, finally offered an opportunity for discussion. The minister covered familiar ground, stressing the importance of good relations with Indonesia, and the government’s opposition to Indonesia’s claims. Speaking about the recently signed joint Australian-Dutch declaration on administrative co-operation, he pointed out that the co-operation should benefit the interests of the natives in the first place until they would be in a position to determine their own future, but a united New Guinea was a possibility. In official documents it was actually the preferred outcome, but Casey did not share this secret with parliament.

On behalf of the opposition, Evatt mentioned his desire for good relations with both the Netherlands and Indonesia. His suggestion to negotiate an economic and security agreement with both countries showed just how ill informed the opposition, as an outsider to policy making and its constraints, had become. Evatt admitted that it would not solve the question of sovereignty, but it should at least improve the climate. Representatives on the government’s side immediately declared the idea impractical. Labor’s internal disagreement over a solution to

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60 House of Representatives, 20 November 1957, p.2319.
61 The ALP Conference of 1957 had in fact suggested a security pact between Australia, the Netherlands and Indonesia as a solution. Evatt was merely implementing the party’s policy. House of Representatives, 27 April 1959, p.1254.
the conflict -- Jim Cairns preferred a UN mandate to the solution offered by Evatt -- further weakened the opposition in the debate and probably contributed to its failure to present a realistic alternative to the government’s policy.\textsuperscript{63}

In the face of diminishing support in the UN, William Wentworth (LP) advised the government not to use the legal argument any longer, but to stress the interests of the people of West New Guinea instead. They would benefit from a UN trusteeship, which Australia should advocate.\textsuperscript{64} Doug Anthony (Country Party), fearing Indonesian numbers and communism, suggested an Australian-Indonesian trusteeship as a solution.\textsuperscript{65} The result of the debate was inconclusive. With the opposition divided and its own ranks closed through party discipline, the government’s policy survived the debate unharmed. The government continued its efforts to obtain more support from the United States,\textsuperscript{66} and also continued its administrative co-operation in conformity with the agreement signed in November 1957. However the hard fought diplomatic victory in the UN was not long lived. In early December 1957 the Indonesian government nationalised Dutch assets, and all Dutch citizens were expelled. Preventing Indonesia from

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 5 December 1957, p.2930.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., pp.2949-2950.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p.2956.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p.2982.
\textsuperscript{66} During the ANZUS Council meeting, the Australian delegation raised the issue without any success. Casey too undertook in vain to persuade Secretary of State Dulles to change his neutral stand. Critchley, op. cit., pp.187-188. Dulles did reaffirm that a transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia was against US security interests, but that a change of policy towards unqualified support would deny the US the chance to maintain its relations with those Indonesian leaders who might influence other Asian states. Millar, op. cit., pp.278-279.
taking over West New Guinea while also aiming at friendly relations, became increasingly irreconcilable goals.

In April 1958 Casey restated in the House that the administrative agreement between Australia and the Netherlands served to offer the indigenous people the chance to decide their own future. Explaining the benefits of the agreement in terms of a synchronisation of development plans he hinted that unification was a goal.\(^{67}\) Evatt replied by reconfirming his desire to see Australia co-operate in the administration of West New Guinea with both the Netherlands and Indonesia.\(^{68}\) The outcome of the UN debate had apparently not brought about any development in the ALP’s thinking on the matter. His alternative was weak given the irreconcilable positions of the Netherlands and Indonesia. Evatt’s suggestion implied that he was not aware of the real state of affairs, which comes as no surprise since Chapter III already found that the House had inadequate means to obtain information from the government. The institutional means available to the opposition to influence foreign policy were weak in the first place but, as this example proves, a lack of access to inside information even further reduced the opposition’s impact on foreign policy. The ALP thus remained an outsider to policy making regarding West New Guinea.

\(^{67}\) House of Representatives, 15 April 1958, p.875.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., p.876. The ALP Conference of 1957 had suggested a security pact between Australia, the Netherlands and Indonesia as a solution. See also Calwell in the House of Representatives, 27 April 1959, p.1254.
In July 1958 the JIC produced another study on the case. The objective was still to have the Netherlands stay in West New Guinea “until such a change would occur in the political status...as was compatible with Australian interests.”69 Ultimate self-determination was the only such change the committee foresaw. Australia should influence and support the Netherlands’ administration to promote ultimate self-determination compatible with Australia’s interests. The political deterrent against an Indonesian attack was to be increased. JIC favoured a contribution to the defence of the territory, but only if the United States would participate.70 Action proposed to implement these ideas encompassed measures to influence the Dutch administration, continuation of the political deterrent, and an attempt to persuade the United States to contribute to the defence of West New Guinea.71

Casey managed to get two papers, ‘Indonesia and the Netherlands’72 and ‘Notes for a talk with the Netherlands Ambassador’, accepted by cabinet. None of the ministers made any significant contribution. Cabinet supported the idea of putting maximum pressure on the US government in order to make it adopt a firm stand against any armed attack by Indonesia,73 but in its decision cabinet adhered to Menzies’ policy maxim not to become directly involved in any military conflict, unless in the company of powerful friends.74

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Submission no.1281, 8 July 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
73 Conversation Casey - Tange, 9 July 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 25.
74 Menzies in the House of Representatives, 20 April 1955, p.50.
The Netherlands’ Ambassador to Australia, Lovink, strongly pressed Casey regarding an Australian assurance of military assistance, claiming that this was a *conditio sine qua non* for the Netherlands. Casey, bound by cabinet’s decision, did not budge, since the US had not given a similar guarantee.\(^75\)

In yet another report,\(^76\) which considered the implications of the conclusions of the July 1958 JIC/JIP report, JIC revised its opinion regarding Indonesia’s capability to launch an attack on West New Guinea. By mid-1959 Indonesia would have significantly increased its capacity for an attack and, the report warned, the advocates of extreme action were in the ascendancy. Indonesia had also become more susceptible to communist pressure. For these reasons JIC predicted a more provocative policy.\(^77\) Thus the international security situation was perceived as more dangerous, demanding a reconsideration of policy.

In response to the JIC agendum Casey took a submission to cabinet informing it of the JIC’s prediction that Indonesia’s military capacity and willingness to risk a military confrontation would grow.\(^78\) The submission also mentioned Dutch requests for Australian military assistance. Subsequently it summarised the policy goals that the government had hitherto pursued and declared that Indonesia did not make a reliable neighbour since its future political course was

\(^75\) Outward cablegram, O.8860, 14 July 1958, Australian Archives, file no.915/9 part 46.
\(^76\) JIC, Agendum no.53/1958 supplement no.3, is undated, but must have been produced somewhere between August and Casey’s visit to the Netherlands on 28 and 29 September 1958. Australian Archives, file no. TS666/42.
\(^77\) Ibid. Australian Archives, file no. TS666/42.
much in doubt with communism threatening to become the dominant force. Further the submission noted the benefits to the development of the Australian half of the island if West New Guinea was in the hands of a friendly power with a comparable policy. Finally the report mentioned the interest of the indigenous people in a continuation of Dutch presence. Casey repeated that the policy had intended to stiffen Dutch resolve without alienating Indonesia, which might otherwise assume a hostile position or fall into the hands of the communists. A solution to the conflict was claimed not to be readily available.

In their contribution to the submission the Defence Committee and Chiefs of Staff Committee had jointly concluded that retention of Australian New Guinea was a primary defence objective and as long as Indonesia might fall under communist influence a grave security threat would ensue from its possession of Netherlands New Guinea. However, Australia’s support for the Netherlands’ administration was an important factor in the political attitudes and development of Indonesia. Keeping Indonesia neutral or friendly was of great importance to Australian defence. Considering this delicate balance the Defence Committee advised that Australia should only enter into military commitments when the US did so.79

Still reflecting conflicting interests, the recommendations offered in Casey’s submission disappointingly, but not surprisingly, provided no new direction to Australian policy. Efforts to keep the Netherlands in West New Guinea were to be continued, since a trusteeship would not

78 Submission no.1312 Netherlands New Guinea - Indonesia, Australian Archives, file no. C508 part 1.
be feasible with a two-thirds majority in the UN out of reach. To this end administrative co-
operation had to be intensified once again. Casey advocated that Australia should also continue
and intensify the policy of deterrence. Australia should be ready to enter into military agreements
when the US was. 80 Defence minister Philip McBride stressed the importance that defence
authorities placed upon the island of New Guinea, and warned against Indonesia’s growing
military strength. 81 Public opinion also played some role in the discussion, with several ministers
claiming that the Australian public demanded military support to the Netherlands in case of
Indonesian aggression. 82 Other ministers felt a moral obligation to fight an aggressor, whatever
the position of the United States.

Prime Minister Menzies as usual summed up the discussion in cabinet. He stressed the strategic
importance of Australian New Guinea to Australia’s defence, and in turn the importance of
Dutch New Guinea to the defence of Australian New Guinea. This led to the conclusion that for
strategic reasons the Netherlands had to stay. This goal, however, could require the formation
of a strategic alliance with the Netherlands. A final response to the Netherlands’ request for
military support was made dependent on the position of the US, since Australia could not
commit itself militarily unless its great friend did. Given that state’s unwillingness, Australia’s
policy would be to bring about a change in US policy. Thus cabinet optimistically assumed that
Australia’s diplomacy carried so much weight that it could change US strategic thinking.

79 Ibid.
80 Cabinet minute, decision no.1518, submission no.1312, 12 August 1958, Australian
Archives, file no. C508 part 1.
81 Ibid.
While awaiting the results, Menzies suggested to concentrate on efforts that would make a violent escalation of the dispute unlikely. Cabinet agreed with Menzies.\footnote{Cabinet Minute decision no.1526, 13 August 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.} Thus cabinet set about lobbying the US and forming a political deterrent. The discussion showed the total domination of security considerations, and the acceptance of the JIC as an authoritative source of analysis and framer of cabinet’s policy theory. The whole policy concept rested on US political and especially military support. In order to achieve its goals the Australian government was dependent on its major ally, whose support was at least questionable, but this thought did not unduly bother cabinet in 1958.

Cabinet followed the advice as advocated by Casey and McBride, much to the satisfaction of the former.\footnote{Ibid.} Concerns over the application of the principle of self-determination were notably absent in this small group of decision makers. Members of the House generally supported the government’s policy, albeit for different reasons. Coalition Representatives endorsed the policy fully, while ALP members advocated UN involvement, much like the social democratic party PvdA in the Netherlands.

Well equipped with this cabinet decision Casey entered the Dutch lion’s den on 28 September 1958 for what was likely to be a determined Dutch effort to secure Australia’s military support.
Casey’s offer of increased administrative co-operation and continuing diplomatic support fell far short of Dutch demands. He therefore would have to convince the Netherlands that this was the best Australia could do, in the absence of US military commitments. On his arrival, Casey issued a positive statement claiming that the Joint Agreement between Australia and the Netherlands, served the concept of self-determination:

The Australian and Dutch government are maintaining and extending very close co-operation in the administration of their respective territories to see that they are developed in the interests of their inhabitants....Both governments are dedicated to preparing the peoples of New Guinea for self-government.\(^{85}\)

During talks with Luns, Casey set about his task of informing the Netherlands of the revised strategic outlook and its implications for Australian policy: the Australian government would be lobbying to persuade the US to enter into a security arrangement and step up its political deterrent. Luns was left in no doubt that Australia by itself would not offer any military support.\(^{86}\) The Dutch government showed some understanding and did not make Casey run the gauntlet publicly, but Casey realised the volatility of the Netherlands' position. He also knew that his coming diplomatic attempt had to be convincing in order to bolster Dutch morale.

Although Casey knew that the US wanted to appease the Indonesian army because of its capacity to stop a communist takeover,\(^{87}\) Casey’s experience in the Netherlands forced him to defy the odds in his attempt to commit the US militarily. At the ANZUS Council meeting in late

\(^{84}\) Unmarked note by Casey to his staff, 15 August 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
\(^{85}\) Quoted from Millar, op. cit., p.299.
\(^{86}\) Unmarked document, 29 August 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 31.
1958 he tried to convince his American and New Zealand partners of the need to keep West New Guinea out of Indonesian hands. To this end he developed an argument on the interests of the indigenous people of West New Guinea, who, according to Casey, benefited from Dutch efforts to develop them. Pressed hard over military support by Casey, Dulles offered diplomatic advice and promised to take the matter to the UN Security Council in case of violence. Confronted with the refusal of military support, Casey settled for building an alliance for political deterrence. Since US participation was decisive to success of the alliance, Casey would continue to lobby the American government.

During this important phase of policy implementation the House’s input had again been negligible, in large measure due to the reluctance of members on the government side to debate the issue and disclose information. Acting Minister for External Affairs, McBride, for example claimed to have inadequate information to supply an answer to a question by Evatt, while Menzies blatantly refused to answer a question on Australian policy put forward by Charles

88 Unmarked document, 29 September 1958. Ibid., file no.3036/6/1 part 33.
89 Norman Harper, Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian - American Relations 1900-1975, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1987, p.300. Dulles also informed Casey of his promise to Luns that should Indonesia attack Dutch New Guinea this would involve breaking a basic principle the United States regarded as very important, in the same way as would a Chinese attack on Taiwan’s off-shore islands. Millar, op. cit., p.307. Although not fully satisfied, Casey settled for this promise, not expecting the US to give any clearer assurance. Casey in a letter to McClure Smith, 26 November 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 33.
90 House of Representatives, 27 August 1958, p.773.
Morgan (ALP).\textsuperscript{91} Parliament’s institutional role and its procedures again prevented the opposition, to play any significant role in evaluating the policy.

On 30 December 1958 cabinet again discussed its West New Guinea policy in the face of recent disturbing developments. The new submission, no.12, that Casey took to cabinet mentioned that Indonesia was continuing to acquire considerable quantities of arms.\textsuperscript{92} Provocative statements had also continued unabated from Jakarta. It could not be ruled out that the domestic political situation in Indonesia would deteriorate even more, benefiting the communists. A further cause of concern was the fall of the Drees Cabinet in the Netherlands. The new Dutch cabinet could assume a more forthcoming and therefore weaker policy. With the prospect of an Indonesian military campaign increasing, it was certain that the Netherlands would not fight if left unsupported. On 22 December the Dutch government had asked Australia and the US to engage in military consultations. Cabinet had to consider its policy in the light of all these international developments.

The submission advocated a policy that rested upon the assumption that Indonesia was not lost to communism yet, but whoever was in power would pursue the policy to acquire West New Guinea, possibly with the use of force. The PKI would benefit greatly from a major military

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 11 September 1958, p.1121.
\textsuperscript{92} Unfortunately the submission mentions neither the country where Indonesia was purchasing these arms nor the start of this reinforcement. The purchase, however, can be dated between August and December 1958, since it was mentioned under the heading ‘recent developments’, a section which covered all developments since cabinet decision no.1526 of August 1958. Submission no.12, 30 December 1958, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1
conflict. Stressing the military importance of Indonesia, the submission also referred to Indonesia’s political importance as a touchstone by which Australia’s relations with Asia would be judged. Subsequently the report went on to explain the importance of Netherlands New Guinea to Australia’s security and the uninterrupted development of Australian New Guinea, but here it covered no new ground.

Discussing the political implications of Drees’ resignation the report pointed out correctly that without the weight of his towering personality, PvdA, if relegated to the opposition benches, could well become a subversive force in the Netherlands' West New Guinea policy, resulting in a collapse of the Netherlands’ home front. Therefore Australian policy needed to reckon with a modified Dutch policy also because there were no international guarantees regarding military assistance. The Netherlands’ Ambassador had already indicated that the American assurances of assistance in case of an Indonesian attack were inadequate. This came as no surprise to the authors of the report: the US government, wary of the strength of communist forces in Indonesia and determined to rebuild its relationship with the Indonesian government after the Indonesians had discovered CIA involvement in the failed 1958 uprising in Sumatra, had informed the Australian government in September of its intention to support moderate forces in Indonesia. These were predominantly located in the army, and therefore the US was prepared to supply some military equipment to Indonesia. However the US remained opposed to force being used, as Dulles had told Casey. Dulles had further expressed his desire to have the Netherlands stay,
preferably until the moment had come to transfer Netherlands New Guinea to Australian control.\textsuperscript{93}

A few days later, on 5 January 1959 cabinet decided, on the basis of submissions 11 and 12 by the JIC, on its policy.\textsuperscript{94} Knowing that the UK and the US had refused to commit themselves militarily in advance of an Indonesian attack, and judging Indonesia of greater strategic importance to Australia than [West] New Guinea, cabinet saw it as a major goal to keep Indonesia friendly, or at least out of the hands of communism. Cabinet also noted that Australia would not commit itself militarily and the Netherlands ought to be informed accordingly. Australia would once again step up its diplomatic activity aimed at persuading the Netherlands to stay on and to deter Indonesia from aggression. To this end the UK and the US had to become involved more closely. The International Court of Justice was regarded as a solution to the deadlock. Cabinet ignored the fact that Indonesia did not accept the Court’s jurisdiction.

Although the reports had stressed the changing circumstances, cabinet was unable to adapt its policy accordingly. The approved policy was a recipe of more of the same. Cabinet’s constancy was losing touch with the shifting situation. It was unable to overcome the contradictory policy goals of keeping the Netherlands in West New Guinea while not offending Indonesia, since any offence from Australia was thought likely to benefit the PKI in Indonesia. The subject of Papuan

\textsuperscript{93} Inward cablegram, I.2290/91/92/93/94, 5 February 1959 from Beale (Australian Embassy in Washington), Australian Archives, file no.59/57 part 2.
\textsuperscript{94} Cabinet Minute, decision no.17, submissions nos. 11 and 12, 5 January 1959, Australian Archives, file no. C508 part 1.
self-determination played no part in any discussion. This was in sharp contrast to the
government’s public expressions of concern, but these served to justify internationally
Australia’s opposition to Indonesia’s bid to takeover the territory.

Talks with Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Subandrio, who was due to arrive in
Australia on 11 February 1959, offered the government an opportunity to repair the damaged
relations with Indonesia, but at the risk of driving a wedge between Australia and the
Netherlands. According to Casey such an outcome should be prevented, but the visit had to
contribute to better relations with Indonesia. Casey advocated in cabinet to use legal
arguments and the principle of self-determination to defend Australia’s case. Once again self-
determination would serve as a suitable instrument to hide Australia’s apprehension about
sharing a border with Indonesia.

Prior to Subandrio’s visit Casey received information revealing the deep divisions inside the US
State Department. Strong voices were apparently prepared to hand over West New Guinea if
this would help to create a friendly, non-communist Indonesia. Since Dulles himself did not
share this opinion, the US was likely to remain neutral and the idea of a trusteeship became
more attractive. It is difficult to assess what impact this confirmation of the failure of Australian
lobbying to the US had, but Subandrio’s visit ushered in a phase of Australian disassociation

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95 Submission no.30, prepared by Casey, 30 January 1959, Australian Archives, file
no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
96 Note for cabinet, 9 February 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 1.
from the West New Guinea issue. Given Menzies’ and Casey’s maxim to follow the United States closely in issues relating to Australia’s security, it is likely that this cable contributed to the government’s agreement with the phrasing of the joint communiqué issued after the talks with Subandrio, which will be discussed below.

During the talks Subandrio left Menzies in no doubt that West New Guinea formed an obstacle to good bilateral relations. In order to improve the climate he suggested, in line with Menzies’ comment to the effect that the Australian government believed that the matter was one for the Netherlands and Indonesia to work out, that the Prime Minister would not oppose a bilaterally agreed settlement of the sovereignty question, with a transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia as a possible outcome. Subandrio also proposed that a joint communiqué should state that Australia was very glad to see the two countries reach a peaceful settlement of their dispute. 98 Although cabinet did not immediately accept this formulation, Casey made the concession to declare Australia not a party principal to the dispute. 99 In conformity with the cabinet decision on strategy, Casey and Menzies developed the argument of self-determination as ultimate objective and justification for supporting the Netherlands. 100 Since Australia adhered to self-determination for the indigenous people it was unwilling to urge the Netherlands to reach an accommodation.

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98 Cabinet minute, decision no.36, 11 February 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1/1
99 Ibid. Although Subandrio met with the whole cabinet, only Menzies and Casey took the floor.
100 “[Australia’s] great ambition is to have West New Guinea developed in the same way [as Australian New Guinea]. It is for this reason that Australia recently made an administrative agreement with the Netherlands, designed for the advancement of the native people.” Quoted from cabinet minute, decision no.37, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1/1.
The joint communiqué issued after the talks indeed renounced Australia as a party principal, and for the first time the government publicly declared its willingness to accept a Dutch-Indonesian agreement reached by peaceful processes and in accordance with internationally accepted principles, which meant absence of duress.\textsuperscript{101} The principle of self-determination suffered badly from this diplomatic compromise, which aimed to salvage Australian-Indonesian relations, since an agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia would not necessarily produce adequate guarantees for West Papuan self-determination. Casey might have judged such an agreement as hypothetical, but by renouncing any role for Australia as a party principal he contributed to bringing about the unthinkable. Menzies and Casey denied that the communiqué was a departure from the previous policy, but the Dutch government did not miss the obvious shift in the Australian stand and its implications for Netherlands’ sovereignty and self-determination.\textsuperscript{102}

The Australian press was on balance mostly favourable to the phrasing of the communiqué.\textsuperscript{103}

The Returned Service League (RSL) denounced the statement. Both in the House and the

\textsuperscript{101} On the Australian side, only a few people were involved in the drafting, namely Menzies, Casey, Tange, McIntyre and James Plimsoll.

\textsuperscript{102} In a letter to Casey on 19 February 1959, Dutch Ambassador Lovink explained that the Netherlands had always argued that its presence in West New Guinea was not only to the benefit of the Papuans but also of importance to Australia. The Australian government had been opposed to a transfer of sovereignty since such a course would create great unrest in the region. This argument seemed no longer valid. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1/1. Newspapers in the Netherlands widely regarded the joint communiqué as a change in the Australian position, which undermined the Dutch stand. Inward cablegram 3241 from the Australian embassy in The Hague, 20 February 1959.

\textsuperscript{103} Collection of press statements, 17 February 1959, Australian Archives, file no. 3034/10/10/2.
Senate there was criticism, mainly expressed by the ALP, although the Liberal Party counted some defectors in its ranks as well. Coalition members generally supported the government’s approach and also endorsed the idea of secrecy in negotiations, which effectively denied parliament any input.

In the House, Evatt again brought up the idea of a tri-partite agreement as a means serving both the interests of the indigenous people and Australia’s defence. Calwell regarded the joint statement as a reversal of policy, with which he disagreed. He continued to adhere to the inalienable right of self-determination for the natives of West New Guinea. For security reasons too he wanted the agreement scrapped. Both Calwell and Evatt denied that Indonesia had any entitlement to the territory. They underlined their desire to see the principle of self-determination applied, and wanted to keep the option of a merger of the two New Guineas open. Evatt favoured Australian administration of the whole island under supervision of the Trusteeship Council as a solution. The government’s policy remained in tact since the debate ended with the House divided.

104 In the Senate Willesee and Nicholas McKenna perceived a contradiction in accepting a peacefully negotiated solution between the Netherlands and Indonesia, and Australia’s proclaimed adherence to self-determination. Senate, 25 February 1959, pp. 170 and 183. McKenna preferred to accelerate the educational process of the peoples of New Guinea and development of their country as an entity. Secondly he wanted to protect Australia’s security. Australia should become the trustee since this would unite New Guinea under an experienced administrator. Ibid, 18 February, p.35.

105 Notably Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes (LP), but also David Drummond (LP/NC). They particularly disputed Casey’s claim (House of Representatives, 18 February 1959, p.69) that the policy had not changed. House of Representatives, 24 February 1959, p.204.
The debate showed most strikingly how availability of up-to-date information of international conditions affected the choice of policy means and goals. The government, although it refused to admit this, had changed its policy in the face of recent international developments. The opposition on the other hand still advocated a seemingly less realistic policy in which self-determination continued to play a central role. Parliamentary procedures and parliament’s functioning as an institution further explain Labor’s stand. Parliamentary procedures denied the ALP a serious and regular involvement in foreign policy making, while the institutional role of parliament defined the part of the government group and the opposition. This latter factor prevented the ALP from exercising any influence on policy in the phases of deliberation and evaluation and forced the party to use the rare opportunity of debate to offer an alternative to the government’s policy. In formulating this alternative lack of access to the secret information meant havoc for the party, making it even easier for the government to discard ALP’s unrealistic alternatives. ALP members who did try to follow international developments closely, such as Whitlam, had a more ‘realistic’ view that came closer to the government’s perception.

Formally the Menzies government maintained that its policy had not changed, but the upshot of the talks had been a further isolation of the Netherlands, bringing an Indonesian takeover closer and making an act of self-determination more unlikely. In response to Dutch pressure, Menzies reiterated in parliament support for Dutch sovereignty and stressed that the interests of the indigenous people remained paramount. In Menzies’ view recognition of Dutch sovereignty and

106 Ibid., pp.205-207.
self-government were fully consistent goals.\textsuperscript{107} He tried to silence the resounding voice of concern, by stating that in case of negotiations Australia expected its voice to be heard on matters that affected New Guinea’s future.\textsuperscript{108} However the fact remained that as a result of the declaration Australia was known to be no longer opposed to bilateral talks, the outcome of which would most likely be a transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia. The shallowness of Australia’s concern for self-determination was exposed publicly this time.

In April 1959 during a SEATO meeting Casey continued his unsuccessful quest for international support to deter Indonesia from military action, claiming that with all its new arms Indonesia might strike within 12 to 18 months,\textsuperscript{109} and aware of the US refusal to joint military consultation.\textsuperscript{110} With a military deterrent increasingly unlikely, the emphasis of his diplomacy would be more on the construction of a political deterrent.

In another assessment of the situation, External Affairs figured that Indonesia was unlikely to contemplate the use of force. Instead efforts would probably continue to isolate the Netherlands politically. Economic threats would also go on. The De Quay Government, however, was unlikely to budge, and would try instead to continue Dutch rule until self-determination had been attained. Without any military support from the US and UK, and with declining political backing

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 21 February 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1/1.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 24 February 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 41.
\textsuperscript{109} Unmarked External Affairs report about the SEATO meeting, 10 April 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 37.
\textsuperscript{110} Inward cablegram, I.5347 from the Australian embassy in Washington, 25 March 1959, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 37.
in the UN, the position of the Netherlands was regarded as vulnerable. The Australian position was said to be:

Vigorous political support for the Netherlands in the UN, claiming a special interest in the future of West New Guinea on grounds of strategic interests and a position in East New Guinea,...a persistently advanced view publicly that acceptance of the Indonesian claim would deprive the people of West New Guinea of the right to determine their future,... [and] an agreement reached by Indonesia and the Netherlands by peaceful means must be in accord with the principle of self-determination.

The report reconfirmed Australia’s commitment to the cause of self-determination as administering power of the Trust Territory of New Guinea. Association of the two halves of the island was not regarded as a political objective, but a decision confirming that the policy intended to work towards facilitating an ultimate fusion was highly desirable.

The report went on to discuss the position of the United States in depth. It concluded that, in the face of overwhelming importance attributed to support for moderate groups in Indonesia in the fight against communism, the general anti-colonial attitude prevailing in the US, and the possible election of a Democratic Administration, the US was likely to remain neutral.

The paper reconfirmed once more that the main policy objective had been to keep Indonesia out of West New Guinea in the interest of regional stability and Australian security. Those

111 Unmarked document, May 1959, Australian Archives, file no.59/57 no.3.
112 Quoted from ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
reasons remained valid; Indonesia should not gain control over the territory.\textsuperscript{115} Not surprisingly, given the conclusions of the analysis of the international situation and Australian interests, the report offered no new policy means. The Australian government should continue to encourage the Netherlands to stay and give them all assistance, short of military support, while also trying to minimise damage to the relationship with Indonesia.\textsuperscript{116} This left the Australian government with a familiar dilemma. During a visit to The Hague in June 1959 Menzies fully followed the advice given in the report.\textsuperscript{117}

Following his overseas talks Menzies explained in the House that both the Netherlands and Australia would continue their policy of developing the native population to ultimate self-government. Seemingly nothing had changed. Awareness that a merger of the two halves of the island was not viable had already changed the government’s ultimate policy goal and would influence the policy means as well. Ignorant of this development in government thinking, Evatt mentioned Australia’s defence interests and stressed the paramount duty of supporting the indigenous people to achieve self-government. Calwell continued to promote a tri-partite

\textsuperscript{115} The reasons given in favour of a continuation of Dutch presence were: with the Netherlands in control, Asian influence could automatically be minimised; departure of the Dutch would enable Indonesia to proceed with sovereignty claims to the Australian part of the island; Dutch presence partly prevented a direct conflict with Indonesia; Australian New Guinea benefited from administrative co-operation with the Netherlands; and finally if Australia were to let down the Netherlands that country would see no obligation to consider Australian interests. A desire to see the principle of self-determination applied was not listed as a reason. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} Critchley, op. cit., p.223.
agreement as solution to preserve the *status quo* until the native people could make up their mind.\textsuperscript{118} The opposition’s contribution to the policy was again negligible.

During a visit to Indonesia in early December 1959 Menzies warned Prime Minister Djuanda and foreign minister A.H. Nasution of the adverse effects of military threats on the prospects of a solution.\textsuperscript{119} When Sukarno guaranteed that he would not use violence, Menzies’ visit seemed successful.

In February 1960 Casey took another submission to cabinet, prepared by Tange and Lambert (Department of Territories), which argued that the need to prevent Indonesia from taking over West New Guinea still existed. The Netherlands should be encouraged to stay by continuing to give it maximum political and diplomatic support. The policy should still envisage, facilitate and encourage a voluntary political association of the two halves of the island. So far the submission had offered no new policy departure but the comments regarding self-determination are worth mentioning for they disclosed more clearly than previous submissions the government’s real purpose of its public support for self-determination. It was argued that the policy had to be disguised and would therefore be presented in terms of elimination of obstacles to self-determination.\textsuperscript{120} The submission proves beyond doubt that self-determination only served as public camouflage for Australia’s strategic interests: altruist or moral concerns were absent.

\textsuperscript{118} House of Representatives, 13 August 1959, pp.190-201.
\textsuperscript{119} Undated Inward cablegram, I. 22528, Australian Archives, file no.45/1/3/17 part 1.
\textsuperscript{120} Submission no.550, ‘the future of Netherlands New Guinea’, February 1960, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/2/1 part 2.
In April 1960 Menzies again travelled to The Hague, where the pace of the Dutch crash program to prepare the Papuans for self-determination took him by surprise: the Netherlands seemed to envisage a preparation of ten years only. Disappointed over the lack of international support and in the face of growing Indonesian pressure, Luns warned that the Netherlands could also divest itself of its duties before the ten year period would have expired. The Netherlands’ Charge d’Affaires, Insinger, added that the international climate was changing, with colonies all over the world rapidly being replaced by new and independent states. Further the Dutch government would leave it to the future New Guinea Council to decide a target date for self-determination.\textsuperscript{121} In the months to follow, and much to its dislike, the Australian government continued to receive reports indicating that the Netherlands was accelerating the pace of development towards self-rule, making achievement of Australia’s newly formulated policy unlikely. But caught up in its own web of deceit, the government would have to continue to pay lip-service to self-determination.

Much of 1960 was uneventful, but the incident with the flag-showing trip by a Dutch aircraft carrier to the Pacific -- the ship briefly bunkered in Australia on its way to West New Guinea where it delivered a number of fighter planes as part of a reinforcement program -- formed an exception, which was exploited by Indonesia as evidence of the hostile and aggressive intentions of the Netherlands, and as excuse to strengthen its own defences.

\textsuperscript{121} Unmarked report of a conversation between Insinger and Blakeney, 11 April 1960, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 40.
Shortly before Indonesia decided to terminate diplomatic relations with the Netherlands in August, External Affairs repeated the basis of its policy in a special report. However, the old contradiction -- to have the Netherlands stay in West New Guinea if possible until the moment of self-determination, while also desiring friendly relations with Indonesia -- still existed. An explicit recognition of the right of self-determination further complicated the task of meeting the second goal. As conditioning factors External Affairs further mentioned: the Australian promise to pursue in co-operation with the Netherlands policies taking account of the affinity between the two territories, a private pledge by Canberra to Indonesian government officials not to exercise any influence to establish any new arrangements with the Netherlands, the Prime Minister’s statement in the House on 24 February 1959 that in the event of negotiations Australia would expect to have its voice heard on matters pertaining to the future of West New Guinea, the joint communiqué issued at the end of Subandrio’s visit and finally, the Indonesian pledge not to use force. Domestic factors were not considered to restrain the policy. Since no implications of these conditioning factors for goal attainment were discussed the analysis was inchoate and inadequate.

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122 The unmarked report is dated August 9, 1960. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 41.
123 Unmarked External Affairs report, 9 August 1960, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 41.
124 Ibid.
Although the conflicting policy goals were maintained, Tange became convinced of the disastrous implications of any armed resistance to Indonesia on relations with that country.\footnote{In order not to alarm the United Kingdom and the United States, Tange gave instructions not to disclose these intelligence findings. Note by Tange, 29 September 1960, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 45.} The view of such an influential adviser made it ever more unlikely that Australia would take a tough stand in defence of a principle.

In parliament the opposition was again snubbed. In a reply to Menzies’ repeated commitment that the future of West New Guinea should be one satisfying its inhabitants and be in accordance with their freely expressed wishes, Calwell repeated his preference for a tri-partite agreement to secure peace in the entire archipelago, and allow the indigenous people, in the distant future, to determine their own way.\footnote{House of Representatives, 6 December 1960, p.3571 and p.3580.} His argumentation once again showed the distance between the Leader of the Opposition and international reality. His attempt was to no avail in any case, since party discipline prevailed.

By the end of 1960 the military situation became graver. The Netherlands announced to make available an additional amount of money to West New Guinea’s defence and Indonesian decided to purchase large quantities of Soviet arms. Diplomatic posts informed External Affairs that the Netherlands’ government was no longer ruling out a trusteeship as a means to achieve
self-determination.\textsuperscript{127} This implied that the Dutch government was considering to pull out and rid itself of its torment. Although such a new approach would gravey threaten the framework of Australian policy, no immediate action was required since the Netherlands failed to submit a resolution to the UN, and efforts by Tunku Abdul Rachman of Malaysia to find a way out of the deadlock seemed to falter. But in 1961 events would catch up and prove Australia’s policy of indecisiveness completely obsolescent. With Indonesia taking delivery of large amounts of arms from the USSR and staging landings of troops on the shores of West New Guinea, parliament would at last become involved in the issue.

Another major event in 1961 with implications for Australia’s policy was the change of administration in the United States and a concomitant shift in that state’s policy towards Indonesia and the West New Guinea issue. Menzies received a foretaste during a visit to the United States in his dual capacity as Prime Minister and external affairs minister. President Kennedy tried to down play the security risk that a common border with Indonesia would pose to Australia. Menzies, however, stuck to his guns.\textsuperscript{128} Still ignoring the signs of imminent change, Tange reported in March 1961 that cabinet saw no virtue in altering the status quo.\textsuperscript{129}

April brought the important visit to Canberra by Indonesian defence minister Nasution. Prior to this visit cabinet had reconsidered its policy and decided to maintain the position that Menzies

\textsuperscript{127} Both the Australian High Commissioner in London and the Australian mission to the United Nations sent reports containing this message to Canberra. See Inward cablegram, I.27872 and Inward cablegram, I.30571/572 respectively, Australian Archives, file no.1/150.

\textsuperscript{128} Critchley, op. cit., p.246.
had expressed after Subandrio’s visit in 1959. This meant a continuation of support for Netherlands’ sovereignty and the objective of self-determination, but did not exclude recognition of an agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia reached by peaceful means, by now no longer a strictly hypothetical scenario. The government would declare that there was no military agreement with the Netherlands, but that a military confrontation would face it with grave problems. When Menzies met with Nasution he stuck to this approach. Nasution for his part was very keen to get confirmation that Australia would assume a strictly neutral position, no longer supporting or encouraging the Netherlands. Menzies refused to make such a commitment, but the assurance that no military pact existed must have been of comfort to Nasution.¹³⁰

Following the talks Menzies, who had been criticised by the opposition for avoiding a debate on his government’s West New Guinea policy, initiated a debate in the House with a statement that accurately covered the points made by both the Indonesian and Australian delegations. He particularly emphasised the discussion on self-determination. The Australians had stressed their desire to see this principle implemented, whereas Nasution had rejected it outright. Nasution had declared that an interim trusteeship with the purpose of returning the area to Indonesia would be acceptable. Menzies claimed to have replied that this plan abandoned the right of self-determination. Therefore it was unacceptable to the Australian government and hence no

¹²⁹ Unmarked note, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 45.
¹³⁰ Outward cablegram, O.6613, 27 April 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 46.
pressure would be put on the Netherlands to start negotiations. Netherlands’ sovereignty and ultimate self-determination were thus made congruent principles in the government’s policy.

Menzies’ reasoning confused Calwell who wondered if it meant a renunciation of the 1959 joint declaration. He claimed that his support for the Prime Minister’s effort to give the people a chance to freely choose their future was in line with his policy record, but Calwell also emphasised that all peoples of New Guinea should be regarded as one. This allowed him to opt for a unified Melanesian federation, preferably becoming a part of the British Commonwealth. Calwell disagreed with the government’s willingness to accept an agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia, since the Netherlands had no moral right to hand over the Papuans to another colonial power. Whitlam supported Dutch rule in West New Guinea since it resided in the principle of self-determination of non-self-governing people, and the validity and morality of Australia’s case could only be based on self-determination. However the Australian government had hardly played this card in the UN. The Prime Minister’s statement was much more satisfying to Whitlam, although like Calwell, he was still puzzled by the contradiction between acceptance of a Dutch-Indonesian agreement and self-determination. Whitlam nevertheless supported Menzies’ statement that the Netherlands’ claim to rule over West New

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132 Ibid., p.1255.
133 The biennial ALP Conference had stressed the party’s adherence to self-determination for the inhabitants of the island of New Guinea. Co-operation with the UN should help to solve the conflict over West New Guinea, the inhabitants of which were said not to be ready for self-government. House of Representatives, 27 April 1961, p.1254.
134 ALP Representative Eddie Ward, suggested taking the matter to the UN as soon as possible. House of Representatives, 27 April 1961, p.1261.
Guinea was based upon Chapter XI of the UN Charter. As long as the peoples of New Guinea were not yet ready to govern themselves, Australia and the Netherlands should continue their rule.\footnote{Ibid., p.1272.}

In the face of Indonesia’s increased diplomatic and military pressure on the Netherlands, the conclusion that “nothing came out of Nasution’s visit”\footnote{Ibid., p.1272.} is unwarranted. The visit contributed to a further isolation of the Netherlands. Self-determination had again been used as an argument to keep West New Guinea out of the hands of Indonesia. Finally the government had given the opposition the opportunity to debate the issue in depth. The debate was a rare show of bipartisan support for the government. The gap between the two parties had narrowed significantly, with the ALP putting a stronger emphasis on the moral issue of self-determination, to be achieved through UN involvement, something the government regarded as impossible. As the speeches of Calwell and Whitlam show, Labor’s ranks had closed.

In an effort to rid themselves of the burden of West New Guinea, the Netherlands’ government decided to undertake to internationalise its administration. This step threatened to remove the safety buffer of Dutch sovereignty, considered a fundamental element in the protection of Australia’s security. Not surprisingly, cabinet was unhappy with the Netherlands’ gamble of taking the issue to the United Nations.
Cabinet was forced to debate its policy in August 1961, following a Dutch request for advice on its UN resolution. Cabinet noted Indonesia’s uncompromising ambition to gain control over West New Guinea, allowing only transfer of sovereignty as solution. Cabinet discussed this course purely in terms of economic and strategic implications, and concluded that there was no room for a modification of its policy so as to accommodate Indonesia. The fate of the Papuans and their entitlement to self-determination was again of no importance to cabinet.137

Confronted with a flurry of diplomatic activity by the Netherlands and Indonesia, Tange at last advised Menzies to abort the position of passive opposition in an attempt to quash any unwanted developments.138 Australia resented the Netherlands' idea of taking the issue to the UN because it involved too great a risk that ‘irresponsible forces’ could play havoc with the idea of granting self-determination to the Papuans.139 However, recognising the Netherlands’ desire to make the best of it in the UN, the government was left with no choice but to give its comments on the resolution the Netherlands intended to submit. All it could do was to strengthen the resolution’s formulation in an effort to improve its chances of being carried by a UN majority, however unlikely that was. Expressing the wish to relinquish sovereignty to an international body before any act of self-determination, the Netherlands’ proposal confronted Australia with a new situation altogether. Having failed to take any initiatives, or grant adequate

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136 Quoted P.R. Heydon, acting Secretary of External Affairs, file no.233/10/3/3, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 46.
137 Cabinet minutes, submission no.1305, 12 August 1961, Australian Archives TS3036/6/1 part 13.
political or military support to the Netherlands in the past the government had to support the resolution\textsuperscript{140} and its successor, the Brazzaville resolution,\textsuperscript{141} in which direct negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands were foreseen. Having declared its willingness to accept a solution between both parties reached without duress, Australia could not oppose this resolution, although it would play no role itself. The Australian government had relegated itself to a mere bystander with events tumbling around its superseded policy.

\textsuperscript{139} Heydon in conversation with Dutch Ambassador De Beus, 28 August 1961, Australian Archives, file no. TS3036/6/1 part 13.

\textsuperscript{140} The Netherlands’ resolution demanded that, “The General Assembly...1. Decides to set up a United Nations Commission for Netherlands New Guinea...2. Requests the Commission to investigate the possibilities of an early implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) in respect of Netherlands New Guinea and more specifically to this end to inquire into: (b) The opinion amongst the population as to its present situation and its future; (c) The possibility of organizing a plebiscite under the supervision of the United Nations in order to register the wishes of the population concerning their future, and the timing of the plebiscite; (d) The desirability and possibility of bringing the Territory, during the interim period, partially or wholly under the administration of an International Development Authority, established by and operating under the United Nations.”

\textsuperscript{141} This resolution read: “The General Assembly...Recalling the principles set forth in its resolution 1514 (XV)...[c]onvinced..., that any solution which affects the final destiny of a Non-Self-Governing Territory must be based on the principle of self-determination of peoples in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, 1. Urges the governments of Indonesia and the Netherlands to resume negotiations without delay with a view to reaching an agreement on the future of the territory of West New Guinea, without prejudice to respect for the will and self-determination of the peoples; 3. Decides to establish a commission composed of five members appointed by the General Assembly on the proposal of its President; 4. Requests the Secretary-General to inform that Commission of the result of the negotiations by 1 March, 1962; 5. Instructs the Commission, if the parties have not reached a negotiated agreement by 1 March 1962; (a) To carry out an investigation into the conditions prevailing in the territory; (b) To examine the possibilities of establishing, for an interim period, an international system for the administration and supervision of the territory; (c) To report to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session.”
During the debate in the UN, External Affairs received an alarming report that there was now a firm conviction amongst officials in the State Department’s Far Eastern Bureau that the West New Guinea problem must be settled in the interest of US-Indonesian relations. According to embassy staff in Washington the higher ranks, including President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk had a better understanding of Australian interests. Australian lobbying activities would therefore target the higher ranks in the State Department.\textsuperscript{142}

Ambassador Shaw warned from Jakarta that the situation was deteriorating. The Indonesian government saw Australia as the main obstacle to the achievement of its goals and regarded Australia’s opposition as a signal of hostility. The argument about self-determination was seen as a facade. The Ambassador warned for the consequences of a deterioration in relations that seemed “far more important than the issue of self-determination for West New Guinea.”\textsuperscript{143} Nevertheless the Australian delegation to the UN was instructed that the Australian concern was:

\begin{quote}
To ensure that the future of the Papuans...should be of their free choosing....negotiations between Papuans and Indonesians on the restricted question of a preferred autonomy within Indonesia would not...[be] in accord with the principle of self-determination unless the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia had itself first freely received Papuan approval as the result of the self-determination process.\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{142} Inward cablegram, I.23303, from Beale, Australian embassy in Washington, 28 September 1961, Australian Archives 3036/6/1 part 50.

\textsuperscript{143} Quoted from dispatch no.15, 3 October 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 51.

\textsuperscript{144} Quoted from Outward cablegram, O.15081 by Menzies/McEwen/Townley/Hasluck/Hicks/Lambert/Bunting, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 51. The cablegram explained that the Australian position derived from Australia’s acceptance of the UN Charter provisions.
The Netherlands' determination to internationalise West New Guinea's administration as a means to protect the right of self-determination, forced the Australian government to go beyond the level of rhetorical support for the principle of self-determination. At last self-determination really became the prime goal of policy.

In the House Menzies strongly defended the element of self-determination in the Netherlands' resolution: “From first to last we have said self-determination for those people.” But in preparation of a cabinet meeting, Tange warned -- even though the UNGA had not yet voted on the Dutch resolution -- that the status quo in West New Guinea was bound to change soon, putting more pressure on Australia at least to speed up its development policies for East New Guinea and possibly to change the status of its territories. Tange was adamant not to let a conflict over East New Guinea develop with Indonesia, and also to avoid a confrontation with Asian-African opinion in respect of Australia’s administrative policies in Papua New Guinea. He further insisted on preventing Indonesia from gaining West New Guinea, but wanted to avoid an Indonesian military attack. Although hard to realise, the formation of a single Papuan state might best serve those interests, according to Tange.

specifically in respect of East New Guinea and generally in respect of non-self-governing territories.

145 Quoted from House of Representatives, 28 September 1961, p.1444.
146 Unmarked document, 10 October 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 51.
Tange feared that as a result of the Netherlands’ initiative Indonesia would gain West New Guinea within ten years, and probably less, and that Australia was likely to get into conflict with its neighbour over East New Guinea. A forced abandonment of East New Guinea would allow Indonesia the opportunity to gain control, or at least achieve strong influence. Tange acknowledged that the whole basis of Australian policy -- the assumption that Dutch presence until the moment of execution of self-determination would preclude Indonesia from gaining control -- was under threat. In spite of these changed circumstances he argued that Australia’s interests had not changed, which allowed him to uphold his previously expressed policy advice to cabinet.\footnote{File 852/10/43, 17 October 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 51.} Without an adjustment to changes in the international situation the policy became increasingly obsolescent.

Notwithstanding ominous reports that Indonesia would resort to military means should the Netherlands’ resolution be adopted,\footnote{Inward cablegram, I.27707 from Ambassador Shaw in Jakarta, 15 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.} Menzies continued to support the resolution arguing that it was solidly based in international law and equity. The Prime Minister still expected a two-thirds majority in favour of the resolution in the UN as well as US support.\footnote{Outward cablegram, O.17320 by Menzies, 15 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.} He was rudely awoken from his dream by the news that a compromise resolution should be tabled in the face of a likely defeat of the Dutch resolution.\footnote{Outward cablegram, O.17320 by Menzies, 15 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.} The United States seemed prepared to float a draft for a resolution that would safeguard the principle of self-determination. Beale warned Menzies:
“If we lose this one, we may well have lost our last chance of preventing West New Guinea from going to Indonesia.”\textsuperscript{151}

External Affairs decided that an amended resolution could still meet the basic goals of the Netherlands and Australia, as long as it clearly endorsed the principle of self-determination and provided for a UN commission to report to the General Assembly as a basis for talks.\textsuperscript{152} The Department reiterated its objections to forced negotiations that would exclude self-determination and thus be inconsistent with the Charter principles. A few days later India tabled a resolution in favour of the Indonesian stand which ignored the principle of self-determination and only demanded a resumption of negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands. This reduced the chance of the Brazzaville resolution being carried.

The General Assembly became divided into a group of predominantly western states that defined the case in terms of application of the principle of self-determination, and an alliance viewing the problem as a case of denial of sovereignty to an already independent former colonial state. The anti-colonial coalition had been reinforced over the past years by a number of former colonies now independent. This anti-colonial group capitalised on East-West rivalry. Anti-colonialism was therefore a popular issue, allowing Indonesia to find a blocking one third vote.

\textsuperscript{150} Unmarked report by the Australian delegation to the United Nations, 16 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.
\textsuperscript{151} Quoted from Inward cablegram, I.27860, 17 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.
\textsuperscript{152} External Affairs, file no.3036/1/4, 20 November 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 54.
With the defeat of both the Brazzaville resolution and the Indian resolution on 27 November the international tide turned decisively, and the conflict entered its final stage.\footnote{The voting on the Brazzaville resolution resulted in 53 in favour, 41 against and 9 abstentions. The Indian resolution received 41 votes in favour, 40 votes against and 21 abstentions.}

Indonesia’s diplomatic offensive in the 1950s had demanded that, in order to safeguard its security interests, Australia publicly embrace self-determination to stem anti-colonialist sentiment in the UN. In 1961 the failed attempt by the Netherlands to involve the UN in West New Guinea’s administration and lack of any military commitments from Australia’s allies, in turn forced the Menzies government to abandon self-determination to salvage its security interests. The international situation had both dictated that Australia support and abandon the principle of self-determination as a means to safeguard its security interest.

\textit{5. Menzies backs down}

A series of events immediately following the voting on the Brazzaville resolution ushered in a period of re-evaluation and redirection of Australia’s policy. Until the voting in the UNGA the government had received optimistic telexes from The Hague, confirming that the Netherlands would adhere unswervingly to its policy of unconditional application of self-determination.\footnote{See for example a report by the Australian embassy in The Hague, 29 November 1961, Australian Archives file no.45/1/3/17 part 4.} As
discussed in Chapter IV the defeat of the Brazzaville resolution caused a collapse of the home front in the Netherlands, forcing its government to accept direct talks with Indonesia.

Another most important factor explaining the impending change in policy was a report by the Chiefs of Staff to the Menzies’ government which for the first time played down the strategic significance of West New Guinea to Australia’s defence. Since strategic interests had largely motivated the government’s opposition to an Indonesian takeover the reassessment of West New Guinea’s military significance made a major contribution to the redirection of policy. Reports from the Australian embassies in Washington and Jakarta put further pressure on cabinet to reconsider its views. Increasingly strong forces inside the State Department seemed determined to settle the dispute before it could develop into a major crisis.

The successful attack by India on the Portuguese enclave of Goa on 18 December 1961, which evoked no significant international criticism, came as a shock to the Australian government and was a morale boost for Indonesia. On 19 December 1961 Sukarno issued his tri-command,

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155 Hanno Weisbrod, ‘Sir Garfield Barwick and Dutch New Guinea’, *Australian Quarterly*, vol.39, no.2 (June 1967), pp.24-36. European control over West New Guinea was no longer considered vital since Indonesia’s capacity to launch an attack against Australian New Guinea was limited and the territory was covered by the ANZUS treaty. David Marr, *Barwick*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1980, p.170.

156 Harriman, Assistant Secretary Far Eastern Affairs, and his deputy, Steeves, made it clear to Beale that the United States believed that Sukarno would get Netherlands New Guinea by force or pressure. They saw no opportunity to implement self-determination in a way not farcical, since they considered the population still very primitive. Their main goal was to appease Indonesia, and so prevent Communism from getting a foothold. Inward cablegram, I.30542, Australian embassy in Washington, 19 December 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 56.
calling on the Indonesian people to prepare for general mobilisation, for the unfurling of the Indonesian flag in West Irian, and for the defeat of the formation of a Papuan puppet state.

Although all these international developments seemed to make a change of policy inevitable, Menzies’ personal views and direct involvement as Minister for External Affairs continued to form a stumbling block. On December 21 a cablegram was sent to a number of embassies which still stated: “Any negotiations...[should have] as [their] objective an agreement on how the principle of self-determination is to be applied.” On the same day, however, External Affairs and Menzies received confirmation that the State Department rejected self-determination as a precondition in negotiations. The Kennedy Government was only prepared to concoct a face-saving formula, but then Australia would have to comply.

The policy was delivered a final blow when Garfield Barwick replaced Menzies as Minister for External Affairs on 22 December. Lacking Menzies’ sympathy towards the Netherlands’ stand Barwick would quickly the bring Australia’s policy in line with the views of its great and powerful friends. Tange now declared that the government had not realised that, given new intent of the Netherlands to leave West New Guinea as soon as possible, there would be

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157 Quoted from outward cablegram, O.17685, 21 December 1961, Australian Archives file no.3036/6/1 part 54.
158 Inward cablegram, I.30734, 21 December 1961, from the Australian embassy in Washington, Australian Archives, file no.45/1/3/17 part 4. The British High Commissioner to Australia also warned Menzies of the ‘disastrous effects’ of a military adventure by Sukarno. Therefore the United Kingdom’s main goal was to prevent fighting. Negotiations were the only option, but not with self-determination as a precondition. Unmarked letter by the British High Commissioner to Australia, 22 December 1961, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 56.
created a weak and unstable state: not an alluring prospect for Australia’s security.\textsuperscript{160} Thus External Affairs’ leading senior civil servant supported Barwick who could now take on the Prime Minister.

In late December External Affairs received final confirmation that the Netherlands had accepted unconditional talks with Indonesia.\textsuperscript{161} The Australian government quickly followed suit when Barwick issued a statement on 30 December 1961 which declared: “Both governments should start negotiations without any preconditions but with neither party unmindful of the Charter principle that the indigenous people should ultimately be afforded an opportunity of choosing for themselves their future government.”\textsuperscript{162} The statement proved that as far as the Australian government was concerned, self-determination no longer served as precondition to negotiations. The term self-determination was even avoided so as not to annoy Indonesia.\textsuperscript{163} The government denied that the expression implied a change in policy, claiming instead that it merely reflected a change of emphasis put on certain policy elements in response to changing international circumstances. The government tried to camouflage its abandonment of the application of self-determination as policy goal by arguing that its was inappropriate for Australia to insist on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Marr, op. cit., p.169.
\item David Jenkins, ‘How Australia changed tack over West New Guinea’, \textit{West Papua Update}, no.15, June 1993, pp.5-7. The article was originally published in \textit{SMH}, 1 January 1993.
\item Inward cablegram, L31093 from The Hague, 28 December 1961, Australian Archives, file no.45/1/3/17 part 4.
\item Archive of the Department of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, file no.2878, press statement no.15/10, 30 December 1961.
\item File 586/2 Barwick’s meeting with the press, 3 January 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 58.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
right of self-determination while the Netherlands, as a party principal, had agreed to negotiate without any preconditions.\textsuperscript{164} The government thus refused to accept any responsibility for the sacrifice of its principled policy, presumably afraid of a hostile press and considering its narrow majority in the House.

The new policy brought Australia into line with its allies and the Netherlands. It was also a reasonable measure to keep Australian public opinion abreast of international developments beyond Australian control and prepare it for some contingencies likely to result from the international situation. The main motivation behind the government’s attitude had been the knowledge of American attitudes, particularly in case of an escalation of the conflict by Indonesian aggression.\textsuperscript{165}

Subandrio’s reaction to Barwick’s speech was negative since he considered Australia’s policy as insufficiently conciliatory. Since the press was also confused over the phrasing,\textsuperscript{166} Barwick again had to explain the policy. Before he could issue this statement he had to face Menzies. During a long talk on 4 January 1962 Barwick admonished Menzies to change his position concerning support for the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{167} For a short transitional period the policy making centre had been divided, but Menzies, having suffered a near election defeat in December 1961,
could no longer rule the foreign policy roost, going against the views of the newly appointed Minister for External Affairs.

Thus on the same day Barwick issued a statement, that he and the Secretary of External Affairs, had drafted with Menzies’ approval, which did not even refer to self-determination. Barwick played down the strategic importance of [West] New Guinea to Australia, creating room to disassociate Australia from the conflict. He explicitly referred to the communist threat which the crisis had brought about, and expressed the need for a solution by peaceful means. The Dutch government correctly read the speech as a policy turn-about.

Australian press reports spoke of appeasement, and the Sydney Morning Herald was particularly critical, and although Barwick would go to some length later to convince the press of the necessity to respond to international developments, Barwick had already made up his mind. In talks with the Netherlands’ Ambassador De Beus he went even further in his sacrifice of Papuan self-determination, advocating a formula in which the Netherlands would hand the area

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170 Meeting between Netherlands Embassy Counsellor, Ketel, and F.J. Blakeney (Department of External Affairs), 5 January 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 58. Ambassador De Beus regarded Barwick’s speech of 4 January 1962 as a retreat from the statement of 30 December 1961, with the emphasis now fully on maintaining friendly relations with Indonesia and achieving a peaceful solution to the conflict. Meeting De Beus - Campbell, 10 January 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 59.
to an international authority which in turn would transfer it to Indonesia. Only after establishment of Indonesian control would an act of self-determination follow.\textsuperscript{171}

To cover his retreat, Barwick put the blame for the implicit, though not publicly admitted, sacrifice of self-determination on the Netherlands, which in his opinion, had wrongfully taken the risk to introduce a motion in the UN with the intention to have its own administration replaced by a UN regime. Given the failure in the UN and lack of American and British pledges of military support, Australia could not possibly be expected to come to the aid of the Netherlands, especially since Australia’s future was lying with Indonesia. Talks were therefore the only solution.\textsuperscript{172}

The final stage of redirecting the policy began when Barwick faced cabinet on 11 January. His position was strong, having the support of his department and Menzies. In cabinet, Barwick presented a detailed submission prepared by External Affairs which argued that the two goals of Australia’s West New Guinea policy had become untenable, almost mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{173} Explaining why the government had been averse to an Indonesian takeover, the report discussed the strategic importance of West New Guinea in relation to Indonesia’s political instability and the risk of Indonesia becoming communist. Further, there was the belief that Australia would benefit from a future independent and united New Guinea. Attributing value to

\textsuperscript{171} Marr, op. cit., p.172.
\textsuperscript{172} Text of a press release, 10 January 1962. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 59.
\textsuperscript{173} Jenkins, \textit{West Papua Update}, p.6.
ethnicity, the Papuans of both East and West New Guinea ought to be given the chance of self-determination. The submission then discussed the disadvantages of support for the Netherlands. The most striking, although obvious, conclusion drawn in the submission was that instead of contributing to stability, support for a continuation of Dutch presence had only resulted in increasing tension in the region, and Australia’s relations with Indonesia had suffered. Since the Netherlands would pull out in the near future, it would leave behind a politically and economically not viable and militarily indefensible state. Finally, and very remarkably, the report mentioned that an early implementation of self-determination in Dutch New Guinea would be a major embarrassment to Australia’s own development efforts in the Eastern half of the island.174

Barwick informed cabinet of the international situation that Australia was facing. He argued that one had to realise that Dutch attempts to internationalise its administration were inevitable, since neither the UK nor the US was prepared to assist the Netherlands militarily.175 Just prior to the meeting Barwick had been informed that the US would not beforehand give any assurances of logistical or any other military support to the Netherlands, should Indonesia attack. The US would only strongly denounce the use of force and support diplomatic moves in the UN.176 Indonesia on the other hand could count on Soviet support for its campaign.

174 Id.
175 Ibid., p.7.
176 Conversation between the Secretary of External Affairs and US Charge d’Affaires, William Belton, 10 January. Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 59. A conversation between Beale and Harriman on 8 January 1962 had provided similar conclusions regarding American support. Inward cablegram from Washington, 8 January 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 59.
Barwick judged the Netherlands’ position as hopeless, hence its departure imminent. Since Australia could not prevent an Indonesian takeover it should give priority to the relationship with Indonesia: after all Australia had much to gain from a friendly and non-communist neighbour. A continuation of support for the Netherlands could cause irreparable damage to the relationship with Indonesia. A good relationship would make Indonesia a stronger bulwark against a southward expansion of communism than an independent Papuan state. Thus Barwick concluded that development of a friendly relationship with Indonesia was both the long term and immediate goal of Australia’s policy. Apparently cabinet agreed without much discussion.  

The decision to remain on the sidelines had already been taken when Menzies made a statement to the House. He outlined Australia’s obligation to act in close consultation with the UK and US, implying that their lack of support caused Australia to act as it did. Interfering with Barwick’s hardline realist policy, Menzies stated that the government still hoped that the Papuans would be given a right of self-determination in due course.

Although Calwell correctly pointed out that the government had appeased Indonesia by dropping the right of self-determination as a policy goal for the sake of a peaceful settlement, his pugnacious accusation offered no alternative. His sabre rattling in parliament -- “this is a moment in our history when bold and decisive action is not only the proper course but the safe

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177 Jenkins, op. cit., pp.6-7.
179 SMH, 10 February 1962.
course [and] Indonesia will retreat quickly enough if we stand firm\textsuperscript{180} -- made matters worse
and would haunt and split the ALP, something that did not go unnoticed by government
representatives in parliament. Harold Holt for example immediately capitalised on it, making
ALP’s opposition ineffective.\textsuperscript{181}

Barwick’s attempts and efforts by senior officials of External Affairs to appease the press by
means of special briefings partly failed to produce the aspired pacification immediately.\textsuperscript{182}
Barwick’s explanation of Australia’s policy and denial that any changes had taken place since
January 12, did not convince some Melbourne based newspapers which reported that Australia
had been pressed by the US to abandon its policy.\textsuperscript{183} The Sydney Morning Herald in particular
remained a critical opponent to the government’s policy, while other newspapers after the initial
shocks came to terms with the fact that Australia had become an outsider to the negotiations
over West New Guinea’s future. When the vibrations of the fundamental change of policy,
implying the final defeat of Australia’s West New Guinea policy, had died away, the press had
been effectively removed as an obstacle to Australia’s acceptance of an Indonesian takeover.

The final move towards acceptance of the new policy was made by opposition leader Calwell.
With the Sydney Morning Herald still loyal to both the ALP and the former policy on West

\textsuperscript{180} Quoted from House of Representatives, 28 February 1962, p.305.
\textsuperscript{181} House of Representatives, 27 February 1962, p.257. In the Senate too the ALP came under
heavy attack by the government over Calwell’s remarks.
\textsuperscript{182} According to Freudenberg External Affairs travelled especially to Melbourne and Sydney to
explain the change in policy. Graham Freudenberg, \textit{A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam},
Guinea, Calwell had a seemingly belligerent threat published with the intention to shore up public and political support. The article stated: “If Indonesia seeks to use force to create a potential threat to Australia’s security, then I say, with all due regard to the gravity of the situation, that threat must be faced.”\footnote{Quoted from Freudenberg, p.17.} Since the prospect of a war was not very attractive his move backfired, splitting the ALP and securing the government of the support of its entire group in the House: with a majority of just one vote, essential to get approval of its policies.

Thus with the aid of the emotional Calwell, the last potential domestic obstacle to the new policy was effectively removed. Calwell’s outburst would have a long echo, affecting Whitlam’s attitude as Prime Minister at the time of the Timor crisis when he was not prepared to cross swords with Indonesia for the sake of self-determination.

Another debate on the matter was not initiated until Barwick declared in the House in March that the government wanted to bring the two parties to the negotiating table without violence erupting.\footnote{His speech was tabled in the Senate on 15 March, but the debate was delayed until 4 April.} In his speech, which was well received by most newspapers in Australia as being ‘sensible and realistic’,\footnote{With the exception of the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, other newspapers such as the \textit{Melbourne Herald}, the \textit{Daily Mirror}, and the \textit{West Australian} had reconciled to the new emphasis in the policy.} he declared that the major aim of the government’s policy remained the promotion of friendship with Indonesia and prevention of the spread of communism to the

area northwest of Australia. As his last point Barwick said that the right of self-determination should be exercised in West New Guinea. He stressed that the anti-colonial mood in the United Nations and the views of Australia’s great and powerful allies had needed to be taken into account. Menzies nevertheless added that the principle of self-determination was upheld above all others. Calwell, being denied the opportunity of a debate in this instance as well as on 29 March 1962, responded grimly, and accused the government of defeatism. Again, however, he failed to deliver any serious alternative other than UN involvement.

The Netherlands and Indonesia finally started talks without preconditions on 20 March 1962, to the delight of the Australian government, which had been commending negotiations to both parties for months. After only a few days talks were broken off. Following this break down Bunker introduced a compromise solution, main elements of the plan (also see Chapter IV) involved a transfer of administrative authority to a temporary executive under the Secretary-General for not more than 2 years. In the first year UN personnel would replace the Dutch administration. Indonesian officials would in turn replace the UN administration during the second year. By the end of the two year period Indonesia would have full administrative authority. In Bunker’s proposal Indonesia would agree to make arrangements, with the assistance and participation of the Secretary-General and the UN, to give the people of the territory the opportunity to exercise freedom of choice within an unspecified number of years.

188 Critchley, op. cit., p.270.
transfer of administration to Indonesia thus preceded an act of self-determination, the terms of which were very vague.

The Australian government correctly regarded the Plan as going a long way to meet Indonesia’s demands and therefore difficult for the Netherlands to accept. The government’s diplomacy was the typical farrago with which it had approached the matter for many years. Australia’s diplomatic efforts concentrated on preventing a stalling of the negotiations. To this end External Affairs conducted a balancing act, carefully sublimating pressures exerted by the United States, Indonesia, and the Netherlands.

Fearing the risk of war the government was not prepared to give in to a Dutch request to ask the US to abandon the Bunker Plan altogether but during the ANZUS meeting it made an attempt to persuade the United States to assume a more supportive position, which failed. Not being a party principal, the government decided not to do any more lobbying in favour of the Netherlands. Barwick secretly advised De Beus that the Netherlands should accept the Bunker Plan as a working paper and an opportunity for further negotiations.

Remaining neutral, the Australian government refused to put any pressure on the Netherlands as the United States was suggesting. Rather, External Affairs informed the Americans that it considered the extent and nature of international participation in the suggested process of self-

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190 Conversation Barwick-De Beus, 11 April 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 70.
determination quite insufficient. The main conclusion remains, however, that with the acceptance of the timetable of the Bunker Plan -- a transfer of administration some time prior to an act of self-determination -- protecting peace, and hence prevention of an advance of communist forces in the region, prevailed over safeguarding proper guarantees for self-determination. Since the government was in broad agreement with the terms of the Bunker Plan, it supported application of the principle of self-determination in West New Guinea, but this goal should not be a precondition to talks, nor did it exclude an Indonesian takeover. Officially the government held firm to its principles, but in practice it used a new policy theory and surrendered to the international situation.

In parliament, in reply to a speech by Calwell, Barwick declared that the government wanted to maintain three principles in the settlement of the West New Guinea dispute. The minister endorsed a peaceful settlement which recognised sovereignty and self-determination, meaning the right of people to choose their own future. Notably, however, he did not disclose the content of the Bunker Plan, which was little concerned with self-determination. Unaware of the existence of the Bunker Plan, Whitlam upbraided the government for failing to emphasise the principle of self-determination in the early UN debates, and even when Subandrio visited Australia: “[The government] always relied on matters of defence or on the

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191 Ibid.
192 Outward cablegram for Beale in Washington, O.5875, 10 April 1962, Australian Archives, file no.3036/6/1 part 70.
194 House of Representatives, 10 April 1962, pp.1508-1509.
fact that West New Guinea was alien to Indonesia in race, language, history and religion. Self-determination was never to the forefront of [the government’s] arguments.  

This stinging attack was frighteningly accurate in exposing the government’s hypocrisy on the principle of self-determination. Whitlam suggested that Australian diplomacy should endeavour, through the UN, to make Indonesia accept its obligations to the inhabitants of West New Guinea.  

Other ALP representatives also vented their gall on the government and its half-hearted policy. Ward (ALP) accused the government of denying parliament the opportunity to debate the issue and keeping it uninformed. Norman Makin (ALP) attacked the government for having sovereignty as its first concern instead of self-determination. Unaware of the Bunker Plan, Makin advocated a trusteeship until the people could express their opinion. Again the government’s monopoly on information impeded the opposition from making any relevant contribution in the phases of re-evaluation and deliberation. The ALP’s division into a determined pro-self-determination group led by Calwell and involving the trade unions, and a group of intellectuals including Whitlam who only half-heartedly supported self-determination, posed a further obstruction to an effective opposition.

195 Ibid., p.1510.  
196 Whitlam drew on a decision taken by the Federal ALP Conference in April 1961.  
197 House of Representatives, 10 April 1962, pp.1515-1516.  
198 Ibid., p.1522.  
199 Calwell divulged ALP’s internal division of opinion to De Beus on 11 April 1962. Archives of the Department of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, file no.2879, document no.1182/389.
In the Senate, McKenna (ALP) suggested that the question of West New Guinea should be committed once more to the UN in the face of recent developments. He too accused the government of betraying its principles of self-determination and non-aggression. Senator Gorton (LP), as Minister assisting the Minister for External Affairs, replied that negotiations under UN supervision were being conducted, and that debates in the General Assembly had proved futile. Senator Cole (ALP) advocated a stand on the principle of self-determination, if only to serve Australia’s defence interests, with which he was most concerned. Senator Vincent (LP) pointed out the international realities of the case, notably Indonesia’s military capacity and its powerful friends, including communist states who wanted a war. Negotiations were the right remedy to the problem, he insisted. The debate did not offer a way out: party discipline prevailed. Besides, few Senators possessed up to date information on how the international realities had changed.

In June 1962 External Affairs again assessed Australia’s interests. Avoiding an Indonesian attack had assumed priority, but preventing Indonesia from gaining control over West New Guinea, if this could be achieved without direct conflict, was still ranked second. Also External Affairs wanted to preclude any conflict with Asian and African opinion concerning Australian

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200 Senate, 4 April 1962, p.789.
201 Ibid., pp.801-803.
202 How poorly some Senators participating in the debate, which continued in May when the content of the Bunker plan had become known at last, were informed, is shown by Senator Archibald Benn’s comment: “We are dealing with a question relating to West New Guinea,
administrative policies in East New Guinea. Further the Department wished to establish close and friendly relations with Indonesia, which had to be prevented from becoming dominated by communists. Self-determination had outlived its usefulness and could not serve Australia’s interests any longer. Therefore no mention was made of it.

During the second round of talks in July (see Chapter IV) Australia had become a real outsider to the conflict, with neither the Netherlands nor Indonesia paying much attention to its opinion. In August 1962 cabinet could only take note of the Dutch-Indonesian intention to start official negotiations. Barwick’s policy goals had been to grant self-determination to the people of West New Guinea, and to maintain friendship with the Netherlands and Indonesia. In the end the policy resulted in a sham formula for self-determination (see Appendix I). The Netherlands was unhappy over Australia’s lack of support, and Indonesia rode rough-shod over Australia’s objectives. The policy had resulted in complete failure, as it was the Americans who ultimately secured a peaceful solution.


[but] I am unable to say precisely what that question is.” Quoted from Senate, 1 May 1962, p.1002.

204 Renouf supports this judgement. Renouf, op. cit., p.430.
Following the signing of the agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia in New York on 15 August 1962 (see Chapter IV and Appendix I) Barwick addressed the House in an attempt to explain and justify the government’s policy:

The stands taken by the parties principal to the problem, the attitudes of our friends and allies, and the situation at the United Nations...were key elements....in determination of what Australia itself could and should do...The government has an interest in the ultimate ability of the indigenous people to choose their own future. Accordingly, the government has maintained constant and vigorous diplomatic encouragement to the parties to settle...peacefully and in doing so to ensure that ability of Papuan population to make that choice.205

Barwick added that the agreement was “a part of history with which Australia must live. In a real sense that result was beyond our control.”206 He offered the lack of military support as a major explanation for the government’s policy.

Labor and even some Liberals expressed their regret over the content of the agreement, not believing that Indonesia would keep its promises. Leader of the Opposition, Calwell, declared: “I would have been much better pleased if the indigenous people....had been given the right of self-determination before occupation of their country by Indo-nesia....because I am not so sure that they will have the right of self-determination given to them in 1970 [sic.].”207 In the end, however, parliament had to accept that there was some truth in Barwick’s words: “The result

205 Quoted from House of Representatives, 21 August 1962, pp.512-517.
206 Ibid., p.517.
207 Calwell wrongly mentions 1970 as the date for self-determination. House of Representatives, 3 October 1962, p.1128. The Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia in fact declared that the act of self-determination had to be completed before the end of 1969.
which the agreement produced....was beyond our control....[The agreement is] a part of history with which we must live.'

The result of the Agreement was felt soon after the Indonesian takeover of administration in May 1963 when the Australian government received information of widespread repression and a clamp down on parties and supporters of Papuan nationalism: the Act of Free Choice, if one would be organised at all, was going to be a farce. Nevertheless, in the House both Barwick and his successor Paul Hasluck initially tried to play down the importance of signs that the Indonesian government had no intention to hold a referendum in the first place and that, should one be held after all, it would only be about internal self-determination. Once Indonesia’s intentions and violations of human rights could no longer be denied, both the Prime Minister and the Minister for External Affairs claimed that Australia was not a party principal to the agreement and that hence its capacity to exert influence was limited.

Concern was expressed mainly by the ALP opposition and skilfully dealt with by the government, making optimal use of parliamentary procedures, which allowed it to avoid dealing with the issue, and its advantage of having access to information provided by the diplomatic service and intelligence organisations. However, the ALP kept the issue of Papuan self-

208 Quoted from House of Representatives, 21 August 1962, p.517.
determination alive and in 1968 parliamentary concern again forced the government to address the matter.

In the lead up to the Act of Free Choice, external affairs minister Hasluck expressed his preference for a form of plebiscite or direct consultation with the people, but he admitted with regret that the Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia was rather vague in this respect.\(^2\) Again Hasluck was keen to declare that under the terms of the 1962 Agreement, Indonesia was responsible for the execution of the Act of Free Choice, with the UN in the role of observer. Hasluck declared that he believed that Indonesia would carry out its responsibilities.\(^3\)

Hasluck’s successor, Gordon Freeth, repeatedly showed similar confidence in Indonesia’s sincerity to have a procedure allowing for a real expression of the people’s will, by means of the Indonesian *musjawarah* method. According to Freeth there was no need for a representation to the Indonesian government regarding the use of the *musjawarah* procedure since Ortiz Sanz, the UN Secretary-General’s representative at the act of self-determination, had expressed his satisfaction with the way Indonesia was meeting its obligations under the agreement.\(^4\) When Kim Beazley Senior (ALP) showed Freeth that Sanz’s discontent with the *musjawarah* procedure was on the record -- Sanz did make several representations to the Indonesian


\(^3\) House of Representatives, 20 November 1968, p.3022.
government advocating to use the one-man one-vote system at least in developed urban areas.\footnote{Ibid., 25 March 1969, p.818.} -- the minister tried to deny that Sanz and the Indonesian government were at loggerheads.\footnote{International Commission of Jurists Australian Section, \textit{The Status of Border Crossers from Irian Jaya to Papua New Guinea}, Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists, Sydney, 1985, p.11.} But when Sanz did publish a critical report regarding insufficient assistance to carry out his supervisory task, Freeth had to admit defeat. This nevertheless had no consequences for the government’s policy as Freeth could reject the need for an Australian representation to the UN using the excuse that complaints were a matter for discussion between the signatories of the 1962 Agreement: the Netherlands and Indonesia, and the UN Secretary-General.\footnote{Ibid., 1 May 1969, p.1566.}

During a debate in late May 1969, the government was finally forced to outline a policy. Charles Jones (ALP) and Dr. Wylie Gibbs (LP/NC) had shown concern about the restrictions on the act of self-determination and demanded that the government take steps to guarantee a loyal execution of the 1962 Agreement. In his reply Freeth’s once again used the argument that Australia was not a party to the New York Agreement, but he also stated that there was no reason for Australia to make a representation since:

\begin{quote}
Indonesia has given every indication that it proposes to carry out the act of self-determination within the terms of the 1962 Agreement...There is not enough evidence of a breach of the agreement....Indonesia is genuinely trying to carry out an act of self-
\end{quote}

\footnote{Ibid., 28 May 1969, p.2319.}
determination...Most of the reports [about suppression of the Papuans] are inaccurate. Is Indonesia not to maintain law and order?²¹⁶

Freeth must have been motivated by the consequences for relations with Indonesia, which were ‘very important.’ Although Freeth declared that he would reserve his judgement pending the final report by Ortiz Sanz to the UN Secretary-General, this debate made it clear that the policy of the government was to accept the outcome of the Act without demur and to concentrate on building relations with its neighbour.

Although, given the doubtful translation of self-determination for the West Papuans into Indonesian style musjawarah, the omnipresence of the Indonesian army and the exclusion of pro-nationalist Papuan groups from participation, the Act of Free Choice could not possibly be regarded as a genuine attempt to establish the people’s preference, the Australian government accepted the outcome, and focused on building a strong relationship with its politically and strategically important neighbour: realist motives prevailed over considerations of self-determination and other human rights.²¹⁷

Given Australia’s overriding emphasis on the importance of its relationship with Indonesia, it was no surprise that Australia supported UN resolution 2504 (See Appendix II) which acknowledged the fulfilment of the tasks entrusted to the Secretary-General under the 1962

²¹⁶ Quoted from House of Representatives, 30 May 1969, pp.2554-2555.
agreement, ignoring the reservations made by Ortiz Sanz with respect to the implementation of Article XXII which granted the people the basic rights to freedom of speech, movement and assembly (also see Chapter IV). Having failed in its attempt to keep Indonesia out of the territory, the cause of the West Papuans had obviously outlived its usefulness and their plight fell into oblivion. External Affairs even discouraged the PNG government from showing solidarity with the West Papuans, to keep Indonesia on friendly terms.\textsuperscript{218} Former opposition leader Calwell scarified the Bunker Plan. He was still hoping that one day a Melanesian Union could be formed.\textsuperscript{219} However with the UN taking note of Resolution 2504 (XXIV) in November 1969, Indonesian control had been finally vindicated.

\textbf{7. Australian policy after the Act of Free Choice}

The foundation for Australia’s policy towards Indonesia which had been laid back in 1962 by Barwick had lost none of its power political merits; on the contrary. Barwick had intended to give priority to building solid relations with a friendly Indonesia serving as a bulwark against southbound communism. Australia was offered a golden opportunity when, following the failed coup in the October 1965, a strongly anti-communist military regime came to power in Indonesia. The new Suharto Government was thought to deserve Australia’s diplomatic and economic support rather than undermining criticism over its human rights record. Supporters of


\textsuperscript{218} Gavan Breen, \textit{Let Them Be: West Papua Revisited}, Australia West Papua Association, 1993, p.221.
this view thought that Australia had too much to benefit from a stable Indonesia. Fear of a 
repeat of the 1965 unrest, continued to dominate Australian strategic thinking in the 1970s. 
Therefore, like the Whitlam Government, the Fraser Government supported the Suharto 
regime. More economic aid was supplied since this could contribute to economic growth, 
which in turn would reduce poverty and inequality, potential sources of discontent and instability.

This new post-1962 analytical framework for Australian policy making towards Indonesia, 
based on strategic considerations, did not allow the government and the main political parties to 
deal seriously with reports of human rights violations in West New Guinea. Occasionally a 
backbencher would raise the issue of self-determination, but the government would send such a 
member about his business or fail to address the expressed concern at all. As the discussion 
on Australian political involvement with human rights violations in West New Guinea will reveal, 
the government consistently refused to be drawn into a fundamental discussion on the 
relationship between these violations and self-determination. This would have required a 
fundamental change in Australian policy, with damaging consequences for the bilateral 
relationship with Indonesia. Moreover, such questioning of the unitary state edifice of Indonesia,

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221 See question upon notice no.704, 3 November 1983, by Dr. Douglas Everingham (ALP), 
and Hayden’s reply on 30 November 1983. House of Representatives, 
30 November 1983, p.3129. Everingham did receive a proper answer to a similar question put 
on notice on 5 June 1984, no.1541, in which Hayden emphasised that Australia recognised 
Irian Jaya as an integral part of Indonesia, accepting the outcome of the Act of Free Choice. 
House of Representatives, 4 September 1984, pp.562-563.
which justified its existence mainly by pointing to the former colonial state, could have gravely endangered Indonesia’s internal stability and hence regional stability.

In 1976-1977 the first refugee crisis in West New Guinea (see Chapter IV) attracted little attention from Australian politicians. Senator Withers, representing the foreign minister, responded to ALP concerns that human rights violations had led to the displacement of a large number of Papuans. He stated the government’s awareness of those reports, but failed to inform the Senate about the government intentions. The matter was not taken any further, and parliamentary concern dissipated.

The 1984 refugee crisis in Irian Jaya was picked up by the House in a notice of motion by Hodgman (LP). Most strikingly, however, the motion, which did not become subject of debate, failed to acknowledge that the political status of West New Guinea and Indonesia’s continuing efforts to integrate the territory by means of transmigration were causing the unrest. Efforts to promote Papuan human rights were not completely fruitless, however. Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Morrison, went to West New Guinea to investigate the situation. His findings, inter alia, provided the Hawke Government with accurate figures to judge the size of transmigration, but instead of being alarmed foreign minister Hayden accepted Indonesia’s stated reasons for the transfer of people to West New Guinea, these being a reduction of

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222 Senate, 11 October 1977, pp.1278-1279.
223 House of Representatives, 21 August 1984, p.35.
population pressure in Java and economic development of the territory. By means of development aid Hayden hoped to remove tensions relating to West New Guinea’s development. The government treated the border crossers problem as a matter with important humanitarian implications, but left the solution to Indonesia and PNG. Displaying the aloofness that had characterised Australia’s policy since 1959, the government declared its non-involvement, Australia not being a party principal.

Lewis Kent (ALP) was the first Representative to admit publicly that there was a causal relation between transmigration and the wave of people fleeing to PNG. He wanted the government to take up the issue of ‘cultural genocide’ with the Indonesian government, and to take steps in international fora as well. Also among the left wing of the ALP in Victoria there was support for the cause of the Papuans in general and the refugees in particular. The Australian West Papua Association provided the Victorian ALP with information. In spite of these social and political concerns the government took no steps. After 1986 those few concerned voices in parliament fell silent as well, although the problem of West Papuan refugees in PNG remained

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224 Ibid., 21 November 1985, p.2608.
225 Up to 1984 approximately 82,000 people had been transmigrated to West New Guinea. Ibid., 26 November 1985, p.3662.
227 House of Representatives, 4 April 1984, p.1350.
228 Australia West Papua Association Newsletter, vol.1, no.1, November 1985, p.4.
229 Ibid., 30 April 1986, p.2798. Also see Kent’s even more straightforward speech on 27 November 1986. House of representatives, p.3905.
unsolved. In 1990 Laurie Ferguson (ALP) drew attention to small scale ongoing military operations in the border area of Irian Jaya and PNG, but again the government was unwilling to intervene in bilateral matters between Indonesia and PNG.

The visit by representatives of Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM -- Free Papua Movement) to Australia in 1986 forms a good example of the government’s reluctance to be drawn into the continuing struggle for self-determination: no government official was prepared to see any of the representatives. Left wing organisations, the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Australian Democrats, as well as ALP State parliamentarians, did have meetings, but core policy makers refused to meet the delegation. The OPM group requested, inter alia, that the Australian government would discuss the OPM claims of human rights violations with Indonesia and also put these claims to the UN Human Rights Commission while seeking at the UN a thorough re-examination of the 1969 Act of Free Choice. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Richard Woolcott, was opposed to any encouragement to the OPM since this group would raise false expectations among dissidents and cause inflammation of relations with Indonesia. The government’s refusal to talk to the OPM group indicated how much consideration it would have for the group’s requests.

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8. Conclusions

A broad coalition consisting of External Affairs and Defence officials, as well as key ministers in the Menzies Government, consistently opposed an Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea. Australia’s security interests were believed to benefit from the stability that a continuation of Dutch administration would bring to the region. The Dutch, as a Western ally, politically unstable. Initially self-determination did not come to the forefront as an issue in Australia’s policy.

formed a buffer between Australia and Indonesia, a part of the alien Asian world and considered

This policy intended to persuade Indonesia to remove the issue from its foreign policy agenda, and therefore encouraged the Netherlands not to engage in negotiations. When these attempts failed and Indonesia tried to internationalise the issue, the government publicly embraced self-determination as a long term goal, but in reality self-determination served as a means to justify Australia’s opposition to Indonesia’s claim to sovereignty and as a means to find more international support to stop Indonesia. In Australian politics there was no significant opposition to this policy.

Continuation of Dutch administration and self-determination no longer automatically served security interests when Australia’s opposition to Indonesia’s claims resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations. Indonesia moved closer to the Soviet Union and radical forces in Indonesia
seemed to benefit from the conflict. The United States and the United Kingdom offered no military assistance should the conflict turn violent. Without those guarantees Australia felt unable to continue its opposition to Indonesia. Thus the government gradually abandoned the principle of self-determination that it had embraced in 1957 and distanced itself from the dispute. Subandrio’s visit in 1959 formed a landmark in this respect, since the government gave up its demand to be heard in discussions on the territory’s future status and declared its willingness to accept the outcome of negotiations between the Netherlands and Indonesia, even if these would not result in self-determination for the West Papuans. In a heated debate the government had to modify its desertion of self-determination, but the dice had been cast and the policy centre and periphery were in agreement over the change in policy.

The dilemma of how best to serve Australia’s security interests became more urgent in 1960 and 1961. Until after the crucial UNGA debate the view that gave priority to obstructing Indonesia and promoting self-determination as best serving Australia’s security prevailed. The eventual fundamental shift in policy was in the first place caused by changes in the international situation. In December 1961 and January 1962 first the policy making centre’s composition changed, and subsequently and without much public discussion also its goals. When Barwick became Minister for External Affairs in December 1961 he was convinced that Australia’s security interests were no longer served by promotion of self-determination, but rather by a speedy transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia. He found supporters inside his department and persuaded Prime Minister Menzies of the need to change the goals of policy. In January 1962 self-determination was downgraded to an issue of secondary importance at best. Preventing
Indonesia from turning communist, a likely course should negotiations between the Netherlands and Indonesia fail, had priority. Negotiations between the Netherlands and Indonesia should therefore succeed and Barwick tried to persuade the Netherlands to adopt a flexible position.

The press response to the change in policy was generally hostile, as was the opposition’s response, but cabinet and its parliamentary group were in broad agreement. Opportunities for an extensive debate were also limited. Public opinion was not on the side of the coalition which in January 1962 counted amongst its ranks the same actors that had supported the previous policy, and the previous policy theory. Disputes over the change in policy had largely been contained within the policy making centre, which had never been under any threat of having its policy prescribed by external actors such as parliamentarians, interest groups and the media. Changes in the international situation had forced actors located in the decision making centre to reconsider their policy theory. They concluded that self-determination had outlived its usefulness. Therefore they privately dropped it as a foreign policy goal. Institutional and functional characteristics of he foreign policy making process, which had contributed to the creation of a very strong policy making centre in the first place, prevented formation of an alliance strong enough to make the transformation of policy a difficult one.

The post-1962 period was characterised by continuing efforts to rebuild the relationship with Indonesia and, after the Indonesian army had seized control in 1965, to strengthen the position of Indonesia’s anti-communist government. Papuan self-determination was sacrificed to his overarching policy goal, as was shown by the government’s acceptance of the outcome of the
unfair Act of Free Choice in 1969. After that ‘plebiscite’ the government considered the matter of self-determination closed. Reports of human rights violations in West New Guinea were largely ignored and not seen as the result of the denial of self-determination. Development aid was supplied as a means to overcome tension between natives and transmigrants. Papuan self-determination, once instrumental in Australia’s security policy, had become an outright nuisance in the new relations with Indonesia, particularly since it caused border tensions between Indonesia and PNG. Therefore successive Australian governments have distanced themselves as far as possible from the topic, and from those few groups advocating West Papuan self-determination.

In Chapter III it was hypothesised that the Departments of External Affairs and Defence and their representatives in cabinet would, together with the Prime Minister, dominate foreign policy making in the case of West New Guinea, given their institutional and functional domination of the foreign policy making process. The findings in this chapter fully support the hypothesis. Any changes in either policy goals or means were brought about by international conditions, and funnelled through the bureaucratic and procedural machine of foreign policy making. The internal dynamics of Australia’s foreign policy making centre shaped and adapted the policy; the input of parliament, interest groups and the media was very limited. Parliament’s involvement in the phases of foreign policy deliberation and evaluation is weak in the first place, but with confrontation between opposition and government dominating parliament’s functioning, the minority is very unlikely to have any impact on foreign policy. With party discipline almost absolute, the majority has no other option but to be obedient to the wishes of the government.