

1981

In the Sticky Fly Paper: The United States, Australia and Indonesia, 1959-1964

Glen St. J. Barclay

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Barclay, Glen St. J. (1981) "In the Sticky Fly Paper: The United States, Australia and Indonesia, 1959-1964," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 34 : No. 4 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol34/iss4/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

The West New Guinea and Malaysian crises of the early sixties involved the United States, Australia, Indonesia, Great Britain, and the Dutch. They may have been provoked by sheer mischievousness but they centered on questions of colonialism, nationalism, self-determination, independence, and regional security. They muddied understandings of ANZUS, SEATO, and bilateral responsibilities. There were real political costs but if there was a victor, it was the United States.

IN THE STICKY FLY PAPER: THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA AND INDONESIA, 1959-1964

by

Glen St. J. Barclay

Nothing has ever cast more doubt upon the efficacy of the ANZUS guarantee to Australia than the policy adopted by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations toward Indonesia during the confrontation over West New Guinea and Malaysia. The Sydney *Sunday Mirror* claimed that "a clash of interests" had developed between the United States and Australia in February 1961.¹ Deputy Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Labor Party E. Gough Whitlam asserted the following April that the United States had "never supported the point of view of the Netherlands and Australia on West New Guinea."² Labor spokesman on foreign affairs Kim E. Beazley argued in September 1963 that "the United States takes no responsibility for the defense of Malaysia."³ Labor leader Arthur A.

Calwell insisted as late as April 1964 that

the Government . . . has a completely false understanding of the United States role in the Malaysia-Indonesia dispute . . . [E]verything that the Minister then went on to say was designed to imply that the United States would be bound to come to our aid if our troops were attacked. If the Minister believes that, he will believe anything.⁴

Even Alan S. Renouf, then Permanent Head of the Australian Department of External Affairs and subsequently Australian Ambassador in Washington, who might certainly have seemed to have had the opportunity to learn better, stated in an interview on 14 February 1975 that "the U.S. faced with the choice

68 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

between Australia and Indonesia, might have chosen to support Indonesia."⁵

The truth of the matter was that Washington never believed that such a choice could exist. Nobody was going to fight Indonesia, and Indonesia was not capable of fighting anybody. Least of all was anybody going to fight anybody over West New Guinea. This seemed to have been fully implicit in a Joint Communique issued by Australian Minister for External Affairs Richard G. Casey and Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio on 15 February 1959, that declared that Australia still recognized Netherlands sovereignty over West New Guinea and the right of the inhabitants of self-determination but that Australia would not oppose any agreement reached between the Netherlands and Indonesia as parties principal, arrived at by peaceful processes and in accordance with internationally accepted principles.⁶ This, as former Australian Minister for External Affairs Sir Perry C. Spender commented, meant that Australia "gave the green light to Indonesia to obtain, or extract from the Dutch, by such means as she thought fit, whatever agreement she could (and what less than transfer of sovereignty did anyone think this would have been?)"⁷ Spender's views were corroborated by Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph M. Luns, who told him that the Dutch Government "could no longer feel any confidence that in its resistance to increasing international pressure, engendered by Indonesia, it would receive any support, public or private, from Australia."⁸ This should have ensured a peaceful solution. The Dutch would hardly fight for West New Guinea on their own. The Indonesians would not have to fight if the Dutch were not going to fight. The United States would not become involved militarily unless Australia became involved militarily, and this could not happen if there were no war for it to become involved in.

The question of military involvement

on anybody's part arose in these highly improbable circumstances as a result of the unpredictable diplomacy of Indonesian President Achmet Sukarno and Australian Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies. The two leaders met in Jakarta in December 1959. Their exchanges were apparently cordial, and were described by Menzies himself as "frank, comprehensive and cordial." No communique was ever issued, however. Nor did Menzies report on his visit to the Australian Parliament. When asked if he was going to submit a report, he merely said that he would think about whether it was appropriate for him to do so. He apparently decided that it was not.

Menzies' motivations in foreign policy were frequently elusive. Sukarno's seemed perfectly clear. He was working both sides of the street. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev began a state visit to Indonesia on 18 February 1960. He expressed support for Indonesian demands for the liberation of West New Guinea from Dutch rule. The Dutch responded by sending the aircraft carrier *Karel Doorman* and two destroyers to the Banda Sea. The Australians began to scare. "Once you have reinforcements from both sides," an Australian diplomat remarked, "you don't know what will happen."⁹ The situation worsened further when Sukarno announced in July the establishment of a special committee to outline a concrete policy for the liberation of what he termed West Irian. On 17 August he broke off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands, declaring that a new "policy of strength" was to be followed with respect to West New Guinea, on the grounds that "one does not beg for one's rights, one fights for them."¹⁰ Menzies had been in England much of this time. He now flew to New York, to attend a meeting of the United Nations. Sukarno had just presented an innocuous resolution, supported by four other non-aligned governments, calling on Eisenhower and Khrushchev to renew their

U.S./AUSTRALIA/INDONESIA 69

contacts interrupted by the disclosure of the U-2 spyplane flights.

Menzies unfortunately saw this as an opportunity to earn the gratitude of the United States by cutting Sukarno down to size. He moved an amendment to the Indonesian resolution calling for a full four-power summit conference including the United Kingdom and France, instead of a simple one-on-one meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev. It failed disastrously. Only five countries voted for the Australian amendment. Even New Zealand and South Africa abstained. The Americans were naturally irritated rather than gratified. Eisenhower said that Menzies had positively alienated support in the General Assembly because "he kept going back to the same old things."¹¹ State Department Adviser R. F. Pederson told U.S. Representative to the United Nations James J. Wadsworth that the Prime Minister had "committed a tactical mistake because his amendments were too pro-western."¹² Menzies had been seeking to cultivate good will in Washington at the expense of the Indonesians. All he had done was embarrass the Americans and raise doubts about his own judgment.

Sukarno was meanwhile making even more serious trouble. On 21 November 1960 the Netherlands Government announced that a small group of Indonesian infiltrators had landed on the southwest coast of West New Guinea. Eight days later, a Dutch warship intercepted an Indonesian vessel attempting to land supplies for an earlier group of infiltrators. Subandrio insisted that there had been no change in Indonesia policy of liberating West Irian by peaceful means, but it was evident that a program of armed intervention was in train, albeit on a piffling scale and orchestrated with well-nigh total ineptitude. Matters took a far more disturbing turn, however, when Indonesian Chief of Staff Abdul Nasution flew to Moscow with Subandrio in

January 1961 to negotiate purchases of Russian submarines, warships, attack craft, fighter planes and bombers, to the value of some \$300 million. It was time for Menzies to try his luck in Washington again.

The Australian Prime Minister flew off to a meeting with the new President John F. Kennedy on 24 February. The Americans awaited his arrival with perfect equanimity. The National Security Council advised Kennedy that the United States was "likely to see eye-to-eye with Australia" on the problems of Southeast Asia, and "we look with confidence to Australia for a major contribution to any action necessary to safeguard the security of the area." The United States should therefore "continue to explore with the Australian Government solutions to the dispute between Indonesia and the Netherlands over the status of West New Guinea, compatible with over-all U.S. objectives." Secretary of State Dean D. Rusk similarly believed that the United States faced no important problems in its present bilateral relations with Australia. He noted, however, that the American view that a direct United Nations trusteeship seemed to offer the best prospect for solution of the West New Guinea issue

provoked a number of political and technical objections . . . Australia prefers that the Dutch remain in West New Guinea until self-determination can be exercised and hopes that the Papuans then would elect some status other than association with Indonesia . . . Australian leaders are skeptical of our analysis that a peaceful solution to this problem cannot wait for Papuan political evolution.

He accordingly suggested that Kennedy might wish to present the views of the U.S. Government to Menzies along the following lines:

Our appreciation of Australia's deep interest in West New Guinea and the uniquely common concern

70 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

of our two nations in the stability of the area has prompted us to go first to them for discussion of possible solutions We are considering his Government's preliminary reservations regarding a direct trusteeship very carefully, especially as they relate to Australian security. We want to assure him in this context, that we regard very seriously our responsibilities under the Mutual Defense Treaty We have no illusions that amelioration of this problem will resolve all questions concerning Indonesia. We are aware that Indonesia will continue to pose problems that will require our best efforts to meet.¹³

The fact that Kennedy and Rusk recognized the nature of Australian concerns did not of course mean that they thought that they justified a show-down with Indonesia. Menzies told Federal Parliament in Canberra that his talks with the President had been "warm, friendly and helpful."¹⁴ But the Joint Communique issued on 24 February in fact made no mention of the West New Guinea issue at all. Its main burden was the "strong faith" of the two leaders in SEATO and ANZUS as bulwarks for peace in the Pacific.¹⁵ The implication was obvious. If Australia could count on U.S. support under the terms of the two regional pacts, then there was no way in which Australian security could seriously be threatened by an Indonesian presence in West New Guinea.

Kennedy and his advisers were, however, seriously aware that the Australians did not see the matter in quite such clear-cut terms. Under Secretary of State Robert H. Johnson noted that "the Australians would adamantly refuse to accept any solution which involved turning over West Irian to the Indonesians," although this was contrary to the position that the Australians themselves had adopted under the terms of

the Casey-Subandrio Joint Communique. Nor was Johnson without his own misgivings regarding the Indonesians. "Sukarno has set up a kind of blackmail situation," he wrote. "He is to visit the Soviet Union following his visit here."¹⁶ But the Australians also seemed to be involved in a double play. Sir Dallas Brookes, Australian Administrator of Papua New Guinea, said that both the Netherlands and Australia had pledged themselves to the objective of self-government for their respective territories. It had been "the sad history of many people in all parts of the world and at various times in history . . . to have had their fate decided as a result of decisions in which they themselves have had no part. We believe that the fate of people should not be so decided."¹⁷ But Menzies told Indonesian military leaders that Australia would respect any agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands made as a result of negotiations conducted voluntarily and free of duress, although he was not prepared actually to put pressure on the Dutch to negotiate for the transfer of sovereignty without providing for self-determination by the indigenes of West New Guinea.¹⁸

Washington was prepared to employ pressure to this end. Kennedy had applied the same technique with Sukarno as he had with Menzies. Their Joint Communique made no mention of West New Guinea either. Instead, it reaffirmed "the spirit of cooperation and confidence which has characterized the relations between the two countries."¹⁹ The Americans were calling their shots judiciously. They were stressing security with the Australians and mutual confidence with the Indonesians. They had also decided to get the matter out of the way before it became too dangerous. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson told White House Adviser Walt W. Rostow that the United States was now "prepared to use our maximum powers of persuasion with the Dutch in

order to obtain a solution that will be acceptable to Indonesia" if only because "it seems most likely that sooner or later it [West New Guinea] will go to Indonesia" anyway.²⁰ Chief of the Division of International Administration John S. Henderson, Jr., told Rusk that it was doubtful if there was any trouble spot in the world where the Soviet bloc could gain so much with so little risk as by encouraging active hostilities over West New Guinea. He accordingly suggested that it would be useful if Sukarno and Nasution could be given, before they went to Moscow, some reason to believe that the United States was determined to press forward with any proposal that contained the possibility of an Indonesian recovery of West New Guinea by peaceful means.²¹ Kennedy duly wrote to Sukarno, telling him that he intended to develop a new approach to the problem, which would be helped greatly if Sukarno could preserve a calm atmosphere and use his influence to maintain tranquillity. Self-determination for the Papuans had clearly become expendable in the circumstances.

But preserving a calm atmosphere unfortunately seemed to be beyond the call of duty for Sukarno. During his visit with Khrushchev, he arranged for the purchase of two TU-16 bombers, as well as some *Badgers*, with a range and payload greater than the Royal Australian Air Force's *Canberras*. The Dutch then moved in with a proposal that Australia and the United States could hardly reject. Foreign Minister Luns proposed in the General Assembly on 26 September that a United Nations Commission for Netherlands New Guinea should be established, with the purpose of organizing a plebiscite under United Nations auspices, to register the wishes of the Papuans regarding their own future. The Netherlands Government would respect any decision they made, including one to join Indonesia. But the Indonesians apparently did not think it appropriate that the Papuans

should be given a choice. Subandrio rejected Luns' proposal, asserting that West Irian was Indonesian territory. If the Netherlands were to declare it independent, Indonesia would be "compelled to use all the means at our disposal, to crush such a proclamation, even if it means war with the Netherlands."²² Both Washington and Canberra, however, endorsed the Dutch initiative. Australian Ambassador Sir James Plimsoll applauded it as "a constructive, forward-looking and peaceful proposal," reaffirming that "it is not our intention in Australia to obstruct or oppose the eventual union of West New Guinea with Indonesia, if such should be the will of the indigenous Papuan inhabitants."²³ U.S. Representative Jonathon B. Bingham similarly said that the position of the United States on self-determination "is well known and we perceive no valid reason why an appropriate expression of the will of the people should be denied to the inhabitants of West New Guinea."²⁴ Australia and Washington had agreed on a face-saving formula. What they could hardly agree on would be an unconditional surrender that irresistibly evoked images of Munich.

Kennedy had the strongest reasons for wishing to conciliate both Indonesia and Australia at the time. He and his advisers had already recognized the need for "consultation with our SEATO allies, principally the British and Australians, regarding SEATO action in support of the deteriorating situation in Vietnam."²⁵ The Australian Ambassador in Washington was officially informed on 17 November 1961, that the United States was "considering increasing its assistance to the Republic of Vietnam," and "an indication of Australia's views and willingness to assist was requested."²⁶ The United States could not possibly hope for Australian support in Vietnam if the Australians were left in any real doubts about the extent to which they could

72 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

count on U.S. support against Indonesian aggression. But aggression was the last thing that Kennedy considered the Indonesians seriously capable of. The whole issue was increasingly impressing him as nonsensical. He was sure that the Dutch . . . would hardly go to war over this last barren fragment of Pacific empire. Nor did he propose to let matters develop to the point of a great-power confrontation in the Banda Sea with Moscow and Peking backing Indonesia while America backed the Dutch . . . West New Guinea did not seem to him a part of the world in which great powers should be rationally engaged.²⁷

It obviously did not even occur to Kennedy that anybody might imagine that the United States would be backing Indonesia.

The important point, as Under Secretary of State George W. Ball told Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, was that the Dutch not feel that they were faced with *force majeure*, but that they feel that they were committed to seeing that the people of West New Guinea got a fair deal. "The Indos," he concluded, "should realize that they cannot expect the Dutch to surrender before negotiations have begun."²⁸ A letter was drafted for Kennedy to send to Sukarno that offered the Indonesians the early prospect of a transfer of territory, provided that they refrained from attempting to seize militarily what they had virtually been assured of obtaining peacefully. Kennedy was to tell Sukarno that

the whole experience of the past few months has, in our judgment, narrowed the gap between the Dutch position and our own. Some definite action which will result in the Dutch relinquishing their position in the territory . . . now seems a wholly realistic prospect . . .

[W]e are quite ready to play whatever role you and the Dutch [*sic*]

would be useful in helping to work through this situation . . . [but] the use of force on your part would make it extremely difficult if not impossible for me personally to be helpful in working out a satisfactory resolution of this matter . . .

It is not question being in favor of Dutch as against Indonesians. We are objective, not neutral.

The crux of the matter was that, as Rusk told Ambassador Howard P. Jones, Sukarno "would have little or no support in world if at this critical juncture he were to seek achieve his objectives by means of force (FYI. Even if he had the means, which he presently does not. END FYI)."²⁹

It was presumably with the intention of concealing Indonesian incapacity to achieve a military solution that Sukarno announced on 13 December the formation of a National Defense Council for the liberation of West Irian by military means. The Australian Chiefs of Staff were unconcerned. They advised the Federal Cabinet that it would be "difficult if not impossible for Indonesia to mount and sustain a large-scale invasion force," and that "in the event of a large-scale conflict with a communist or communist-supported Indonesia, the American guarantee under A.N.Z.U.S. would operate."³⁰ The mutual guarantees under ANZUS did not in fact extend beyond the limits of the Pacific Ocean, and any conflict with Indonesia would most likely be fought in the area of the Indian Ocean. The Chiefs of Staff, however, were confident that the United States would not be deterred by geographical technicalities from coming to the rescue of Australia in the circumstances envisaged. Menzies' actions perhaps implied not so much confidence. He promptly handed over the portfolio of External Affairs to Attorney General Sir Garfield Barwick, the least excitable or easily panicked of his ministers, having sent a letter to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that caused

the latter to note in his Diary that "an attack by the Indonesians . . . seems likely in the very near future. This, naturally, much excites and alarms the Australians."³¹

Barwick appeared to be neither. He sent off identical cables to the Dutch and Indonesian Governments on 30 December, stating that "Australians were shocked and dismayed that Indonesia should openly declare its intention to resort to force as a means of concluding the issue in its own favor," and reiterating that the Australian Government was prepared to accept the terms of any agreement endorsed by the people of West New Guinea as an act of self-determination, "whether it were for integration with Indonesia or for independence." The Indonesians, of course, would not accept any decision by the indigenes except one for integration and were therefore determined not to give them the opportunity to make a decision. But it was reassuringly obvious that Indonesia was not likely to pose any serious threat to anybody, with or without West New Guinea. On 15 January 1962 the Dutch frigate *Evertsen* encountered three Indonesian patrol boats, apparently carrying troops. It sank one and drove the others off. The Dutch suffered neither damage nor casualties. "For the moment," Ambassador Jones told Rusk with relief, "I rule out of consideration consequences of US military participation with Dutch and other Allies, since I cannot believe we would align ourselves against *[sic]* Asian nations in shooting war, barring Communist bloc participation."³² Events of the following weeks confirmed this view. Of 420 Indonesian paratroops dropped over West New Guinea, 22 were killed and 119 captured without loss to the Security Forces. The rest were presumably disposed of by the Papuans. Not even the Australians could be frightened by this display of military ineptitude.

The fact was that Australian-U.S.

military relations were becoming closer than at any time since the Korean war. South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem appealed to Menzies for aid in March, on the grounds that his Government had "been compelled to appeal for increased military assistance from Free World countries to help prevent it from being overwhelmed."³³ The ANZUS Council met in Canberra over 8-9 May for the first time in 2 years. Menzies offered CINCPAC Adm. Harry D. Felt ten officers and NCOs from the Australian Army to serve as instructors in Vietnam. It was not actually what Admiral Felt wanted, but Rusk showed his appreciation by affirming "complete solidarity from the United States on Australia and New Zealand's political responsibilities here in the Pacific area," in response to the singularly inept question, "does the United States view the terms of the [ANZUS] Pact as covering Australia's island territories, such as West New Guinea?"³⁴ West New Guinea was not and never had been either an Australian island territory or an Australian political responsibility, but Rusk knew the kind of answer necessary to assure Australian support in Vietnam.

Washington was in any case prepared to go beyond words to make Sukarno see reason. "In absence WNG settlement," Rusk told Jones,

we would consider in present rapidly deteriorating situation giving emergency aid in limited amount of foods, medicines and other essential categories. [However] . . . following WNG settlement, . . . we will be willing to consider extending aid not only for development projects but also . . . in form of balance of payments assistance should this be necessary.³⁵

The Indonesians soon got the message. "Generals Jani and Mokogarta have informed us," Jones reported, "that they have concluded we are now militarily on

74 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

the side of Dutch since we have done nothing to prevent Dutch reinforcements while stopping delivery of combat material to Indos."³⁶ The United States had in fact shipped 11,000 sub-machineguns of Danish manufacture to Indonesia the previous month, purportedly for use by the civil police, because of Rusk's conviction that "if US had not provided them Indos would have obtained them from Soviet bloc."³⁷ But the pressure was on. Kennedy warned Sukarno sharply in July that "the United States has undertaken grave commitments in that part of the world. My country has endeavored to contribute to the efforts towards reaching an accommodation on West Irian with confidence that a sincere desire for a peaceful settlement existed on both sides."³⁸ This appeared to do the trick. Indonesia and the Netherlands agreed on 16 August that West New Guinea be transferred to a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority on 1 October 1962, with Indonesia assuming full responsibility for the territory on 1 May 1963. Indonesia was to "make arrangements . . . to give the people of the territory the opportunity to exercise freedom of choice The act of self-determination will be completed before the end of 1969."³⁹

But the irrepressible Sukarno had gotten himself into trouble elsewhere before he was well out of trouble in West New Guinea. U.S. advisers had wondered as far back as April 1961 whether, with West Irian out of the way, Sukarno might be forced "to perform in other areas." He obviously thought that he was. The new British Federation of Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963, after United Nations Secretary General U Thant had reported that ascertainment teams had found that the majority of the peoples of Sarawak and North Borneo were in favor of entering it. Indonesia promptly refused to recognize the new Republic. The British and U.S. Embassies in Jakarta were

burned down. State Department officials immediately began discussions in London with Australian, New Zealand and British officials on the best means "to direct Indos away from bloc and general irresponsibility."⁴⁰ The following week, Menzies informed the Federal Parliament that he had already told the British and Malaysians that Australia would add its military assistance to the defense of Malaysia's territorial integrity and political independence.

All this posed a quite different problem for the United States. Australia had always insisted that it had no commitment to the Dutch to defend West New Guinea. It had proclaimed one to the British to defend Malaysia. The United States had wanted the Dutch to leave the Pacific. It wanted the British to remain in the Indian Ocean. But the new line in U.S. policy toward Sukarno had yet to be defined. Australian Labor spokesman on Foreign Affairs Kim E. Beazley asserted that "the United States takes no responsibility for the defense of Malaysia," and that this was "in conformity with a number of things that have happened in South-East Asia."⁴¹ This might well have appeared to be the case, even to Barwick, who spoke with Rusk on 17 October. The Secretary of State "offered no encouragement of United States participation, merely saying that the Timor problem could become exceedingly difficult." However, Kennedy, on Rusk's advice, told Ambassador Jones on 19 November to

request assurances from Sukarno of (a) willingness to settle the Malaysian dispute peacefully . . . and (b) agreement to withdraw his military forces from the Kalimantan border . . . and to cease active support of guerrilla actions in Malaysian territory. In return for this, the United States Government would (a) use its influence to bring about a tripartite meeting to settle the Malaya dispute . . . (b) assuming a settlement is reached,

resuscitate the multilateral program for aid to the stabilization of the Indonesian economy (c) in connection with (b) provide up to 150,000 tons of rice to Indonesia (d) plan for a visit of the President.⁴²

To underline the message, units of the 7th Fleet cruised the Indian Ocean. Rusk pretended to be surprised at Sukarno's alarmed reaction. He hoped that Jones would "be able gradually to persuade Sukarno . . . that deployment is not repeat not to be associated with the Indonesia-Malaya situation As a gesture of friendship we had in fact hoped to make a courtesy call at Djakarta." But he also told Jones that "present climate in US distinctly unfavorable to Indonesia," and suggested that he reiterate "as matter of information not threat of [*sic*] possible invocation ANZUS pact if Australian or New Zealand troops involved."⁴³

This was not just make-believe to frighten the Indonesians. White House Assistant Michael V. Forrestal told Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William P. Bundy that if Sukarno were to appeal to his people for a total national effort against the forces of colonialism led by the United States and its principal European ally, "at some point in its process our obligations under the ANZUS Treaty would be called into play; and in any case we would find it hard to sit idly by while the British got themselves heavily engaged in a guerilla war against a vituperative Sukarno."⁴⁴ Ambassador William E. Stevenson similarly told Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal that "serious clash with UK would involve US and Commonwealth countries."⁴⁵ Washington was raising the specter of ANZUS so incessantly that nobody could doubt that some commitment had in fact been accepted. Jones told Rusk that Australian Ambassador Keith C. Shann was cheerfully "peddling the line

that we are in the sticky fly paper of Malaysia and cannot withdraw whether we like it or not. I told Shann this was not news I admitted privately that we would be in the wings as needed."⁴⁶

Sukarno had also got the message again. He agreed to a cease-fire after talks with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy on 23 January 1964. Negotiations began in Bangkok on 5 February among the Malaysians, the Indonesians and the Philippines. They were broken off on 4 March. On 16 March Sukarno called on Indonesian youths to register for a "Crush Malaysia" campaign. The Australian response was immediate. Minister for Defense Paul C. Hasluck announced on 17 March that his Government had decided to provide Malaysia with substantial quantities of ammunition, engineering equipment and small seagoing craft. Training courses for Malaysian defense force personnel in Australia would be greatly expanded, and small numbers of Australian servicemen would be seconded to Malaysia until their own training was sufficiently advanced. Liberal back-bencher Jeff Bate then asked the critical question. He wanted Barwick to assure Parliament that Australia had definite treaty arrangements with the United States for mutual support if Australia were committed to action in support of Malaysia. Barwick replied that he had frequently alluded to the strength of the ANZUS Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, which covers this country not only in the event of Australia itself being attacked but also in the event of our troops, naval vessels or service aircraft being under attack in any part of the Pacific area. I would have thought that those statements would answer the first part of the question.⁴⁷

But Barwick's answer should in fact only have raised more questions. Any fighting between Australian and Indonesian forces over the defense of

Malaysia would not be likely to take place in the Pacific. It would therefore be outside the treaty area. There were only two reasons why the United States could be expected to become militarily involved in such circumstances. Either the American commitment to protect Australian security was not subject to any geographical limitations, in which case ANZUS was virtually irrelevant, or Australian support for U.S. policy in Vietnam was sufficiently important to Washington to warrant U.S. intervention against Indonesia in these specific circumstances. There was also the very credible possibility that Washington did not believe that ANZUS could or would be invoked, but was perfectly ready to let the threat of ANZUS be used to frighten the Indonesians into behaving sensibly.

There could of course be no question of an appeal to ANZUS, anyway, unless Australian units actually came under Indonesian attack. Canberra was taking the utmost care to ensure that this did not happen. Hasluck announced on 16 April that in response to a further request from the Malaysian authorities, two RAN coastal minesweepers would be made available for patrols in the Borneo Straits, an army engineer squadron would begin construction work in North Borneo, and four RAAF *Iroquois* helicopters would support operations against Communist insurgents on the Thai-Malaysia border, thus releasing Malaysian and British helicopters for service against the Indonesians in Borneo. Australian support was very clearly directed to helping others fight the Indonesians, not to themselves fighting the Indonesians. Barwick was nonetheless pressed by Labor spokesmen to say if he had specific assurance that the United States would intervene if Australian forces were somehow attacked in Malaysia. He replied surprisingly that "Borneo is within the treaty area. On that point there is no difference whatever . . . between the American view and our own." He looked very

much like being wrong on both counts. Labor leader Arthur A. Calwell proclaimed that if the Minister "believes that, he will believe anything . . . the American Government just does not see the Malaysian dispute as coming under ANZUS, or even involving it."

Calwell was even wronger than Barwick had been. Prime Minister Menzies spoke in reply as if ANZUS was almost irrelevant, if not exactly inappropriate, as the Labor members had been eager to imply. As to the basic question of "what happens if in the course of this defense of Malaysia we face a genuine attack on the territorial integrity or political independence of Malaysia," he considered that it was "a great mistake to talk dogmatically of what the United States of America will do." The important thing was that there was "a contract between Australia and America. It is a contract based on the utmost goodwill, the utmost good faith and unqualified friendship. Each of us will stand by it."⁴⁸ But if standing by a contract meant going far beyond the defined limits of the contract, it was hardly worth having the contract in the first place.

The irony was that the Americans were in fact incessantly indicating to the Indonesians that the ANZUS Treaty could be involved in the issue of Malaysian security. Sukarno issued an "action command" on 3 May for "21 million volunteers . . . to increase the revolution's vitality and help the peoples of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah dissolve Malaysia and attain national independence."⁴⁹ Assistant Secretary Bundy immediately warned that the United States might have to cut off all remaining aid programs to Indonesia. Rusk assured Jones that

Bundy was stating facts of life Sukarno asked whether Bundy statement meant that US was now defending Malaysia. I said if he meant by this militarily defending

Malaysia, the answer of course was negative, although I continued, escalation of the conflict could result in ANZUS Treaty being invoked. If he meant politically support Malaysia, he was aware that we recognized Malaysia and that we had welcomed its formation.⁵⁰

This again had the desired effect, though again only temporarily. Sukarno agreed on 18 May to a meeting of Heads of Government of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in Tokyo. Subandrio then announced amazingly that this meant that Indonesia was no longer bound by previous commitments and was free to continue with confrontation. He then flew off to Moscow. A communique issued by the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs on 2 July said that Russia and Indonesia had reached complete agreement on various issues, including the framework of arms deliveries. A Joint Communique issued in Moscow a fortnight later expressed the sympathy of Premier Khrushchev with the liberation struggle against neocolonialist plans for Malaysia.

This helped greatly to clarify the situation. The ANZUS Council Meeting in Washington confirmed its continuing support for Malaysia the following day. The members recognized at the same time that the defeat of the aggression against South Vietnam was "necessary not only to the security of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific but as a demonstration that Communist expansion by such tactics will not be allowed to succeed."⁵¹ Tunku Abdul Raham of Malaysia at once flew to Washington to meet with President Lyndon B. Johnson. They issued a Joint Communique on 23 July in which Johnson "reaffirmed the support of the United States for a free and independent Malaysia," and agreed "to provide military training in the United States for Malaysian personnel and to consider promptly and sympathetically credit sales, under existing arrange-

ments, of appropriate military equipment for the defense of Malaysia."⁵² On the same day, Rusk told Jones to inform Sukarno that "as long as Indos persist in using armed forces and terrorists in carrying out confrontation . . . we must continue reiterate our support for Malaysia in resisting such assaults."⁵³ Subandrio's response was to call Jones into his office and greet him with "When are you sending your reinforcements to Malaysia?" Jones replied: "I hope this will not be necessary. You know it is not what we want."⁵⁴ The battlelines were drawn, in the firm belief that there was not going to be any battle.

Sukarno was not Hitler and Indonesia was not the Third Reich. Confrontation over Malaysia posed no more significant a military threat to the stability of the region than the liberation struggle over West New Guinea. Some 30 or 40 Indonesian infiltrators were landed at various points on the Malaysian coast between 17 and 18 August. Nineteen were captured and two killed. The Malaysians had not found it necessary to call on other Commonwealth forces for direct assistance to counter this level of intrusion. They were not likely to have to call on the United States. There was accordingly no need for the United States to become too involved in a Commonwealth problem that the Commonwealth clearly was able to deal with. Rusk told Jones that the United States would be prepared to take a strong position in the Security Council in support of Malaysia if a meeting were convoked on the confrontation issue. Jones agreed, but advised that it would be "best for all concerned if US keep in background on Malaysian dispute as long as possible, letting British, Australia and others take lead in any SC action indicting Indonesia. I would expect of course that US would support action but would hope that it could be done low key with British rather than US in spotlight. British properties

78 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

gone," he added meaningfully; "US position might still be saved."³⁵

The requirement for the United States was now simply to reassure its ANZUS partners who had undertaken to show their flags in Vietnam. Johnson's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy, spoke with Australian and New Zealand officials A.J. Eastman and M.J.C. Templeton in the corridor outside the British High Commissioner's office in Kuala Lumpur. He told them that he considered our relationship with the British in this situation quite different from that which the US had with Australia and New Zealand, because of the ANZUS Treaty. He described our relationship with the British as between being informed and being consulted whereas in the case of the Australians and New Zealanders full consultations were the proper course.

His concern was to work out actual procedures by which an appeal could be made to the United States for military assistance by its ANZUS partners. Eastman and Templeton both agreed happily with Bundy's description of the relationship. Eastman said that the Australians were firmly intent on participation with the United States if their forces were actually to be used against Indonesia. The problem was that it might not be possible to consult with the Americans before Australian forces were actually committed to a retaliatory operation, because it was up to the Commander in Chief Far East himself to decide what units to employ, and the Australian High Commissioner himself might not know that his country's troops were involved until the very last minute. The arrival of British officials put an end to this interesting conversation, but the Australians and New Zealanders agreed to try to work out procedures that would enable them to advise the United States

as far in advance as possible.³⁶

Bundy's intention was simply to encourage the Commonwealth countries to maintain their presence in Southeast Asia, at a time when the United States was embarking upon a new dimension of involvement in Vietnam. They were most likely to do this if they could be assured of American support if it were ever needed, than which nothing was in practice less likely. Rusk told Jones in October to "continue to stress to HMG importance of strong military posture in area, and necessary that GOI be left in no doubt on UK-GOM ability and willingness meet high levels military activity." The Indonesians themselves had no doubt that high levels of military activity were a likely contingency. The CIA reported that the Indonesian Army

feels that an armed conflict with the British over Malaysia is inevitable. The Indonesian armed forces are therefore preparing to defend Indonesian territory against British attacks and for purposes of retaliation or deterrence are planning to install Soviet ballistic missile base in Indonesian territory The Indonesian General Staff assume that Britain would have no difficulty landing their army on Indonesian soil because of superior naval strength.³⁷

Nothing remotely approaching this order of conflict actually eventuated. Confrontation remained at a very low level of intensity indeed. By the time it was effectively halted by the Indonesian coup of October 1965, Indonesian infiltrators had suffered about 590 fatal casualties. Commonwealth dead, military and civilian combined, numbered only 150. These included one Australian soldier, killed by a boobytrap. Australian-Indonesian relations had remained unaffected by the whole business to the extent that Australian mapping experts were actually assisting Indonesian surveyors to chart the frontier line between

West Irian and Papua New Guinea, at a time when Australian units were assisting the British and Malaysians to contain Indonesian infiltration in Borneo. The Indonesians for their part never referred publicly to the fact that Australia and New Zealand were involved in confrontation at all.

The West New Guinea and Malaysian crises represented victories for American *realpolitik*. The United States had won virtually every hand. The Dutch had been induced to leave the Pacific. The British had been encouraged to stay. Conflict had been avoided with a country that Washington had always regarded as being of vital strategic and ideological importance in the region. Australian readiness to show the flag in Vietnam had not been impaired. All this had been achieved despite the eccentricities and sheer mischievousness of Sukarno and despite Menzies' tendency to perceive threats to Australian security where no such threats could possibly exist at the time. There was of course a price tag. The indigenes of West New Guinea were denied the right of self-determination and the mutual obliga-

tions and geographical compass of the ANZUS Treaty were suddenly plunged into obscurity. Pragmatic policymakers and strategists may not be too concerned about the Papuans. But they surely must feel that the Australian-American alliance might have developed more satisfactorily if the events of 1961-65 had not left so many people uncertain about what it actually meant, except that it did not mean what it actually said.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Glen St. John Barclay, Reader in International Relations, University of Queensland, was educated at Auckland University College, Victoria University of Wellington, and Australia National University, Canberra, earning the Ph.D.

degree from the latter. He is the author or editor of several books including *Twentieth Century Nationalism*, *The Impact of the Cold War: Reconsiderations*, and the forthcoming *World War II in the Pacific*. He has also written many journal articles, research reports, and book reviews and is a specialist in Australian-American affairs.

NOTES

1. *Sunday Mirror* (Sydney), 26 February 1961, p. 3.
2. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Representatives, 27 April 1961), v. 31, p. 1270.
3. *Ibid.*, 23 September 1963, v. 40, pp. 1379-1380.
4. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1964, v. 42, pp. 1271-1274.
5. Noela M. McKinnon, "Australian Foreign Policy, 1957-1965: A Study of Four Foreign Ministers," Unpublished Thesis, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane: 1975, p. 83. This is probably still the best overview of the period currently available. In his memoirs, *The Frightened Country* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), Alan S. Renouf discusses the crises over West New Guinea and Malaysia almost without reference to the United States, and quite without allusion to any positive diplomatic or other initiatives by the United States in coping with Indonesia.
6. Australia, Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, February 1959, pp. 81-82 (hereafter cited as CNIA).
7. Percy C. Spender, *Politics and a Man* (Sydney: Collins, 1972), p. 294.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Times of Indonesia*, 24 May 1960, p. 1.
10. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1960, p. 1.
11. Phone Calls Series, 4 October 1960, DDE Diary, Eisenhower Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter cited as EL).
12. Robert F. Pedersen to James J. Wadsworth, 6 October 1960, Eisenhower Papers, EL.
13. Dean D. Rusk to John F. Kennedy, 24 February 1961, POF, Countries, Australia Security, Box 111, Kennedy Library (hereafter cited as KL).
14. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 April 1961, v. 30, p. 648.

80 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

15. White House Press Release, 24 February 1961, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 13 March 1961, p. 372.
16. Memo of Conversation, 31 March 1961, NSF, Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore, Rand Studies, KL.
17. *CNIA*, April 1961, pp. 42-47.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-54.
19. White House Press Release, 25 April 1961, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 15 May 1961, p. 713.
20. Lyndon B. Johnson to Walt W. Rostow, 27 April 1961, NSF Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore, Rand Studies, KL.
21. John S. Henderson, Jr. to Rusk, 15 May 1961, NSF, Countries, Indonesia, KL.
22. *CNIA*, November 1961, pp. 21-31.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-37.
24. Statement by Jonathon B. Bingham, 22 November 1961, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 8 January 1962, pp. 74-75.
25. Roswell Gilpatric, Memo for Record, 11 October 1961, U.S. Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967* (Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1971), p. 323.
26. Australia, House of Representatives, *Parliamentary Papers*, "Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam," 13 May 1975, p. 5.
27. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Fawcett, 1965), pp. 492-494.
28. Rusk to Howard P. Jones, 8 December 1961, NSF, Countries, Indonesia, Box 113, KL.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Nancy Viviani, "Australian Policies and Attitudes Towards Indonesia," Unpublished Thesis, Australian National University, Canberra: 1972, p. 208.
31. Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 252.
32. Jones to Rusk, 16 January 1962, NSF, Countries, Indonesia, Box 113, KL.
33. Ngo Dinh Diem to Robert G. Menzies, 31 March 1962, in *Parliamentary Papers*, "Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam," p. 6.
34. Final Communique, 9 May 1962, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 28 May 1962, p. 870.
35. Rusk to Jones, 16 May 1962, NSF, Countries, Indonesia, Box 111, KL.
36. Jones to Rusk, 23 May 1962, *ibid.*
37. Rusk to AMEMBASSY Paris, 15 August 1962, *ibid.*
38. Kennedy to Sukarno, 30 July 1962, *ibid.*
39. Agreement Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands Concerning West New Guinea (West Irian), Articles XVIII and XX.
40. AMEMBASSY London to Rusk, 18 September 1963, NSF, Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore, v. IV, KL.
41. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, 25 September 1963, v. 40, pp. 1379-1381.
42. Memo of Conversation between the President and Howard P. Jones, 19 November 1963, NSF, Countries, Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore, v. V, KL.
43. Rusk to Jones, 30 December 1963, NSF, Indonesia, v. 2, Lyndon B. Johnson Library (hereafter cited as JL).
44. Michael V. Forrestal to William P. Bundy, 6 January 1964, NSC, NSF, Indonesia, JL.
45. William E. Stevenson to Rusk, 11 January 1964, Malaysian File, v. 2, JL.
46. Jones to Rusk, 31 January 1964, NSF, Malaysian File, v. 1, JL.
47. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, 19 March 1964, v. 41, p. 655.
48. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1964, v. 42, pp. 1262-1280.
49. Howard P. Jones, *Indonesia—The Possible Dream* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 302.
50. Rusk to Jones, 9 May 1964, NSF, Indonesia, v. 2, JL.
51. *CNIA*, July 1964, pp. 40-41.
52. Joint Communique, 23 July 1964, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 10 August 1964, p. 193.
53. Rusk to Jones, 23 July 1964, NSF, Malaysian File, v. 2, JL.
54. Jones to Rusk, 24 July 1964, *ibid.*
55. Jones to Rusk, 3 September 1964, *ibid.*
56. Memo of Conversation between McGeorge Bundy, A.J. Eastman and M.J.C. Templeton, 17 September 1964, *ibid.*
57. Intelligence Information Cable, 24 October 1964, CIA, NSF, Indonesia, v. 3, JL.